



The Order of Saint Francis

Profession of Vows

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

By nature, we are an Order that is formed in the Anglican Tradition of thought and theology, yet we are steeped in the rich traditions of Catholic Franciscan life. Therefore, our Profession of Vows expresses the Episcopal way in which we choose to live out our Franciscan ideals

within a modern world while recognizing the guidance and wisdom set forth by our Beloved Francis in his Rule of Life of 1223.

The Vow of Poverty

“...then let them go, sell all they have, and attempt to give it to the poor. If they cannot do so, their good intention will suffice. Let the brothers and their ministers beware of becoming concerned about the new brothers' temporal possessions, for they should freely dispose of their belongings as God inspires them.” (Rule of 1223)

The vow of poverty is most commonly expressed as a vow of “simplicity” or living within a modest means. The renunciation which is essential and strictly required is the abandonment of all that is superfluous, not that it is absolutely necessary to give up the ownership of all property, but a brother must be contented with what is necessary for his own use. Then only is there a real detachment which sufficiently mortifies the love of riches, cuts off luxury and vain glory, and frees from the care for worldly goods.

Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, affects interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth. A brother must provide for himself or his family and serve society by means of his work and material goods, and therein lies a particular manner of living evangelical poverty. To understand and achieve it requires a strong personal commitment, the stimulation of the fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life, attentiveness to the instructions of the Church, and the demands of society.

The brother should pledge himself to reduce his own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with his fellow brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. He should give thanks to God for the goods he has received, using them as a good

steward and not as an owner. He should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person. He should love and practice purity of heart, the source of true fraternity.

The Vow of Chastity

“If they believe all these things, wishing to confess them faithfully and observe them diligently until the end; and if they have no wives, or their wives have entered a convent, or permission has been given to them by authority of their bishop, a vow of chastity having been taken and their wives being of such an age as to avoid suspicion...” (Rule of 1223)

Under Christianity, chastity has been practiced in a manner unknown under any other influence. Christian morality seeks to prescribe the right order of relations among human beings. It therefore must direct and control the manner of relationship sustained to each other by soul and body.

Chastity is the decision to live with all in love, with respect for each person's integrity. It is not a denial of one's sexuality and capacity for love, but a dedication of the whole self to God: free from indecency or offensiveness and restrained from all excess, in order to be free to love others without trying to possess or control.

A brother should approach all relationships with the respect and dignity that Jesus Christ commands of each of us in that we are His children and that our bodies are a temple unto the Lord. He should be celibate in his relations with others when single and remain chaste monogamous when blessed with a partner or spouse, if so willed by God. Above all else, a brother should love all and practice purity of heart, which is the source of true fraternity.

The Vow of Obedience

“...To observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church; and the rest of the brothers are obliged to obey Francis and his successors.” (Rule of 1223)

Religious obedience is that general submission which religious vow to God, and voluntarily promise to their superiors, in order to be directed by them in the ways of perfection according to the purpose and constitutions of their order. It is composed of three elements:

- the sacrifice offered to God of his own independence in the generality of his actions, at least of such as are exterior;
- the motive, namely, personal perfection, and, as a rule, also the performance of spiritual or corporal works of mercy and charity;
- the express or implied contract with an order (formerly also with a person), which accepts the obligation to lead him to the end for which he accepts its laws and direction.

The religious is bound morally to obey on all occasions when he is bound canonically, and whenever his disobedience would offend against the law of charity, as for instance by bringing discord into the community. By reason of the vow of obedience and of the religious profession a deliberate act of obedience and submission adds the merit of an act of the virtue of religion to the other merits of the act. This extends even to the obedience of a counsel which goes beyond matters of regular observance, and is also limited by the prescriptions of higher laws whether human or Divine.

In its simplest of terms, the vow of obedience exemplifies “humility” on the part of the brother, both in his actions within the Order, his

community, and with the world at large. He humbly accepts the decisions of the Order, his peers and mentors, the discipline of the Church, other pastoral officials, and of the utmost, the will of God.