

17.

In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ²⁸.

By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child²⁹.

18.

Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High”³⁰, and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

19.

Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon³¹.

Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others³².

Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father³³.

Chapter 3 LIFE IN FRATERNITY

20.

The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels — local, regional, national, and international. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church³⁴. These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this Rule and of the Constitutions.

21.

On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (or president) who are elected by the professed according to the Constitutions³⁵. Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community.

Within themselves the fraternities are structured in different ways according to the norm of the constitutions, according to the various needs of their members and their regions, and under the guidance of their respective council.

²⁸ *Misericors Dei Filius* 2:8.

²⁹ *Lumen Gentium* 41:5; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 30:2.3.

³⁰ 1 *Celano* 80 (1 FA:ED, 1*Cel* 80, p. 250).

³¹ *Misericors Dei Filius* 2:9; *Legend of the Three Companions* 14:58 (2 FA:ED, L3C, 14:58, pp. 76 and 101-2).

³² *Admonitions of St. Francis* 21 (1 FA:ED, *Adm.* 21, p. 135); *First Rule* 7:15 (1 FA:ED, *ER* 7:16, p. 69).

³³ *Gaudium et Spes* 78:1-2.

³⁴ Can. 687. now: Can. 309.

³⁵ Can. 697. now: Can. 309.



22.

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 members³⁶.

23.

Requests for admission to the Secular Franciscan Order must be presented to the local fraternity, whose council decides upon the acceptance of new brothers and sisters³⁷. Admission into the Order is gradually attained through a time of initiation, a period of formation of at least one year, and profession of the Rule³⁸.

The entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living. The age for profession and the distinctive Franciscan sign are regulated by the statutes³⁹. Profession by its nature is a permanent commitment.⁴⁰

Members who find themselves in particular difficulties should discuss their problems with the council in fraternal dialogue. Withdrawal or permanent dismissal from the Order, if necessary, is an act of the fraternity council according to the norm of the constitutions⁴¹.

24.

To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity⁴². This communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.⁴³

25.

Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils⁴⁴.

³⁶ Pío XII, *Discourse to the Tertiaries* 3, 1/7/1956.

³⁷ Can. 694. [now: Can. 307.](#)

³⁸ *Memoriale propositi* 29-30.

³⁹ 1 Celano 22 (1 FA:ED, 1Cel 22, p. 202).

⁴⁰ *Memoriale propositi* 31.

⁴¹ Can. 696. [now: Can. 308.](#)

⁴² Can. 697. [now: Can. 309.](#)

⁴³ *Memoriale propositi* 23.

⁴⁴ *Memoriale propositi* 20.



26.

As a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, the councils on various levels, in keeping with the constitutions, shall ask for suitable and well-prepared religious for spiritual assistance. They should make this request to the superiors of the four religious Franciscan families, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries.

To promote fidelity to the charism as well as observance of the Rule and to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity, the minister or president, with the consent of the council, should take care to ask for a regular pastoral visit by the competent religious superiors as well as for a fraternal visit from those of the higher fraternities, according to the norm of the Constitutions⁴⁵.

*“And whoever observes these things
let him be blessed in Heaven with the blessing of the Most High Father,
and on earth with the blessing of His Beloved Son
with the Most Holy Spirit the Paraclete”*
(Blessing of St Francis found in The Testament of Francis)

⁴⁵ *Supra montem* ch. 16.

