



Tau Maria Franciscan Formation Meditations
Tau Maria Franciscan Rule of Life

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Meditation – Francis Charism

Penance:

3. We wholeheartedly embrace Christ's call to radical faith and conversion (Mk. 1:15) under the spiritual fatherhood of St. Francis. His first exhortation to those who sought to follow his Gospel way of life begins as follows:

All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love their neighbors as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance. Oh how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make His home and dwelling place among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(St. Francis – First Letter to the Faithful)

These words summarize well our Franciscan Charism. The tertiary Franciscan vocation has always been a call to a life of penance. This should not be understood as consisting first or mainly in external acts but in a continual striving for authentic holiness. Ascetical practices are essential but must reflect a genuine interior transformation. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come." (2 Cor 5:17) "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (Gal. 4:19)

Prayer and Fasting:

7. "And He told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." (Lk 18:1)
8. St. Francis lived and taught that "all temporal things ought to be subservient (to) the spirit of holy prayer and devotion." (Rule of St. Francis, C.5) He recognized clearly that the purpose of our existence is union with the Blessed Trinity through Jesus Christ, apart from Whom we can do nothing. (cf Jn 15:5) Therefore, we must strive to generously give ourselves to devout and sincere prayer from the heart and to worthily receive the Sacraments. Because our current culture is extremely fast-paced and full of distractions, fidelity to prayer requires discipline and does not allow for wasting time.
17. "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." (Lk 5:35)
18. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Lk 9:23) True penance purifies and makes reparation, but in the end is an act of love, participating in the ultimate heroic sacrifice of the Lamb of God. So generous is our Heavenly Father that He does not disdain even our smallest sacrifices, but has deigned to make them, united to the Cross of His Son, the very price of souls.



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Poverty:

23. The “Poverello” (little poor man) of Assisi heroically imitated his Lord in this great self-emptying of voluntary material and spiritual poverty. Throughout the history of his order all attempts to return to original observance, held holy poverty to be the keystone of fidelity to St. Francis’ ideal. We live in an age of unprecedented material wealth but widespread spiritual bankruptcy. Therefore, as sons and daughters of St. Francis, we also strive to witness to radical trust in the Providence of our loving Father and the total sufficiency of the “one thing necessary” (Lk 10:41) by freely choosing to live poverty, simplicity, and minority according to our state of life.
24. Parents are responsible to provide for the safety, security and all needs of their children. The present and future needs of the family must be taken into consideration without excessive concern for the latter. With this in mind material possessions, savings and investments should be kept to a minimum. Neither our possessions nor our manner of living should ever give the impression of seeking social status, ostentation or luxury for its own sake. Ownership and/or stewardship of possessions or wealth dedicated to directly serving God’s people is allowed and encouraged.
25. All unnecessary possessions and wealth should be given to the poor, the Church or some worthy charity, in a timely manner. “The decisive point of the social question is that goods created by God for everyone should, in fact, reach everyone in accordance with justice and with the help of charity.” [Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) #2459] “The right to private property does not abolish the universal destination of goods.” (CCC # 2452)

Minority:

36. In all things we should “seek the lowest place” (Lk 14:10) as did our Seraphic Father who called his brothers “friars minor” (lesser brothers). The spirit of minority is central to our Charism. As Jesus taught us, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Lk 14:11)

Consecration:

...Holy Immaculate Conception, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, taking you into our home, we consecrate and entrust ourselves and our fraternity totally and forever to your Immaculate Heart, as your slaves and your property.

Make us your true sons and daughters and use our fraternity as an instrument of Christ our King to convert sinners, to sanctify souls, to serve the poor and sick, and to strengthen and renew the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—may be glorified, praised and adored by all mankind. Amen.