

Theology of Ministry Statement

“Incline the ear of your heart and obey the voice of the Son of God...for he has sent you into the entire world...that in word and deed you may give witness to his teaching.”
Francis of Assisi, *Letter to the Entire Order*, nn. 5-9.¹

We—the Friars Minor of the Holy Name Province—are an “evangelizing and missionary brotherhood”² that seeks to carry forward the ministry of Jesus Christ after the example of St. Francis. Christ is the source of our life and the “authentic image of our missionary vocation.”³ As the Word become flesh, Christ proclaimed the reign of God not yet fully realized; engaged in a ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and serving; called others to Gospel life and discipleship; and sent those who followed Him “to fill the whole earth with the Gospel of Christ.”⁴

Francis, our father and model, desired to follow Christ through his total commitment to a Gospel way of life as a lesser brother. As he went through various towns and cities “telling everyone about the reign of God, he edified his listeners as much by his words as by his example....”⁵ He reminded his brothers that “God, in his great mercy,” called them “for the salvation of the many.” Francis also sent them to announce peace, “proclaim the word of God,” and “to heal the wounded, bind up the broken, and recall the erring.” Thus, it is our desire “in whatever way [we] are best able” to follow Christ after the example of Francis according to the gifts and graces which God has given to us as a brotherhood in mission.⁶

Our call to be an “evangelizing and missionary fraternity” is rooted in our life with God [prayer] and our life together as brothers [fraternity]. Through the interrelated and ongoing dynamics of these core experiences, we are being formed and challenged daily to embody our Gospel-faith in a spirit of fraternity and minority. These core experiences send us daily to participate actively in carrying forward the work of the Gospel [mission]. Our life of prayer and fraternity also draws us back continually to be renewed and strengthened for the sake of our Gospel mission.

Our mission, therefore, is to *go among people* in “particular and local communities”⁷ where we hope to be an evangelizing presence and to proclaim the reign of God in various ways. We seek to incarnate our evangelizing and missionary vocation particularly through our presence and ministry in parishes, schools, urban centers and service Churches, as well as in the ministries of preaching, in the creation of centers of spirituality, and in direct service to the poor and the marginalized. These are among the primary places where we have the opportunity to “lay hands on life at the critical points where life can be injured or fostered, where people are born and die, and where they can be assisted when in trouble.”⁸ In faith we are also open to the new ways, places, and situations to which the Spirit might yet call us to speak of the hope that is within us as followers of Francis.

Endnotes

¹Francis of Assisi, “The Letter to the Entire Order,” (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* I, p. 116-117); See also The Legend of the Three Companions, n. 36 (*Early Documents* II, p. 89).

²Holy Name Province, Mission Statement, 1999 Provincial Chapter.

³*The Franciscan Missionary Vocation in the World Today* (Medellin Documents, 1971), n. 4, p. 48.

⁴This phrase is used by Thomas of Celano (1Cel 97, *Early Documents* I, p.) to describe the ministry of Francis.

⁵See in particular “The Legend of the Three Companions,” n. 36, The Rule of 1221, ch. 16, and “The Legend of the Three Companions,” n. 58.

⁶The Earlier Rule, ch. 22, n. 26 (*Early Documents* I, p. 80).

⁷See The Earlier Rule, ch. 16, and *The Franciscan Missionary Vocation in the World Today*, n. 7, p. 48.

⁸Brian Hehir, “Identity and Institutions,” *Health Progress* 76 (Nov.-Dec., 1995): 17.