

## 12. A Reflection

### Beatitude #6: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

To be pure in heart means to live with a sincerity that isn't split between appearances and intentions. It's about being single-hearted—centered wholly on God. There's a kind of quiet clarity that comes with purity of heart, a way of living that steadily refines our motives, detaches us from ego, and aligns us with love. Over time, this clarity allows us to “see God”—not just in mystical experiences, but in the small, shimmering moments of everyday life. In my own journey, I've come to see how purity of heart is deeply tied to conversion—not a one-time decision, but an ongoing willingness to be changed.

When I was in formation to become a Secular Franciscan, I spent 3.5 years walking with two other women through that process. Neither of them was a member of my parish, and both have since moved away, but they were my companions in study, discussion, and discernment. They were lovely women—faithful, devout, and generous—but over time, I began to notice a subtle disconnect.

They enjoyed the formation materials and participated in discussions, but their hearts seemed divided. Rather than allowing Franciscan spirituality to take root and become the central lens through which they viewed their faith, it remained just another medal on an already full necklace. They brought with them a host of other devotions—Marian groups, anti-abortion activism, their parish communities—and never seemed to consider that formation was asking something deeper: a reorientation, a reshaping of their spirituality, their values, their vision. Of course, none of those other devotions are wrong. But becoming a Secular Franciscan isn't about piling on more pious practices. It's about letting the Gospel, through the lens of Franciscanism, transform how we see the world and how we live in it.

At one point, these women became indignant when they weren't allowed to vote in fraternity elections. They felt left out, even unwelcome. But formation isn't a club—it's a spiritual journey. There are clear phases, each with its own responsibilities and privileges. Novitiate and profession are not formalities; they're meant to prepare the heart for commitment.

What became clear was that they were not open to the “free spirit” of Franciscan life—the spaciousness, the joy, the humility, the ongoing conversion it invites. Instead, they tried to mold it into something stricter, more comfortable, more familiar. They brought their own framework and resisted letting it be transformed.

To be pure in heart, I've learned, means letting go of the frameworks we bring, even the ones we cherish, and being willing to let God do something new in us. It means releasing control and allowing the Spirit to gently but firmly reorder our inner landscape. That is what Franciscan formation did for me. And that, I believe, is what Christ meant when He said that the pure in heart shall see God.

Not because they've worked harder than others.  
Not because they've perfected themselves.  
But because their hearts are open—undivided, uncluttered, transparent.  
And in that kind of heart, God shines through.