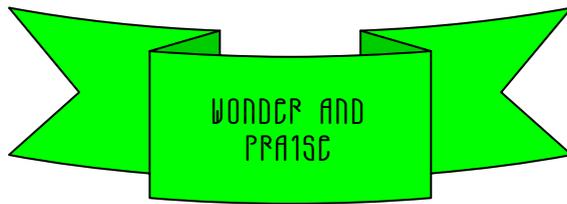


ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 6: "Fraternity & St Francis"
sheet 5

5. Fraternity & Eucharist



Brothers—a gift of God for one another.
Diversity—the quality by which the Lord endows each person, thus creating him as an individual.

Recognition of this leads to—

- mutual acceptance and gratitude
- founding a 'Eucharistic attitude'
[Greek, 'eucharisteo' = to give thanks]

Diversity among brothers and sisters is all the more important in respect of:

Personal identity—every individual is helped to define himself in comparison with others

Poverty—reminds me that I do not possess all the gifts

Integration—helps us mutually to enrich each other

Recognising each brother, and the diversity of gifts given to each for each by God, leads to:

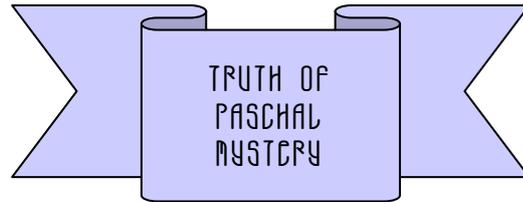
Mutual acceptance and gratitude—that is, it founds a 'Eucharistic attitude'

The gift of the brother generates wonder; acceptance converts itself into praise and thanks to God for the brother, that is, veneration for that brother. This true acceptance of the brother generates a ' **Eucharistic disposition** '. As the brothers grow together in the growth of their vocation they show forth the glory of God who has wrought this new creation through fraternity. They present their ' bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God ' - their spiritual worship [Rom 12.1]. Like the humble Christ, they ' love one another with brotherly affection ' they ' outdo one another in showing honour ' [Rom 12.10]; they ' work together with him ' so as not ' to accept the grace of God in vain ' [II Cor 6.1]; and if a brother is overtaken in any trespass, restoring ' him in a spirit of gentleness ' [Gal 6.1]. In their fraternal reciprocity, they thank God who has called them ' out of darkness into his marvellous light ' [I Pet 2.9], and as they have ' received Christ Jesus the Lord, ...live in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith,...abounding in thanksgiving. ' [Col 2.6]

Fraternal life is the result of personal renewal, of continuous conversion.

The development of authentic fraternal life is—

- fruits and result of a paschal dynamic process
- ‘Exodus’ journey from ‘self-centred’ to ‘other-centred’ living



Passing from death unto life is, for us, a fraternal experience as much as a personal one. And we cannot affirm that we have truly celebrated Easter, and entered into the dynamic process of the Paschal Mystery, until, like St Francis, we have ‘embraced the leper’.

The ‘perfectae caritatis’ that is mandatory for every believer, is realised by us as part of the Franciscan Family.



It is as Franciscans that we declare not only with our lips [John 3.16] **God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,** but also with our lives [1 John 3.16] **By this we know love, that he laid down his love for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren** - that is, ‘if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?’ [1 John 3.17]

To follow in the footsteps of St Francis means ‘self-emptying’ on a Christological scale. We can never say ‘I’m not going that far!’ because **He** went to Calvary; **Francis** embraced the reprehensible; **He** who was rich became poor; **Francis** crossed that final, personal barrier—and found he was hugging Christ.



It is in fraternity that we reach the depths of Christian living: ‘Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.’ [Gal 6.2]

This is the first and foremost form of fraternal ‘service’ [Greek, ‘diaconia’] because the brother is not an object to dominate, not someone to put up with, but a ‘burden’ to bear—just as Christ ‘has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows’ [Isa 53.4] we are to be Christ to others.