



## - A RESOURCE FOR ONGOING FORMATION -

### Part 6: Life in Fraternity

#### 3. Life in Fraternity (a) Building Fraternity

The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members. Rule 22

To foster communion among members, the council should organise regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity. This communion continues with the deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them. Rule 24

People then saw that the brothers rejoiced in their tribulations, persisted in prayer with eagerness and devotion, neither accepted nor carried money, and possessed a great love for one another; and through this they were known to be really the Lord's disciples. Many came to them with heartfelt sorrow, asking pardon for the offences they had committed against them. They forgave them from their hearts saying: 'May the Lord forgive you,' and encouraged them soundly about their eternal salvation...Each day they were continuous in prayer and working with their hands to avoid idleness, the enemy of the soul. They rose conscientiously in the middle of the night, and prayed most devoutly with copious tears and sighs. They loved each other deeply, served one another, and took care of each other as a mother for an only beloved child. Charity burned so ardently in them that it seemed easy for them to give their bodies to death, not only for the love of Christ, but also for the salvation of the soul or the body of their confreres.

Armstrong, Hellmann, Short *Francis of Assisi: early documents*  
Vol I Legend of Three Companions cap 11.41 (p 92-93)

What do you most look forward to in the fraternity meeting?

What, if anything, would you change about the fraternity meeting?

How would you 'sell' the idea of fraternity to others?

Blest be the tie that binds  
us in Franciscan love;  
the fellowship of kindred minds  
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne  
we pour ardent prayers;  
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,  
our mutual burdens bear,  
and often for each other flows  
the sympathising tear.

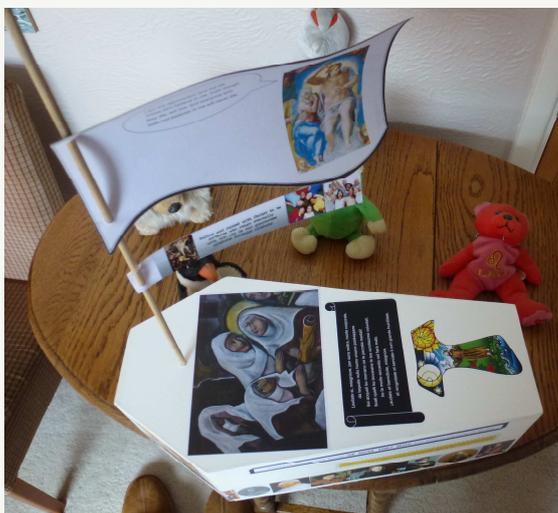
When for awhile we part,  
this thought will soothe our pain,  
that we shall still be joined in heart  
and long to meet again.

This glorious hope revives  
our courage by the way,  
while each in expectation lives,  
and longs to see the day.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,  
and sin we shall be free;  
and perfect love and friendship reign  
throughout eternity.

John Fawcett, 1740-1817

For Franciscans, 'fraternity' is an integral part of our way of life. That is, it is not optional (we meet because we have nothing better to do) but obligatory (we meet because doing so is at the heart of our Franciscan life and witness).





## Scripture—

### John 13. 33-35

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

### Rom 12. 9-21

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not flag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty; but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' 'No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by so doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.