



Tau Maria Franciscan Formation Meditations
Rule of Life

http://www.bspenance.org/The_Rule_of_1221.shtml

M

Meditation – Self Denial in the Following of Christ

The way of “self denial” in the Following of Christ is clearly seen in the study of the Tau Maria Franciscan Rule of Life, and hopefully in seeing how we live. (Thank God for Confession.) The original Rule of 1221 for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance is a great peak into our Holy Father’s minds.

Here begins the Rule of the Continent Brothers and Sisters:

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

CHAPTER I: DAILY LIFE

1. The men belonging to this brotherhood shall dress in humble, undyed cloth, the price of which is not to exceed six Ravenna soldi an ell, unless for evident and necessary cause a temporary dispensation be given. And breadth and thinness of the cloth are to be considered in said price.

It is quite a relief that in the first sentence that St. Francis wrote he included the possibility for mitigation of a form of self denial. Rigidity is not a sign of holiness. Yet, he also paid close attention to detail. Just as those who would gain respect through extravagant dress are meticulous about their clothing, so should we be in seeking the lowest place, even in people’s minds.

2. They shall wear their outer garments and furred coats without open throat, sewed shut or uncut but certainly laced up, not open as secular people wear them; and they shall wear their sleeves closed.

3. The sisters in turn shall wear an outer garment and tunic made of cloth of the same price and humble quality; or at least they are to have with the outer garment a white or black underwrap or petticoat, or an ample linen gown without gathers, the price of an ell of which is not to exceed twelve Pisa denars. As to this price, however, and the fur cloaks they wear a dispensation may be given according to the estate of the woman and the custom of the place. They are not to wear silken or dyed veils and ribbons.

4. And both the brothers and the sisters shall have their fur garments of lamb's wool only. They are permitted to have leather purses and belts sewed in simple fashion without silken thread, and no other kind. Also other vain adornments they shall lay aside at the bidding of the Visitor.

Vanity seeks openings in all of our affairs. Thank God for our Rule that disciplines us against its poison.

5. They are not to go to unseemly parties or to shows or dances. They shall not donate to actors, and shall forbid their household to donate.

St. Francis taught us of the dangers of even our forms of entertainment and socialization, that we would recognize our tendency toward pride of self, even when considering the choices of others.

I admonish and exhort them, not to despise nor judge men, whom they see clothed with soft and colored clothes, using dainty food and drink, but rather let each one judge and despise his very self. (Later Rule, Chapter 2)



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M Meditation – Self Denial in the Following of Christ

The way of “self denial” in the Following of Christ that we have chosen is the way of St. Francis of Assisi. Many of the forms of self denial that we follow are difficult, but few stir more conversations among the Tau Maria Franciscans than our fasting and abstinence requirements. The original requirements, written by our Holy Father Francis, are a bit different from the TMF Rule of Life.

Here begins the Rule of the Continent Brothers and Sisters:

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

CHAPTER II: ABSTINENCE

6. All are to abstain from meat save on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, except on account of illness or weakness, for three days at blood-letting, in traveling, or on account of a specially high feast intervening, namely, the Nativity for three days, New Year's, Epiphany, the Pasch of the Resurrection for three days, Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, the solemnity of All Saints and of St. Martin. On the other days, when there is no fasting, they may eat cheese and eggs. But when they are with religious in their convent homes, they have leave to eat what is served to them. And except for the feeble, the ailing, and those travelling, let them be content with dinner and supper. Let the healthy be temperate in eating and drinking.

7. Before their dinner and supper let them say the Lord's prayer once, likewise after their meal, and let them give thanks to God. Otherwise let them say three Our Fathers.

Reviewing the mind of St. Francis can inspire us to reach beyond our own Rule, and recognize the spirit of self denial that is common to both rules.

CHAPTER III: FASTING

8. From the Pasch of the Resurrection to the feast of All Saints they are to fast on Fridays. From the feast of All Saints until Easter they are to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, but still observing the other fasts enjoined in general by the Church.

9. They are to fast daily, except on account of infirmity or any other need, throughout the fast of St. Martin from after said day until Christmas, and throughout the greater fast from Carnival Sunday until Easter.

10. Sisters who are pregnant are free to refrain until their purification from the corporal observances except those regarding their dress and prayers.

11. Those engaged in fatiguing work shall be allowed to take food three times a day from the Pasch of the Resurrection until the Dedication feast of St. Michael. And when they work for others it will be allowed them to eat everything served to them, except on Fridays and on the fasts enjoined in general by the Church.

Self denial embraces Our Lady Poverty, imitating Our Lord and Savior, at every meal.