



In lieu of our regular meeting, we are gathering this Saturday at Pat's house for his profession. I thought this month's newsletter would be a good time to re-visit Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap's famous talk on the Rite of formation. Here are some excerpts. —Bob

The Brothers and Sisters called to the Franciscan life in the Secular Fraternity make their Profession during a specific celebration according to the Ritual proper to the SFO. This aspect is by no means insignificant, because the celebration constitutes the foundational moment of the identity of the professed, and is simultaneously the condition for a dialogue to take place in response to God's action. In fact, the consequences of the commitment a human being expresses by means of a promise derive from a prior commitment, that of God to man. The celebration of Profession testifies to all of this, because it is God's action and a saving event: it is a moment when salvation reaches the faithful, enabling them to make a promise to live the Franciscan gospel life and producing in them particular effects of grace, by which they are deputed to specific tasks within the People of God. Only a person sanctified in the liturgical action, where (s)he fully experiences the immensity and force of God's love, can be capable of a loving response. On the other hand, the celebration reflects the Church's understanding of Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order. The liturgy, in fact, is always a *confessio fidei*, since in it, i.e. in its enactment during the ritual action, the Church proclaims authentically its own faith in the mystery of salvation, which is actualized in and for the faithful. . .

Profession is a grace and gift of the Spirit. Not only is *the Holy Spirit the source of the vocation of secular Franciscans (Const 11)*, since they are *urged on by the Spirit* to reach the perfection of charity in accordance with their own secular state (*Rule 2*); Profession also comes about by the working of the same Spirit. Therefore the "Preliminary Notes" of the Ritual (cfr. n. 7) state that "The SFO Ritual ... should fittingly display the *gift of the Spirit and the evangelical life-project proper to the Secular Franciscan Order*". . .

Profession comes about through God's intervention. But since God always acts through Christ, whose sacred humanity is the meeting point between God and man, and since today Christ lives and acts through the Church, it follows that Profession is simultaneously the action of Christ and of the Church, i.e. of the whole Body of Christ, Head and members. . .

By Church the Ritual understands a particular liturgical assembly, made up of the people and the community of brothers and sisters, in other words, of the local fraternity of the Secular Order. *The local fraternity makes the presence and action of the Church visible primarily in the Profession. Therefore "Profession, since it is by nature a public and ecclesial fact, must be celebrated in the presence of the fraternity" (Ritual, Preliminary Notes, n. 13).*

The ultimate reason for this norm is found in the reality of the local fraternity: *it is a visible sign of the Church*, which is a community of faith and love (cfr. *Rule 22; Ritual II, 29 d*). The local fraternity is and must be a genuine ecclesial cenacle. . .

The action of the Church is also made concretely visible in the presence of the *minister of the Fraternity*. This is clearly stated in the Constitutions and the Ritual:

"Profession is accepted by the minister of the local fraternity or by his or her delegate *in the name of the Church* and of the SFO. The rite is carried out according to the norms of the Ritual" (*Const 42,3*).

"Through the priest and the president (minister), who represents the fraternity, the Church accepts the commitment and the profession ..." (*Ritual, n. 9*).

The Church acts through the priest and through the Minister, who represents the Fraternity and the Church. The Ritual defines more clearly the role of the Minister of the Fraternity and of the presiding priest, when it states:

“The commitment to the gospel life is received by the president (minister) in the name of the Church and of the fraternity. The priest presides over this rite as the witness of the Church and of the Franciscan Family”. (n. 16). . .

[T]he priest in the celebration of Profession is a: *witness*, who attests and manifests the presence and action of the Church; *guarantor*, who reassures the Church regarding the suitability of the candidates; *one who ratifies*, or confirms the promises in the name of the Church. . .

In every liturgical celebration, and therefore also in the celebration of Profession, the Spirit comes when invoked, makes Himself present, acts and transforms. Therefore Profession takes on the form of a Pentecost, an effective epiphany of the Spirit, which consecrates and transforms those who make the promise to live the gospel life in the Secular Franciscan Order. . .

To celebrate Profession within the Eucharist expresses the *sacrificial dimension of self-giving* inherent in the Profession of the gospel life in the Secular Franciscan Order. In Profession, manifested in the presence of the Fraternity and the Church, the true nature of the candidates as priests and victims is made manifest. They, by promising to live the gospel life, make themselves entirely available to God and place their own bodies (persons) on the altar of Christ’s sacrifice as a holy victim pleasing to God. . .

[W]e say that Profession is by nature the “*renovation of the consecration and promises of baptism*” and in the very act of making it, the candidate declares that (s)he intends to *renew his/her own baptismal promises*. It is as if they wanted to affirm that through Profession they intend to *call to mind* the consecration and promises of Baptism. For this reason, with absolute precision, Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order has been defined as the “Memorial of Baptism.”

But the term “memorial” should not be understood in the usual sense of “remembering” something in the past, but rather as a movement from the past to the present by which that which happened in the past is now made present and efficacious through the power of the Holy Spirit. . .

[P]rofession is the act by which a person places him/herself into the hands (*mancipare = manus capere*) of God, enabling God to take hold of him, with the result that from the precise moment of profession, the person no longer belongs to him/herself, but is considered as totally “expropriated” and at God’s entire disposal. By virtue of profession, the person becomes God’s property, and therefore “sacred.” . . .

Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order therefore has this essential structure: the life of Secular Franciscans depends on the gospel, mediated by the inspiration and experience of Francis of Assisi, who from the beginning of his conversion took it as his rule of life and action.

However, we still need to make the point that Francis’ intention was simply to return to the *Gospel of Jesus*. Every Franciscan vocation is therefore an *evangelical-Franciscan* vocation, not because Francis’ experience is intended as a substitute for the gospel, but because the gospel is rendered transparent through the mediation of Francis. So, for Franciscans it is a question of learning from Francis and, like him, of knowing no other rule or life except that of the gospel of Jesus. This mediation by Francis lies at the origin of our vocation.

Next month’s meeting: June 19, 2016

Ongoing formation: *Laudato Sí*, Chapter 3.

Most High, Glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of our minds.
Give us a right faith, a firm hope and
a perfect charity,
so that we may always and in all
things act according to Your Holy
Will. Amen.

