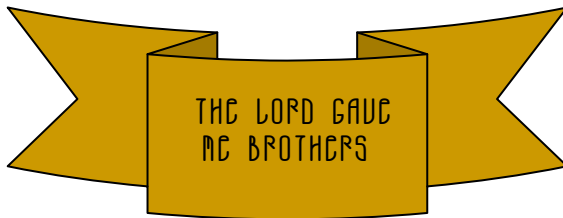


ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 6: "Fraternity & St Francis"
sheet 1

1. Fraternity Defined:
how Secular Franciscans should understand it and practice it



And after **the Lord gave me brothers**, nobody showed me what I was supposed to do, but the very same Most High revealed to me that I was **to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel**.
[Testament of St Francis]

i.e. double gift of God—

- norm of life [gospel]
- group of companions [brothers & sisters]

Fraternity for Francis—is not an optional extra but
Franciscans are Christians specifically committed to fraternity

Fraternity for Francis—is deeply rooted in
his conviction that the Father is the origin [‘While I was with them, I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; I have guarded them...’ John 17.12]



As Thomas of Celano says:

It was always Francis’ anxious wish and careful watchfulness to preserve among his sons the bond of unity, so that those whom the same spirit drew together and the same father brought forth might be nurtured peacefully in the bosom of one mother. He wanted the greater to be joined to the lesser, the wise to be united with the simple by brotherly affection, the distant to be bound to the distant by the binding force of love. [Second Life, CXLIV, 191]



In the **First Letter to the Faithful**, Francis instructs the penitents—

All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love their neighbours as themselves and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance: **Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will be upon them**

Isa 11. 2f 'And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,... and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.'

and he will make his home and dwelling among them . They are children of the heavenly Father

Matt 5.45 'so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven...'

whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Matt 12.50 'For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.'

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to him when we do the will of the Father who is in heaven. We are mothers when we carry him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and when we give birth to him through his holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example.

Matt 5.16 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'

The unity that is found in the Holy Trinity, and the source of life that is given to the believer in receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism and confirmation, must, for the Franciscan, express itself in the unifying work of fraternity. For it is in fraternity that the brothers and sisters live out their Franciscan calling. Francis has no doubts: by letting the Spirit of the Lord lead him, the true penitent will enter into a more and more intimate relationship of communion with God, in the very heart of the Holy Trinity.

Fraternity, being a gift of grace, derives from the only divine Fatherhood and springs from the intimate relationship with Christ and can be built only by such a relationship, and only around this Brother: the Father has given, and still gives, brothers to him who is the firstborn among many brothers [Rom 8.29].

Jesus is the centre of our fraternity

But this 'fraternity' is not just a group of friends—we choose our friends; we do not choose brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters are children of the same father. 'Behold, behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.' [Ps 133.1]

The model and origin of fraternity is Jesus himself