

## Fraternal love

OFS Monthly Formation

August 2023

### Rule of 1221 Chapter XI: How the brothers are to conduct themselves



Statue of St. Francis's brothers, facing the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome, Italy.

“Let the brothers love one another, as the Lord says, ‘This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you’ (John 15:12). And let them show by their deeds the love they have for one another, as the Apostle says, ‘Our love must be not just words or mere talk, but something active and genuine’ (1 John 3:18). And they are ‘not to go slandering other people’ (Titus 3:2), nor are they to grumble or speak evil, for it is written, ‘Libellers and slanderers are enemies of God’ (cf. Romans 1:30). And they are ‘to be peaceable and gentle, and always polite to people of all kinds’ (Titus 3:2)”.

**Consider** the ultimate example of fraternal love, when God the Father “gave his only-begotten Son” in order that we might be saved and have eternal life – “for God so loved the world”, so loved us (John 3:16). Then think of the self-emptying of Jesus (of His divine prerogatives), how He bore our sins in His body, all the way to the cross (1 Peter 2:24). Reflect upon the depths of fraternal love in the sacrifice of the Father and the Son.



Father and Son, by Danny Hahlbohm  
Source: [fineartamerica.com](http://fineartamerica.com)

## Reflecting upon the witness of Saint Francis:

What do we see in the life, words, and actions of our Seraphic Father St. Francis? None other than his own self-emptying fraternal love for his brothers. St. Francis would say to them, “let no one be called ‘prior’, but let everyone in general be called a lesser brother. Let one wash the feet of the other” (Earlier Rule, 6.3). Then, what did he do when he heard one of the brothers calling out, in the middle of the night, that he was dying from hunger; “he caused the table to be laid straightway, and like a man full of charity and discretion, ate with him lest he should be put to shame by eating alone, and by his will, all the other friars ate likewise” (The Mirror of Perfection, Section III Of charity and compassion and yielding to one’s neighbour, Chapter XXVII). Such was the compassion and fraternal love of St. Francis for his dear brother in Christ, as was that of Christ for his disciples. Christ continues to feed the hunger of today’s disciples, when he feeds us in the Eucharist, out of His fraternal love and that of His Father.



North facing stained glass window, in the foyer of St. Francis by the Sea Church

## Fraternal love in action:

In a New Zealand fraternity, there is a very charitable humble sister (probably one of many) who quietly serves in her Parish, goes well beyond the extra mile to serve her brothers and sisters in fraternity, helps the elderly in need, and does whatever is necessary, even if it causes her considerable inconvenience, because she knows it is the right thing to do. One gets the impression that she could not do otherwise, because this dear sister has ‘a heart of gold’. This is fraternal love witnessed to, in today’s world.

## So, let us pray:

FATHER, for the fraternal love that began with your initiative, and became visible in the life and death of your Son, Jesus, in the mission of St. Francis, and continues today through the lives of our Franciscan brothers and sisters, WE GIVE THANKS. Amen.

