



## Celebrating the Rule 1223-2023

### Texts

*Later Rule* 1:1, FF 75; *Rule of St. Clare* 1:1, FF 2750; *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular* 1:1; *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order* 2:4, FF 3424; *Testament* 14-15, FF 116; *Anonymous of Perugia* 11, FF 1497.

All members of the Franciscan Family profess a Rule that becomes a pattern of life and consists in observing the Gospel. As we celebrate the *Later Rule*, we are reminded that for Francis of Assisi, the nucleus of his Rule was the Gospel, as he stated in his *Testament*: “The Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me” (*Testament* 14-15, FF 116). Having listened prayerfully to the words of Jesus Christ, Francis and his first brothers exclaimed: “‘This is what we want; this is what we were seeking.’ And blessed Francis said: ‘This will be our rule’” (*The Anonymous of Perugia* 11, FF 1497).

No member of the Franciscan Family professes his own Rule privately, because he is called to live the Gospel in fraternity. It is important to remember that Francis composed the *Later Rule* at a time in his life when he was dealing with a lot of tension and crises at the fraternal level, but he never renounced the prophetic vision of living as a brother to all and he invites us to do the same. Today the Church, in promoting its synodal and communal dimensions, points to Francis of Assisi as a model of fraternity, calling him the “saint of fraternal love” (*Fratelli tutti* 2). His words and deeds can again, after eight hundred years, illuminate the path of an ecclesial community that seeks to become an outgoing, synodal Church, listening to all, in solidarity with the least, bearing the good news that has the power to fill the lives of those who accept it with joy and meaning (cf. *Evangelii gaudium* 21).



## Celebrating the Rule (1223-2023)

### Our being in Christ

Celebrating the *Later Rule* as a Franciscan Family gives us an opportunity to get to know each other better. It promotes communion and fosters mutual trust among ourselves. It lets us rediscover the importance of dreaming together, it opens new evangelical paths that help us become a more open and outgoing fraternity, a fraternity that can generate a new culture of encounter and social friendship, a fraternity that strives to reach out to all members of society, “each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all” (*Fratelli tutti* 8).

The Rule consists in “observing the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (*Later Rule* 1:1, *FF* 75).

#### Objective

To love and better understand the Rule we have professed.

#### Activities

- Assess the impact of the Gospel and the Rule we have professed in our daily lives.
- Use passages from the Rule to enrich our prayer life.
- Constantly evaluate ourselves in the light of the Rule, in such a way that it can illuminate personal and fraternal discernment.

### Our being brothers and sisters

“For if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit!” (*Later Rule* 6: 8, *FF* 91).

#### Objective

To rediscover the fundamental importance of the Rule for protecting and nurturing fraternal life.

#### Activities

- Organize study days and reflections about our Rule in order to seek together, in fraternity, the most suitable ways to embody it in our daily activities.
- Encourage time for meetings that allow us to improve the quality of relationships within our families, our fraternities, our work areas, etc.
- Promote initiatives, in collaboration with other members of the Franciscan Family, which foster mutual knowledge and increase fraternal communion.



### Our being in communion

“Steadfast in the Catholic Faith, we may observe poverty, humility, and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised.” (*Later Rule* 12: 4, *FF* 109).

#### Objective

To restore meaning and significance to our way of living the Rule in the Church, promoting fraternity and synodality as ecclesial styles.

#### Activities

- Confirm whether the way we live our Rule, which we have professed in the Church, prompts us to carry out our pastoral work and our apostolic activities in communion with the local and universal Church.
- Participate in the synodal journey undertaken in our local Churches, valuing the variety of gifts and charisms that the Holy Spirit arouses to benefit the entire human family.
- Where possible, publicly renew the profession of our Rule.

### Our being in the world

[They are] “not to quarrel or argue or judge others when they go about in the world” (*Later Rule* 3: 10, *FF* 85).

#### Objective

Starting from our witness of fraternity and minority in living our Rule, collaborate in building bonds of unity within society and the institutions that comprise it.

#### Activities

- Promote proposals aimed at reinvigorating relationships among members of Christian communities, as well as between those communities and other social and religious groups, nurturing a culture of encounter and social friendship.
- Enhance the evangelizing power of the cultural and artistic heritage that belongs to the Franciscan Family, in such a way that it becomes an instrument of encounter and dialogue with contemporary society.

