

## Keeping our focus on Francis

AN SFO REVIEW - Fr. John Sullivan, OFM

### SFO POVERTY

A1

*have on hand: SFO Rule: Catechism of Catholic Church*

*Begin with: Today we spend a few minutes reviewing some of our understanding of poverty, one of the very prominent virtues of St. Francis of Assisi. (Today we're also covering from the SFO Rule - Articles 10,11,12.)*

Our Opening Prayer: taken from the memorial Mass of St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Patroness of the whole SFO):

**Father, you helped St. Elizabeth of Hungary to recognize and honor Christ in the poor of this world.**

**Let her prayers help us to serve our brothers and sisters in time of trouble and need.**

**May we follow the example of St. Elizabeth who worshiped you with love and served your people with generosity.**

**We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**A. Let's look at the SFO Rule as a reminder (have participants take turns reading aloud each of them):**

art.4a - art.7a - art.10 - art.11 - art.12 -

**POOR in Christ – We remember that Francis was called the little poor one, “Il Poverello”.**

**- To quote Francis' friar biographer Thomas of Celano (I-Celano;chap.28,par.76):**

**“The father of the poor, the poor Francis, conforming himself to the poor in all things, was distressed to see anyone poorer than himself, not out of any desire for empty glory, but from a feeling of simple compassion. Though he was content with a ragged and rough tunic, he often wished to divide it with some poor person.**

**“This richest poor man, moved by a great feeling of pity, in order to help the poor in some way, used to approach the rich people of this world during the coldest times of the year, asking them to loan him their cloaks or furs. As they responded even more gladly than the blessed father asked, he used to say to them, “I shall accept this from you only on the condition that you never expect to have it returned.” The first poor man who happened to meet him, he would then clothe with whatever he had received, exulting and rejoicing.**

**“He was deeply troubled whenever he saw one of the poor insulted or heard a curse hurled at any creature. It happened that a certain brother insulted a poor man begging alms, saying: “Are you sure that you are not really rich and just pretending to be poor?” When St. Francis, the father of the poor, heard this, he was deeply hurt and he severely rebuked the brother who had said these things. Then he ordered**

the brother to strip naked in front of the poor man and to kiss his feet, to beg his forgiveness. He used to say: "Anyone who curses the poor insults Christ whose noble banner the poor carry, since Christ made himself poor for us in this world." That is also why, when he met poor people burdened with wood or other heavy loads, he would offer his own weak shoulders to help them. "The holy man overflowed with the spirit of charity,...."

### B. The meaning of "poverty"

POVERTY has several definitions -

Q1. Can you give some definitions of poverty ?

Q2. Which definition is being used here in our SFO Rule?

*(after the above is discussed and compared...)*

poverty may be defined as...

**a virtue, a form of penance and conversion, by which we detach ourselves from our possessions for the sake of others in imitation of (following the example of) Jesus Christ. (explain the various elements of this description.)**

Poverty is either involuntary (so many around us, due to circumstances of life) or voluntary (by free choice, by pledge, by vow).

I encourage you to read from the Catechism of Catholic Church: especially paragraphs 2443 to 2449 & 2451-2452. (you may wish to give some examples of what they have written there....)

Q3. Can you think and recall any examples by people to imitate:

Christ / Francis / Clare / Mary (Rule9) / Elizabeth of Hungary

*(give the participants time to recall and explain....)*

### C. Foundational requirements:

a trust in divine providence and concern for others (not selfish).

### D. Examples of what can be done:

How do we practice this poverty?

by sharing - TIME.....

- TALENT.....

- TREASURE.....

(Remember: When I give of my time, my talent, and/or my treasure, I am giving some of myself!!)

Q4.- In what way is this true?

Q5.- What priorities have I developed for my franciscan poverty – of my time, talent, treasure?

Q6. How do I share myself with and for others in these three areas of my life?  
Give some specifics...

Q7. Can I do more in these areas of my life?

Q8. How does the monthly fraternity collection fit into my understanding of poverty and penance?

Q9. How does shopping at second-hand stores (e.g., garage sales/Good Will/Salvation Army/etc.) for clothing and furniture show concern for the environment and natural resources?

Q.10. What is my attitude toward money? ...toward possessions?

Q.11. Am I comfortable curbing my desire to "want more"? Can I think of examples of doing this?