

The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter one: **Orientation** in the SFO

Ilia Delio, OSF: *Franciscan Prayer*

THE HEART TURNED TOWARD GOD

There is a mail order firm by the name of “Heart Matters” that sends me catalogs every month hoping that it can inspire my heart or that of someone else through note cards, CDs and “Precious Moments” figurines. Sometimes I think we clutter our hearts with a lot of stuff that we think “matters” but in the end it is simply a lot of stuff. What matters to the heart is more than things (although “things” may, indeed, inspire it at times). The heart thrives on the life-giving spirit of love. Friendship is a matter of the heart. It is the heart’s desire to share life with another person. The heart (*cor*) is the center of the whole personal life of the human person. It is the seat of intellectual and spiritual life, of reason and will, and the inner movements of experiencing life (or the lack of it).¹ The heart is the place of encounter, where God reveals himself to us. As Jesus tells us in the Gospel, “where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Luke 12:34). Francis believed that the heart was the seat of the will, the root of sin and the place of conversion. The heart is made for God and is the proper dwelling place of the most blessed Trinity; it is the place of encounter between person and Creator. In the heart the person receives the life-giving awareness of God; it is where one comes to know God. The human heart is created to be the home of the Spirit of the Lord through whose life-giving power relationship with God becomes reality. To surrender the “heart” is the fundamental act of following Christ.

¹Thaddée Matura states that “the human heart plays a prominent role in Francis’ thought, for he regarded it as the unifying center of the person, the true self, so that, when it is perverted and turned away from God, it becomes a poisoned well-spring that corrupts everything.” See Thaddée Matura, *Francis of Assisi: The Message of His Writings*, trans. Paul Barrett (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1997), 100.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

Earlier Exhortation
To the Brothers and Sisters of Penance^a
(The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful)
(1209–1215)

The earliest manuscript of this writing, located in the Guarnacci Library in the Italian city of Volterra, introduces it with these words: “These are words of life and salvation. Whoever reads and follows them will find life and draw from the Lord salvation.” While Kajetan Esser entitled it “The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful,” it has been more correctly seen as an exhortation given to those first penitents who came to Francis desiring to share his Gospel way of life. Since 1976, when Kajetan Esser brought the text into prominence, it has served as the Prologue to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

In the Name of the Lord!

[Chapter I]
Those Who Do Penance

¹All those who love the Lord *with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength* and love their neighbor as themselves, ²who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, ³who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴and who produce worthy fruits of penance. ⁵O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, ^b ⁶because *the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its home and dwelling place among them,* ⁷and they are children of the

MK12:30
Mt 22:39
Mt 22:39
Is 11:2
Jn 14:23

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- a. In light of the scholarship of Raffaele Pazzelli, the editors have chosen to propose this as the basic title of this work. Pazzelli argues convincingly that Esser erred in seeing this document as simply an earlier version of the Letter to the Faithful. Cf. Raffaele Pazzelli, “The Title of the ‘Recensio Prior of the Letter to the Faithful’: Clarification regarding Codex 225 of Volterra (cod. Vo),” translated by Nancy Celaschi, *Greyfriars Review*, 4:3 (1990), pp. 1–6.
- b. Francis uses the term *beatus* (in this instance *beati*) within an eschatological perspective, analogous to the use of “blessed” in the Beatitudes of the Gospels. Moreover, he makes explicit reference to both men and women by using *illi et illae*.

heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.^a

Mt 5:45
Mt 12:50

⁸We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹We are brothers to Him when we do *the will of the Father who is in heaven*. ¹⁰We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others.^b

Mt 12:50
1 Cor 6:20

Mt 5:16

¹¹O how glorious it is to have a holy and great Father in heaven!^c

¹²O how holy, consoling to have such a beautiful and wonderful Spouse! ¹³O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and, above all things, desirable: to have such a Brother and such a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who laid down His life for His sheep and prayed to His Father, saying:

Jn 10:15

¹⁴*Holy Father, in your name, save those whom you have given me in the world; they were yours and you gave them to me.* ¹⁵The words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and have believed in truth that I came from you and they have known that you have sent me.

Jn 17:11; Jn 17:6
Jn 17:8

¹⁶I pray for them *and not for the world*. ¹⁷Bless and sanctify them; I sanctify myself for them. ¹⁸I pray not only for them, but for those who will believe in me through their word that they might be sanctified in being one as we are.

Jn 17:9; Jn 17:17
Jn 17:19
Jn 17:20; Jn 17:23

¹⁹I wish, Father, that where I am, they also may be with me that they may see my glory in your kingdom. Amen.

Jn 17:11
Jn 17:24
Mt 20:21

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- a. Francis frequently uses the title “Spirit of the Lord” to refer to the Third Person of the Trinity (*Admonitions* I 12 [hereafter Adm]; Adm XII 1; *First Letter to the Faithful* I 6 [hereafter 1LtF]; *Second Letter to the Faithful* 48 [hereafter 2LtF]; *Later Rule* X 9 [hereafter LR]). While in this instance the biblical reference is to Isaiah 11:2, in most instances there is a reflection of a Pauline pneumatology in which the Holy Spirit is described as “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9), “the Spirit of His Son” (Gal 4:6), and “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:19). Since the saint perceives the Spirit of the Lord as the dynamic principle of the life of his followers, it is helpful to understand the Christological implications of these passages.
- b. Francis frequently uses the phrase *sancta operatio*, holy activity, (cf. 1LtF II 21; 2LtF 53; LR X 8; *Testament* 39 [hereafter Test]). It is used most frequently in conjunction with the Spirit of the Lord or the words of Francis himself which echo those of Jesus and are “spirit and life” (cf. Jn 6:64). Thus, Francis underscores the dynamic principle of the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit, which must be ever operative in the life of a Christian.
- c. The Latin text contains an ambiguous grammatical construction: *O quam gloriosum est, sanctum et magnum in caelis habere patrem!* If we take *sanctum* and *magnum* as neuter and not masculine, the phrase can be translated: “how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven!” However, if *sanctum* and *magnum* are masculine accusatives agreeing with Father, we would translate the phrase: “how glorious it is to have in heaven a holy and great Father!” In view of the parallel constructions of sentences 11, 12 and 13, it seems best to follow the latter translation.

Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

The Church's charitable activity as a manifestation of Trinitarian love

19. "If you see charity, you see the Trinity", wrote Saint Augustine.^[11] In the foregoing reflections, we have been able to focus our attention on the Pierced one (cf. *Jn* 19:37, *Zech* 12:10), recognizing the plan of the Father who, moved by love (cf. *Jn* 3:16), sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem man. By dying on the Cross—as Saint John tells us—Jesus "gave up his Spirit" (*Jn* 19:30), anticipating the gift of the Holy Spirit that he would make after his Resurrection (cf. *Jn* 20:22). This was to fulfil the promise of "rivers of living water" that would flow out of the hearts of believers, through the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. *Jn* 7:38-39). The Spirit, in fact, is that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ's heart and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them, when he bent down to wash the feet of the disciples (cf. *Jn* 13:1-13) and above all when he gave his life for us (cf. *Jn* 13:1, 15:13).

The Spirit is also the energy which transforms the heart of the ecclesial community, so that it becomes a witness before the world to the love of the Father, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son. The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man: it seeks his evangelization through Word and Sacrament, an undertaking that is often heroic in the way it is acted out in history; and it seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life and human activity. Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs. And this is the aspect, this *service of charity*, on which I want to focus in the second part of the Encyclical.

[11] *De Trinitate*, VIII, 8, 12: CCL 50, 287.



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter two: Three Orders ... Structures ... Discernment

Note: Chapter 2, p. 14, asks us to read these doctrinal statements:

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 122-123)

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

- The word Church is based on both the Greek word *ekklesia* and the Hebrew word *qahal*, which mean the gathering of the community. It was first applied to the people of Israel, whom God called into existence. The Church was planned and formed by God, who called together into one those who accepted the Gospel.
- The Father prepared for the Church through a series of covenant events described in the Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled the divine plan for the Church through his saving death and Resurrection. The Holy Spirit manifested the Church as a mystery of salvation.
- The Church is a visible society and a spiritual community; she is a hierarchical institution and the Body of Christ; she is an earthly Church and one filled with heavenly treasures. Hence the Church is a complex reality that has human and divine elements.

The reality of the mystery of the Church is expressed in a variety of ways as follows:

- The Church is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and instrument of our communion with God (cf. CCC, nos. 774–776).
- The Church is the People of God. “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. . . . Once you were ‘no people,’ / but now you are God’s people” (1 Pt 2:9–10). We become members of God’s People through faith and Baptism (cf. CCC, nos. 781–786).
- The Church is the Body of Christ. Christ is the head, and we are the members. In the unity of this Body, there is a diversity of members and roles, yet everyone is linked together by Christ’s love and grace, especially the poor, the suffering, and the persecuted (cf. CCC, nos. 787–795).
- The Church is the Bride of Christ. “Christ loved the Church and handed himself over [to death] for her that he might sanctify her” (Eph 5:25–26; cf. CCC, no. 796).
- The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. “We are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17, Eph 2:21; cf. CCC, nos. 797–801).
- The Church is a communion. The starting point of this communion is our union with Jesus Christ. This gives us a share in the communion of the Persons of the Trinity and also leads to a communion among men and women (cf. CCC, nos. 813, 948, 959).
- These truths about unity and communion in the Church call us to become a source of unity for all peoples.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume III, The Prophet

Bernard of Besse: “A Book of the Praises of Saint Francis” (1277–1283), Chapter VII

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¹³¹The following theme now concerns a vocation. But it has been proved that this religion, accepted by God, to which He calls people by means of a special sign, and which He first founded on perfect men as though *on holy mountains*, He adorned with most illustrious people as though with polished stones. Bishops, abbots, archdeacons, and established Masters of Theology entered the Order. So too did princes, nobles, and innumerable others who were noted for their dignity, their nobility, and their knowledge. They were the flower of nobility and learning. If an example is needed, we can omit all others and take Brother Alexander who is remembered to have been the greatest cleric or theologian in the world at that time.^a There was also Lord John, a soldier valiant in arms, a king and an emperor. He became a brother when he was emperor, in order that the Lord might fulfill the prophesy in Francis: *I will go before you and humble the great men of the earth.*^b

Ps 86:1

Is 45:2

¹³⁴Who could count the number of brothers of the Order, who were approved and celebrated Doctors of Theology? We should not be silent in our praise for Christ who exalted the humble and wonderfully saw to it that just as a soldier of great dignity and goodness was found in the Order of Minors, so too there was found a very great Master of Philosophy and Theology who was also a great preacher. He was Brother John de La Rochelle who was renowned for his reverence for God, for his knowledge, and for his discernment.^c He possessed such talent that he added to the subtlety of his teachers and handed down the art and the excellent ways of preaching and of lecturing in the Faculty of Theology. Both he and Brother Alexander were the authors of formal and useful writings.

¹³⁸After him there came the venerable Father, Brother Odo Rigaldi, who was illustrious in birth but more so in character.^d He was a Master of Theology, Archbishop of Rouen, and a most famous

a. Alexander of Hales (1185–1245), born in Hales Owen, Shropshire, England, studied in Paris, and became master of theology in 1210 and later regent master. He entered the Order in 1231 and, at Paris, taught Brothers John de La Rochelle, Odo Rigalus, and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. Known as the *Doctor irrefragabilis* [The Irrefutable Doctor] and the *Doctor doctorum* [The Doctor of Doctors], he died on August 25, 1245.

b. A reference to Jean de Brienne, 1 cf. supra 55 a, 55–7.

c. John of La Rochelle (c. 1190) is first listed among the friars and masters of theology in Paris. He is noted for his close association with Alexander of Hales and contributed to his *Summa theologica*, cf. Alexander of Hales, *Summa theologica* (Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1948). He died in Paris in 1245.

d. Odo Rigaldus (+1275) entered the Order in 1236, studied at the University of Paris between 1240–1241, and collaborated on the *Exposition of the the Rule of the Four Masters*. He was consecrated Archbishop of Rouen in 1248, a post he held until his death on July 2, 1275.

preacher. He was urged to become a member of the Curia and, just as he was illustrious in his life and teaching before in the Order, so now he was so excellent in guidance that he was considered a model for prelates.

LR VI 4 ¹⁴⁰The Second Order founded by blessed Francis is that of virgins and continent married women, whose proposal is to serve God in the enclosure, in perpetual silence, and in mortifying the flesh.^a The first member of this Order was the blessed Clare, a most devout disciple of blessed Francis. Seeing them living in a most holy way according to his teaching under the profession of the most exalted poverty, he promised her and the other women professing poverty in a similar way of life his counsel and assistance and that of the other brothers. Blessed Clare and her monastery have always observed this same proposal of poverty up to the present day.

¹⁴⁴The Third Order is of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, shared by clerics, laity, virgins, widows, and married couples. Their purpose is to live uprightly in their own homes, to devote their attention to works of piety, and to flee the world’s allurements.^b Therefore, you might see among them nobles, and even knights, and other people great in the world’s estimation, dressed in proper cloaks of black fur,^c humble in both their clothing and mounts, so modestly associating with the indigent, that you would not doubt they are truly God-fearing. From the beginning a brother was assigned to them as a minister, but now, in each region, they are released to their ministers, but who, as confreres begotten by the same father, are still encouraged by the brothers with counsel and assistance.^d

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- a. Bernard provides an insight into the *propositum* [purpose] of the Second Order, officially called “the Order of Saint Clare” in a rule given to these women by Pope Urban IV in 1263. (For *propositum*, cf. FA:ED I 189 d). Their life of serving God, in Bernard’s terms, is “to serve God *sub clausura perpetuo in silentio et carnis maceratione* [in the enclosure, perpetual silence, and starving the flesh].” While *sub clausura* [under the enclosure] appears in the *Rule* of Urban, the other phrases do not and seem to be expressions of the author alone.
- b. As with the Second Order, Bernard now identifies the *propositum* of the Third Order, now known as the Secular Franciscan Order: *in domibus propriis honeste vivere, operibus pietatis intendere, pompam saeculi fugere* [in their own homes, to live honorably, to concentrate on works of piety, and to flee the world’s allurements].
- c. A reference to Nicholas IV, *Supra montem* (1289), Chapter III: “The brothers may also have cloaks or furred coats without an open neck, either sewed or uncut, or at least laced up as decent people should, and the sleeves should be clothed. The sisters should wear a mantle and a tunic made from the same common cloth, or they should at least wear a mantle with a black or white skirt or petticoat, or an ample gown of hemp or linen, sewn without any pleats.”
- d. *Ibid.*, Chapter 15: “Let each member devoutly undertake and faithfully execute the office of minister or any other duty mentioned in this document, when such might be laid upon them.” Further information on the background of this expression of government can be found in Raffaele Pazzelli, *St. Francis and the Third Order* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989), 149; Octavian Schmucki, “The Third Order in the Biographies of St. Francis,” in *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992): 94–6 (hereafter GR).

¹⁴⁷In composing the rules or forms of living for their Order, Lord Pope Gregory of holy memory, at that time in a lesser capacity, united with blessed Francis through an intimate closeness, devoutly supplied what the holy man lacked in knowledgeable judgment.^a But not content with just these Orders, the saint was busy giving to every class of people a way of penance and salvation. One time when a parish priest told him that he wanted to be his brother while still retaining the church, after he gave him a way of living and acting, he is said to have told him that each year, when the income of the church had been collected, he should give for God whatever was left over from the preceding year.

¹⁵⁰Thus the Lord *made* his servant, Francis, grow *into a great nation*, thus *He gave him the blessing of all nations*.

Dt 30:1; Sir 44:21

a. Cf. Gregory IX, *Quo elongati* 3: “...while we held a lesser rank, we stood by him both as he composed the aforesaid Rule and obtained its confirmation from the Apostolic See.” FA:ED I 571.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder

“The Legend of the Three Companions”

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asked him the reason why he was beaming with joy, he answered: “I know that I will become a great prince.”

⁶The day before the vision occurred, the promise of great chivalry and nobility was so strong in him, that it may be believed that the vision itself may have provided the motive. On that day, in fact, he donated all the refined and expensive clothes he had recently acquired to a poor knight.

AP 6 When he set out for Apulia, he got as far as Spoleto, where he began to feel a little ill. No less anxious about the trip, as he was falling to sleep, half awake, he heard someone asking him where he wanted to go. When Francis revealed to him his entire plan, the other said: “Who can do more good for you? The lord or the servant?” When [Francis] answered him: “The lord,” he again said to him: “Then why are you abandoning the lord for the servant, the patron for the client?” And Francis said: “*Lord, what do you want me to do?*” “*Go back to your land,*” he said, “*and what you are to do will be told to you.*” You must understand in another way the vision which you saw.” Acts 9:6; Gn 32:9
Acts 9:7

When he woke up, he began to think very carefully about this vision. Just as the first vision had caused him to be almost completely carried away with great joy in desire for worldly prosperity, the second made him completely introspective, causing him to marvel at and consider its strength, so that he was unable to sleep any more that night.

AP 7 Therefore when it was morning, buoyant and happy, he quickly returned to Assisi, expecting that the Lord, who had revealed these things to him, would show him His will and give him counsel about salvation. Changed in mind, he now refused to go to Apulia and desired to conform completely to the divine will.

IC 6

Chapter III

HOW THE LORD VISITED FRANCIS’S HEART FOR THE FIRST TIME
FILLING IT WITH MARVELOUS TENDERNESS THAT GAVE HIM STRENGTH
TO BEGIN TO PROGRESS SPIRITUALLY IN LOOKING DOWN ON HIMSELF
AND ALL VANITIES,
IN PRAYER, ALMSGIVING, AND POVERTY

⁷A few days after he returned to Assisi, one evening his friends chose him to be in charge so that, according to his whim, he would pay their expenses. He made arrangements for a sumptuous banquet, as he had done so often in the past.

When they left the house bloated, his friends walked ahead of him, singing throughout the city. Holding in his hand the scepter of

his office as their leader, he fell slightly behind them.^a He was not singing, but was deeply preoccupied. Suddenly he was visited by the Lord who filled his heart with so much tenderness that he was unable to speak or move. He could only feel and hear this marvelous tenderness; it left him so estranged from any sensation that, as he himself said later, even if he had been completely cut to pieces, he would not have been able to move.

When his companions glanced back and saw him so removed from them, they went back surprised at seeing him already *changed into another man*. They asked him: “What were you thinking about that you did not follow us? Were you perhaps thinking about taking a wife?”

1 Sm 10:6

1C 7 He answered in an unequivocal voice: “You are right! I was thinking about taking a wife more noble, wealthier, and more beautiful than you have ever seen.” *They laughed at him*. For he said this not of his own accord, but because he was inspired by God. In fact, the bride was the true religion that he later embraced, a bride more noble, richer and more beautiful because of her poverty.^b

Mt 9:24; Lk 16:14;
23:35

1C 4 ⁸From that very hour he began to consider himself of little value and to despise those things which he had previously held in love. Since he was not entirely detached from worldly vanities, this change was not yet perfect. He retired for a short time from the tumult and business of the world and was anxious to keep Jesus Christ in his inmost self, and *after selling all he had*, he desired to buy *the pearl*, concealing it from the eyes of mockers. Often, almost daily, he withdrew secretly to pray. He was inclined to do so by that same tenderness he had tasted earlier, which now visited him ever more frequently, driving him to prayer in the piazza and in other public places.

1C 17 Although he had been for some time a benefactor of the poor, he proposed *in his heart*, from then on, never to deny alms to any poor person begging from him for God’s sake, but rather to give more willingly and abundantly than usual. When away from home, if he could, he always gave money to any poor person requesting alms. If he had no money, he gave him his hat or belt, making sure never to send him away empty-handed. If he lacked even these things, he would go to a deserted place, take off his shirt, and give it to the poor

Ps 14:1; Acts 5:4

a. Fortini believes that this is a reference to the celebration of the second patron of Assisi, Saint Victorinus, for which the Compagnia di San Vittorino, or the Compagnia del Bastone, was organized. Its leader carried a large staff to show his office and, on the day of his election, his companions swore him allegiance by touching his staff. Cf. Fortini, *Francis*, 132.

b. Although this is a reference to 1C 7, L3C underscores the identity of the noble, richer bride as being such because of poverty.

man, begging him to take it for the love of God. He would even purchase furnishings for adorning churches, and would secretly send them to poor priests.

⁹When his father was away and he was at home alone with his mother, although only two of them took their meals, he filled the table with loaves of bread as if he were preparing for an entire family. When his mother asked why he put so much food on the table, he answered that it would be *given as alms* for the poor, since he had resolved to give to anyone begging alms for God’s sake. Because his mother loved him more than the other children, she tolerated him in such matters, noticing the things he did and admiring in his heart many more.

LK 6:30

For he was so accustomed to setting his heart on joining his companions when they called him, and was so captivated by their company, that he would frequently leave the table even if he had eaten only a little. In this way he would upset his parents by his thoughtless flight. Now, however, his whole heart was intent on seeing the poor, listening to them, and giving them alms.

¹⁰He was so changed by divine grace that, although he was still in secular attire, he yearned to be in another city where, as someone unknown, he would take off his own clothes and, in exchange, put on the rags of a poor man. And he would try begging alms for the love of God.

At this time he happened to go to Rome on pilgrimage. As he was entering the church of Saint Peter,^a he noticed the meager offerings made by some, and said to himself: “Since the Prince of the Apostles should be greatly honored, why do they make such meager offerings in the church where his body rests?” With great enthusiasm, he took a handful of coins from his money pouch, and threw them through a grating of the altar, making such a loud noise that all the bystanders were astonished at his generosity.

As he was leaving and passed the doors of the church, where there were many poor people begging alms, he secretly exchanged clothes with one of those poor people and put them on. Standing on the steps of the church with the other poor, he begged alms in French, because he would speak French spontaneously, although he did not do so correctly.^b

a. Pilgrimages to the tomb of Saint Peter in Rome were important events in the Middle Ages. The first recorded pilgrimage was that of Albercius, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia in 216. The church of Saint Peter described in the text was the basilica begun by Constantine c. 324 and completed by his son, Constantius, c. 354. Cf. Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), 217–231.

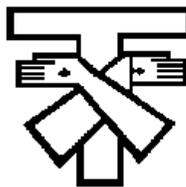
b. For Francis’s use of French, see FA:ED I 194b.

After taking off the beggar’s clothes and putting on his own, he returned to Assisi, and began to pray that the Lord would direct his way. He did not share his secret with anyone; nor did he seek counsel from anyone, except from God alone, and, periodically, from the bishop of Assisi. For at that time no one possessed the real poverty that he desired more than anything else in this world, in which he yearned to live and die.

Pope Benedict XVI: “God is Love” (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

36. When we consider the immensity of others’ needs, we can, on the one hand, be driven towards an ideology that would aim at doing what God’s governance of the world apparently cannot: fully resolving every problem. Or we can be tempted to give in to inertia, since it would seem that in any event nothing can be accomplished. At such times, a living relationship with Christ is decisive if we are to keep on the right path, without falling into an arrogant contempt for man, something not only unconstructive but actually destructive, or surrendering to a resignation which would prevent us from being guided by love in the service of others. Prayer, as a means of drawing ever new strength from Christ, is concretely and urgently needed. People who pray are not wasting their time, even though the situation appears desperate and seems to call for action alone. Piety does not undermine the struggle against the poverty of our neighbours, however extreme. In the example of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta we have a clear illustration of the fact that time devoted to God in prayer not only does not detract from effective and loving service to our neighbour but is in fact the inexhaustible source of that service. In her letter for Lent 1996, Blessed Teresa wrote to her lay co-workers: “We need this deep connection with God in our daily life. How can we obtain it? By prayer”.

37. It is time to reaffirm the importance of prayer in the face of the activism and the growing secularism of many Christians engaged in charitable work. Clearly, the Christian who prays does not claim to be able to change God’s plans or correct what he has foreseen. Rather, he seeks an encounter with the Father of Jesus Christ, asking God to be present with the consolation of the Spirit to him and his work. A personal relationship with God and an abandonment to his will can prevent man from being demeaned and save him from falling prey to the teaching of fanaticism and terrorism. An authentically religious attitude prevents man from presuming to judge God, accusing him of allowing poverty and failing to have compassion for his creatures. When people claim to build a case against God in defence of man, on whom can they depend when human activity proves powerless?



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter three: Francis ... Clare ... Catholic Doctrine

Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

Jesus Christ – the incarnate love of God

12. Though up to now we have been speaking mainly of the Old Testament, nevertheless the profound compenetration of the two Testaments as the one Scripture of the Christian faith has already become evident. The real novelty of the New Testament lies not so much in new ideas as in the figure of Christ himself, who gives flesh and blood to those concepts—an unprecedented realism. In the Old Testament, the novelty of the Bible did not consist merely in abstract notions but in God's unpredictable and in some sense unprecedented activity. This divine activity now takes on dramatic form when, in Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the "stray sheep", a suffering and lost humanity. When Jesus speaks in his parables of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, of the woman who looks for the lost coin, of the father who goes to meet and embrace his prodigal son, these are no mere words: they constitute an explanation of his very being and activity. His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: "God is love" (*1 Jn* 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.

14. Here we need to consider yet another aspect: this sacramental "mysticism" is social in character, for in sacramental communion I become one with the Lord, like all the other communicants. As Saint Paul says, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (*1 Cor* 10:17). Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become "one body", completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbour are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself. We can thus understand how *agape* also became a term for the Eucharist: there God's own *agape* comes to us bodily, in order to continue his work in us and through us. Only by keeping in mind this Christological and sacramental basis can we correctly understand Jesus' teaching on love. The transition which he makes from the Law and the Prophets to the twofold commandment of love of God and of neighbour, and his grounding the whole life of faith on this central precept, is not simply a matter of morality—something that could exist apart from and alongside faith in Christ and its sacramental re-actualization. Faith, worship and *ethos* are interwoven as a single reality which takes shape in our encounter with God's *agape*. Here the usual contraposition between worship and ethics simply falls apart. "Worship" itself, Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented. Conversely, as we shall have to consider in greater detail below, the "commandment" of love is only possible because it is more than a requirement. Love can be "commanded" because it has first been given.

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter three — 2

The Church's charitable activity as a manifestation of Trinitarian love

19. “If you see charity, you see the Trinity”, wrote Saint Augustine.[11] In the foregoing reflections, we have been able to focus our attention on the Pierced one (cf. *Jn* 19:37, *Zech* 12:10), recognizing the plan of the Father who, moved by love (cf. *Jn* 3:16), sent his only-begotten Son into the world to redeem man. By dying on the Cross—as Saint John tells us—Jesus “gave up his Spirit” (*Jn* 19:30), anticipating the gift of the Holy Spirit that he would make after his Resurrection (cf. *Jn* 20:22). This was to fulfil the promise of “rivers of living water” that would flow out of the hearts of believers, through the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. *Jn* 7:38-39). The Spirit, in fact, is that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ’s heart and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them, when he bent down to wash the feet of the disciples (cf. *Jn* 13:1-13) and above all when he gave his life for us (cf. *Jn* 13:1, 15:13).

The Spirit is also the energy which transforms the heart of the ecclesial community, so that it becomes a witness before the world to the love of the Father, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son. The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man: it seeks his evangelization through Word and Sacrament, an undertaking that is often heroic in the way it is acted out in history; and it seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life and human activity. Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man’s sufferings and his needs, including material needs. And this is the aspect, this *service of charity*, on which I want to focus in the second part of the Encyclical.

29. We can now determine more precisely, in the life of the Church, the relationship between commitment to the just ordering of the State and society on the one hand, and organized charitable activity on the other. We have seen that the formation of just structures is not directly the duty of the Church, but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason. The Church has an indirect duty here, in that she is called to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of those moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run.

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation “in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*.” [21] The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility.[22] Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, it still remains true that charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as “social charity”. [23]

The Church’s charitable organizations, on the other hand, constitute an *opus proprium*, a task agreeable to her, in which she does not cooperate collaterally, but acts as a subject with direct responsibility, doing what corresponds to her nature. The Church can never be exempted from practising charity as an organized activity of believers, and on the other hand, there will never be a situation where the charity of each individual Christian is unnecessary, because in addition to justice man needs, and will always need, love.

[11] *De Trinitate*, VIII, 8, 12: CCL 50, 287.

[21] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 42: AAS 81 (1989), 472.

[22] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* (24 November 2002), 1: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 22 January 2003, p. 5.

[23] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1939.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

“I Celano” (Thomas of Celano: “The Life of Saint Francis,” 1228–1229)

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Chapter VIII

HOW HE BUILT THE CHURCH OF SAN DAMIANO,
AND OF THE WAY OF LIFE OF THE LADIES LIVING IN THAT PLACE^b

¹⁸The first work that blessed Francis undertook,
after he gained his freedom
from the hands of his carnally-minded father,
was to build a house of God.
He did not try to build a new one,
but he repaired an old one,
restored an ancient one.^c
He did not tear out the foundation,
but he built upon it,
always reserving to Christ his prerogative,
although unaware of it,
*for no one can lay another foundation,
but that which has been laid,
which is Christ Jesus.*

1 Cor 3:11

When he had returned to the place mentioned where
the church of San Damiano had been built in ancient times,
he repaired it zealously within a short time,

b. Thomas uses the title, *Domina* [Lady] which traditionally referred either to princesses of blood or to nuns and canonesses. (See Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, ed. L. Favre, (Graz, 1883–1887). *Domina* 5, and *Domicellae* 2).

c. Thomas uses the adjective *novus* [new] thirty-nine times in this work emphasizing Francis as a “new soldier of Christ” (n. 9), a “new athlete of Christ” (n. 10), and a “new evangelist” (n. 89). Integrally associated with him are a new: mystery (n. 85), song (n. 126), Bethlehem (n. 85), miracles (nn. 119, 121), vine (n. 74), light (nn. 119, 123), order (n. 74), joy (n. 119), waters (n. 151), teachings (n. 26), spirit (n. 6) and rite (n. 89).

aided by the grace of the Most High.^a
 This is the blessed and holy place where
 the glorious religion and most excellent Order
 of Poor Ladies and holy virgins
 had its happy beginning,
 about six years after the conversion of the blessed Francis
 and through that same blessed man.

The Lady Clare,^b
 a native of the city of Assisi,
 the most precious and strongest stone of the whole structure,
 stands as the foundation for all the other stones.^c

For
 after the beginning of the Order of Brothers,
 when this lady was converted to God
 through the counsel of the holy man,
 she lived for the good of many
 as an example to countless others.
 Noble by lineage, but more noble by grace,^d
 chaste in body, most chaste in mind,
 young in age, mature in spirit,
 steadfast in purpose and most eager in her desire for divine love,
 endowed with wisdom and excelling in humility,
 bright in name, more brilliant in life, most brilliant in character.^e

¹⁹A noble structure of precious pearls arose above this woman,
 whose praise comes not from mortals but from God,
 since our limited understanding is not sufficient to imagine it,
 nor our scanty vocabulary to utter it.

Rom 2:29

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- a. Rebuilding churches was a medieval expression of piety. The eighth century author, Eddius Stephanus, for example, writes of the English saint Wilfrid (+710), that he first rebuilt a church at York and subsequently another in honor of Saint Peter and, finally, one in honor of Saint Mary. Cf. Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, text, translation and notes by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Similar examples may be found in the following: Theodore of Cyrus, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, “Life of Julian,” 13, translated by R.M. Price, (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985); Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Life of Saint Malachy the Irishman VI*, 12.
- b. For further information on the life of Clare of Assisi, see *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, translated and edited by Regis J. Armstrong, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1993); Ingrid Peterson, *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1993).
- c. This may allude to 1 Kgs. 7:9–10, a description of Solomon’s temple, and Rv 21:19, a description of the city walls of the heavenly Jerusalem and thus would refer to the temples of the historical and the heavenly Jerusalem.
- d. Cf. Jerome, *Paula 1*, “Noble in family, she was nobler still in holiness.”
- e. This is the earliest instance of the play on the name Clare or *Chiara* which is translated as “bright.” Thus the Latin text: *Clara nomine, vita clarior, clarissima moribus*.

First of all,
 the virtue of mutual and continual charity
 that binds their wills together
 flourishes among them.
 Forty or fifty of them can dwell together in one place,
 wanting and not wanting the same things
 forming one spirit in them out of many.^a

Second,
 the gem of humility,
 preserving the good things bestowed by heaven
 so sparkles in each one
 that they merit other virtues as well.^b

Third,
 the lily of virginity and chastity
 diffuses such a wondrous fragrance among them
 that they forget earthly thoughts
 and desire to meditate only on heavenly things.
 So great a love of their eternal Spouse arises in their hearts
 that the integrity of their holy feelings keeps them
 from every habit of their former life.

Fourth,
 all of them have become so distinguished
 by their title of highest poverty
 that their food and clothing
 rarely or never
 manage to satisfy extreme necessity.^c

²⁰Fifth,
 they have so attained the unique grace
 of abstinence and silence
 that they scarcely need to exert any effort

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- a. “*Idem velle atque idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est* [Wanting and not wanting the same thing—this is the foundation of a firm friendship].” This is a proverbial saying that Sallust places in the mouth of Cataline who urges his fellow conspirators in the name of friendship to join him in revolt, cf. Caius Crispus Sallust, *Bellum Catilinarium*, XX 4 (The Loeb Classical Library) 33–34.
- b. The monastic tradition presented humility as the foundation of all virtue, e.g. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermo I in Nativitate Domine* (PL 183:115): “Be eager to humble yourselves, for [humility] is the foundation and guardian of the virtues.” “No gem,” writes Bernard, “is more resplendent . . . than humility.” Cf. Bernard, *De Consideratione ad Eugenium papam tertiam libri quinque* II 13. “What is as pure,” he asks, “or as perfect as humility of heart?” Bernard, *In Annuntiationes, Sermo III*, 9. Thomas, however, places it in the second position in the life of the Poor Ladies even though he echoes the earlier approach in suggesting that humility “preserves the good things bestowed by heaven” and enables them to “merit other virtues as well.”
- c. In this instance the Latin *titulus* [title] is a canonical term signifying the source of one’s adequate support. In the phrase *altissimae paupertatis titulo* [the title of the highest poverty] Thomas uses the term in a paradoxical way to indicate that the source of support of the Poor Ladies is poverty.

to check the prompting of the flesh
and to restrain their tongues.^a

Sixth,
they are so adorned with the virtue of patience
in all these things,
that adversity of tribulation,
or injury of vexation
never breaks or changes their spirit.^b

Seventh,
and finally,
they have so merited the height of contemplation
that they learn in it everything they should do or avoid,
and they know how to go beyond the *mind to God* with joy,
persevering night and day
in praising Him and praying to Him.

2 Cor 5:13

For the moment
let this suffice
concerning these virgins dedicated to God
and most devout servants of Christ.

Their wondrous life
and their renowned practices received from the Lord Pope Gregory,^c
at that time Bishop of Ostia,
would require another book
and the leisure in which to write it.

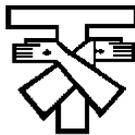
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- a. The vast amount of medieval literature on silence flows from the monastic tradition in which it was viewed as a form of abstinence. Cf. Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California, 1987); Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
- b. The cultivation of patience was seen as a primary means of identification with Christ. While strongly present in the literature of martyrdom, it entered into that of monasticism through the Desert tradition and became a prerequisite for the quiet of contemplation.
- c. *Institutio* [practices] refers to the *Form of Life* given by Cardinal Hugolino to the Poor Ladies of San Damiano in 1219, cf. Hugolino “The Form and Manner of Life Given by Cardinal Hugolino (1219)” in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, translated by Regis J. Armstrong (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1993) 89–100.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

From: “A Letter to the Entire Order” (1225–1226)

118

- ²⁶Let everyone be struck with fear,
let the whole world tremble,
and let the heavens exult
when Christ, the Son of the Living God,
is present on the altar in the hands of a priest!
- ²⁷O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity!
O sublime humility!
O humble sublimity!
The Lord of the universe,
God and the Son of God,
so humbles Himself
that for our salvation
He hides Himself
under an ordinary piece of bread!
- ²⁸Brothers, look at the humility of God,
and *pour out your hearts before Him!*
Humble yourselves
that you may be exalted by Him!
- ²⁹Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves,
that He Who gives Himself totally to you
may receive you totally!



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Supplemental Readings

Chapter four: **Inquiry** in the SFO

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

The Writings of Francis of Assisi — The Undated Writings

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A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father (*Expositio in Pater Noster*)

Two thirteenth-century examples of this type of commentary on the Lord's Prayer suggest that this style of prayer forms "a catechism of prayer" offering strong attitudes toward, as well as images of, God. In fact, this writing is perhaps the only instance in which we find an example of how Francis responded to his brothers' request to teach them how to pray.

¹*O Our Father* most holy: Mt 6:9
Our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Savior:

²*Who art in heaven:* Mt 6:9
In the angels and the saints,
enlightening them to know, for *You, Lord, are light;* 1 Jn 1:5
inflaming them to love, for *You, Lord, are love;*
dwelling in them and filling them with happiness,
for *You, Lord, are Supreme Good, the Eternal Good,*
from Whom all good comes
without Whom there is no good.

³*Holy be Your Name:* Mt 6:9
May knowledge of You become clearer in us
that we may know
the breadth of Your blessings,
the length of Your promises,
the height of Your majesty,
the depth of Your judgments. Eph 3:18

⁴*Your kingdom come:* Mt 6:10
That You may rule in us through Your grace
and enable us *to come to Your kingdom* Lk 23:42
where there is clear vision of You,
perfect love of You,
blessed companionship with You,
eternal enjoyment of You.

⁵*Your will be done on earth as in heaven:* Mt 6:10
That we may love You

- with our whole heart* by always thinking of You, Dt 6:5
with our whole soul by always desiring You,
with our whole mind by always directing our intentions to You,
 and by seeking Your glory in everything,
 with all our whole strength by exerting
all our energies and affections of body and soul Lk 10:27
 in the service of Your love and of nothing else;
 and we may love our neighbor as ourselves
 by drawing them all to Your love with our whole strength,
 by rejoicing in the good of others as in our own,
 by suffering with others at their misfortunes,
and by giving offense to no one. 2 Cor 6:3
- ⁶*Give us this day:* Mt 6:11
 in remembrance, understanding, and reverence
 of that love which [our Lord Jesus Christ] had for us
 and of those things that He said and did and suffered for us.
- our daily Bread:* Mt 6:11
 Your own beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ⁷*Forgive us our trespasses:* Mt 6:12
 through Your ineffable mercy
 through the power of the passion of Your beloved Son
 and through the merits and intercession
 of the ever blessed Virgin and all Your elect.
- ⁸*As we forgive those who trespass against us:* Mt 6:12
 And what we do not completely forgive,
 make us, Lord, forgive completely
 that we may truly love our enemies because of You
 and we may fervently intercede for them before You,
returning no one evil for evil 1 Thes 5:15
 and we may strive to help everyone in You.
- ⁹*And lead us not into temptation:* Mt 6:13
 hidden or obvious,
 sudden or persistent

¹⁰*But deliver us from evil:*

Mt 6:13

past,
present,
and to come.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

The distinctiveness of the Church's charitable activity

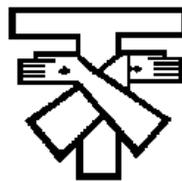
31. The increase in diversified organizations engaged in meeting various human needs is ultimately due to the fact that the command of love of neighbour is inscribed by the Creator in man's very nature. It is also a result of the presence of Christianity in the world, since Christianity constantly revives and acts out this imperative, so often profoundly obscured in the course of time. The reform of paganism attempted by the emperor Julian the Apostate is only an initial example of this effect; here we see how the power of Christianity spread well beyond the frontiers of the Christian faith. For this reason, it is very important that the Church's charitable activity maintains all of its splendour and does not become just another form of social assistance. So what are the essential elements of Christian and ecclesial charity?

a) Following the example given in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christian charity is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc. The Church's charitable organizations, beginning with those of *Caritas* (at diocesan, national and international levels), ought to do everything in their power to provide the resources and above all the personnel needed for this work. Individuals who care for those in need must first be professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it, and committed to continuing care. Yet, while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern. Those who work for the Church's charitable organizations must be distinguished by the fact that they do not merely meet the needs of the moment, but they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity. Consequently, in addition to their necessary professional training, these charity workers need a "formation of the heart": they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. *Gal 5:6*).

b) Christian charitable activity must be independent of parties and ideologies. It is not a means of changing the world ideologically, and it is not at the service of worldly stratagems, but it is a way of making present here and now the love which man always needs. The modern age, particularly from the

nineteenth century on, has been dominated by various versions of a philosophy of progress whose most radical form is Marxism. Part of Marxist strategy is the theory of impoverishment: in a situation of unjust power, it is claimed, anyone who engages in charitable initiatives is actually serving that unjust system, making it appear at least to some extent tolerable. This in turn slows down a potential revolution and thus blocks the struggle for a better world. Seen in this way, charity is rejected and attacked as a means of preserving the *status quo*. What we have here, though, is really an inhuman philosophy. People of the present are sacrificed to the *moloch* of the future—a future whose effective realization is at best doubtful. One does not make the world more human by refusing to act humanely here and now. We contribute to a better world only by personally doing good now, with full commitment and wherever we have the opportunity, independently of partisan strategies and programmes. The Christian's programme—the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus—is “a heart which sees”. This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly. Obviously when charitable activity is carried out by the Church as a communitarian initiative, the spontaneity of individuals must be combined with planning, foresight and cooperation with other similar institutions.

c) Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practised as a way of achieving other ends.^[30] But this does not mean that charitable activity must somehow leave God and Christ aside. For it is always concerned with the whole man. Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God. Those who practise charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others. They realize that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love. A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak. He knows that God is love (cf. *1 Jn* 4:8) and that God's presence is felt at the very time when the only thing we do is to love. He knows—to return to the questions raised earlier—that disdain for love is disdain for God and man alike; it is an attempt to do without God. Consequently, the best defence of God and man consists precisely in love. It is the responsibility of the Church's charitable organizations to reinforce this awareness in their members, so that by their activity—as well as their words, their silence, their example—they may be credible witnesses to Christ.



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter five: Lay Secular Spirituality

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition*

From Chapter 1: "To Follow the Footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

30–36

FRANCIS AND FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

To understand Franciscan spirituality we must begin with the spirituality of Francis himself, *il Poverello*, 'the little poor man' of Assisi. And to begin, we may again use some remarks from Martial Lekeux:

The life of the Poverello may seem more cheerful and more peaceful than that of some of the other saints. But the truth is that he was the saint of excesses: excess in sacrifice, excess in love; and it was by reason of his excesses that he held to the happy medium, because his disregard for moderation worked both ways, just as a scale insures better equilibrium the longer it is on both sides.

Francis is the saint of excesses and yet he is the saint with a smile, because he always fused the two. For him, penance was love, and sorrow 'perfect joy.' Using this standard, folly was wisdom and excess supreme moderation.¹⁴

We must make some sense of this 'excessive' saint if we wish to understand the beginnings and the permanent foundation of the Franciscan tradition. But understanding the tradition does not mean stopping with Francis. Otherwise we would have only the spirituality of an individual, not a 'tradition'. The word itself, from the Latin word for 'handing over', indicates that others received something from Francis. What was it? For his contemporaries, friends, companions, brothers and sisters, it was the experience of knowing Francis himself: he was the message. In a popular expression of the times, he taught them 'by word and example' (*verbo et exemplo*).¹⁵ And, by their own testimony, he was for them a living example of what he taught: He edified his listeners by his example as well as his words; 'he made his whole body a tongue'; 'more than someone who prayed, he had become prayer': these are some of the descriptions of Francis recalled by Thomas of Celano.¹⁶ That is, his whole person had become the message he was trying to communicate.

And what was that message? In a word, it was Jesus. To express it in such simple terms today may seem banal to us, or pious, or quaint. But for Francis, the discovery of Jesus, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ', was the ongoing revelation of his whole life in the twenty years after his conversion. In his early years he discovered Jesus as the one who led him among the lepers, and made their presence 'sweet' to him, rather than 'bitter'. He then discovered Jesus the preacher of conversion, announcing the reign of God. Over the years he began to see more clearly Jesus as the incarnate Son of God at Bethlehem, then as the

14. Martial Lekeux OFM, *Short-Cut to Divine Love*, tr. Paul J., Oligny OFM (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1962), p. 6.

15. See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Docere verbo et exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979).

16. 1Cel 97; 2Cel 96.

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter five — 2

Suffering Servant on Calvary; and finally, ‘the Lord’ of all things, raised up in glory after his death. And in this Lord, the glorified Son, he also understood the trinitarian God.

It is through ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ that Francis understands Mary, the Church, the Scriptures, priesthood, the poor, his brothers and sisters, and all creatures. It is ultimately through and in Jesus that Francis even understands himself. Though he seldom used the title ‘Christ’ by itself to refer to Jesus, his spirituality, and that of the Franciscan tradition after him, has been characterised as ‘Christocentric’.

If there is one word which does complete justice to Franciscan theology and spirituality, it is ‘Christocentric,’ and they have this as their distinguishing feature, because the faith and holiness of St Francis were totally centered on Christ. In Jesus Christ the revelation is made to us of what the world, as a whole and in all its parts, means to God.¹⁷

CLARE AND FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Chief among the keepers and shapers of the Franciscan tradition is Clare of Assisi. She would describe herself as a *plantacula*, ‘a little plant’ of Francis, a term that has often led readers of her writings to assume a kind of inferiority. In context, however, Clare’s name for herself indicates something different: she is separate but connected, rooted in the same soil of the gospel, sharing with Francis a ‘form of life’ she received from him as a gift from God. But the way in which she expresses her growing, intimate knowledge of ‘following the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ’ is uniquely her own. What unites Clare and Francis is not an identical experience of Christ, but different experiences of the same Christ.

In the last decade Clare has begun to assume, perhaps for the first time in the Franciscan tradition, the importance she deserves as the first interpreter of the Franciscan tradition. With the community of women gathered around her, she served as an essential bridge between the earliest days of the Franciscan tradition and its communication to later generations. Since she outlived Francis by nearly thirty years — he died in 1226, she in 1253 — her interpretation of the ‘founding moments’ of the Franciscan school helped to shape the tradition in ways we are only now beginning to understand. One example may help to illustrate this important point. In the account of Clare’s death, written within a year of the event, the description of people at her deathbed is illuminating. There is Leo, formerly secretary to Francis and one of his early companions. With him are Rufino and Angelo, two other early companions and personal friends. And these three are generally believed to be the most important sources for much of the knowledge we have of Francis’ life. And, among all the early texts of the tradition, where do we find them, after Francis’ death, all in the same place? Only at Clare’s side. While the scene as it is described is probably historically accurate (the participants were all still living when Clare’s *Life* was published), it is even more important for what it represents symbolically: Clare at the centre of the early companions, at the core of the tradition as it is being handed over to the next generation. For this reason, some authors today are beginning to speak of a ‘Francis-Clarian’ tradition. More than a disciple, Clare is also a creative architect of the tradition she lived.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

In the centuries following the deaths of Francis and Clare the tradition they established kept alive some great themes enunciated in their writings and exemplified in their lives, and neglected others, as we will

17. Eric Doyle, ‘St Francis of Assisi and the Christocentric Character of Franciscan Life and Doctrine’ in Damian McElrath (ed.), *Franciscan Christology* (St Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1980), p. 2.

see in the pages that follow. Controversies about the real intentions of the founders led to reforms and divisions, typifying the kind of anarchy that some have seen at the heart of this movement.

The order which has been through the most crises is certainly that of St Francis, a fine example of triumphant anarchy ... On the human level, it must be admitted that to have emerged victorious from so many crises is at least a sign of extraordinary vitality.¹⁸

Disputes over poverty rocked the Franciscan world from the late thirteenth through the early fourteenth century. Various reform movements championed their visions of an earlier age of truly 'spiritual' Franciscan life, leading to divisions that in part still mark contemporary Franciscan vocabulary: Conventuals, observants, Capuchins, Reformed, Recollects and a host of others.

The Franciscan tradition produced great theologians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, among whom Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus are the most important. And the tradition has produced a wonderful and diverse crop of mystics and spiritual writers, from Angela of Foligno in medieval Umbria, to Benet of Canfield, a former English Puritan in seventeenth-century France.

After more than a century of suppressions, persecutions and gradual disintegration, at the end of the nineteenth century a slow recovery began. All the components of the large Franciscan Family were again flourishing during the first half of the twentieth century. With the call of the Second Vatican Council for religious families to return to the charism of their founders, the Franciscan tradition continued the long but fruitful process of rediscovering Francis and Clare begun in the late 1800s. And a study like this one would not have been possible without what can only be called the explosion of interest in the two saints from Assisi in the last twenty years.

THEMES OF THE FRANCISCAN TRADITION

After this brief overview of the history of the Franciscan tradition, a few words are in order about the themes of that tradition. Each of the following chapters will examine one of these: the incarnation; life in poverty; the lepers; the hermitages; the cross; and creation. In order of importance, the first theme of Franciscan spirituality must be that of the incarnate God. Though the topic recurs constantly in Christian spirituality, the particular emphasis given to the incarnation by the Assisian saints relates it directly to their embrace of poverty as a spiritual path.

Poverty, or 'living without grasping', marks the writings and lives of both Francis and Clare. A key to their understanding of Christ, poverty also became a source of division among their followers.

People with Hansen's disease (leprosy) shaped Francis' experience of human suffering in a way that led him to see the suffering of Christ in vividly physical terms. Though their presence was important in the spirituality of Francis himself, the people with leprosy gradually 'disappear' in later Franciscan texts, until fairly recently.

Francis wrote a Rule for his brothers living in hermitages. These places of solitude still symbolise the long tradition of Franciscan contemplation. Championed especially by reform movements, the places of retreat produced important writers during the 'Golden Age' of sixteenth-century mysticism.

The cross, with its reference to suffering, death and glorification, epitomises for these founders the depths of charity. Clare's own vivid meditations of the 'Mirror suspended on the wood of the Cross' reveal a good deal of her own mystical identification with Christ. Francis, with his physical 'mirroring' of Christ's suffering, the 'stigmata' seen on his body, became a popular saint in the Middle Ages for his 'conformity' to the passion of Christ.

A well-known classic of medieval Italian religious poetry, Francis' 'Canticle of the Creatures' or

18. L. Moulin, *Vita e governo degli Ordini religiosi* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1965), p. 36.

‘Canticle of Brother Sun’, opens a new chapter in the history of Christian spirituality. Here are the seeds of a spirituality that embraces creation, nature, the world, as a revelation of God, not a distraction. Early biographers of the saint point to his unique relationship of friendship, or kinship, with animals, plants and natural elements.

These few themes hardly cover the territory of Franciscan spirituality. Hopefully they will suggest some of its important landmarks. Each of the following chapters will examine the import of one of these themes in Francis, Clare and a few of their followers. In conclusion I will suggest some ways in which this ‘anarchic’ and lively tradition may help to satisfy a contemporary hunger for a liveable spirituality.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 51-53)

GOD IS THE TRINITY

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life.

—CCC, no. 261

The Old Testament shows God as one, unique, without equal. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone” (Dt 6:4; Mk 12:29). He created the world, made a covenant with his people, and is the Father of the poor, the orphan, and the widow.

In the Creeds, we profess our faith in God as “Father almighty.” His fatherhood and power illumine each other by his care for us, by adopting us as sons and daughters in Baptism and by being rich in mercy to forgive our sins. Scripture constantly praises the universal power of God as the “mighty one of Jacob” and the “Lord of hosts” (Gn 49:24; Is 1:24ff.). God’s power is loving, for he is our Father.

God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God’s immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father. (CCC, no. 239)

Jesus revealed God as *Father* in a new sense. God is Father in his relation to Jesus, his only begotten Son. At the Last Supper, Jesus calls God “Father” forty-five times (cf. Jn 13–17). The Son is divine, as is the Father (cf. Mt 11–27). In a later chapter, Jesus as the Second Person of the Trinity will be discussed further.

Before the Passion, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as teacher, guide, and consoler. The Spirit’s appearance at Pentecost and at other events in the New Testament gives ample evidence of the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity. This, too, will be discussed in a later chapter.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and life. God reveals himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity includes three truths of faith.

First, the Trinity is One. We do not speak of three gods but of one God. Each of the Persons is fully God. They are a unity of Persons in one divine nature.

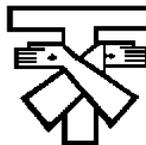
Second, the Divine Persons are distinct from each other. Father, Son, and Spirit are not three appearances or modes of God, but three identifiable persons, each fully God in away distinct from the others.

Third, the Divine Persons are in relation to each other. The distinction of each is understood only in reference to the others. The Father cannot be the Father without the Son, nor can the Son be the Son without the Father. The Holy Spirit is related to the Father and the Son who both send him forth.

All Christians are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity illumines all the other mysteries of faith.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (Second Edition)

- 261** The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life. God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 262** The Incarnation of God's Son reveals that God is the eternal Father and that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, which means that, in the Father and with the Father, the Son is one and the same God.
- 263** The mission of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of the Son (*Jn* 14:26) and by the Son "from the Father" (*Jn* 15:26), reveals that, with them, the Spirit is one and the same God. "With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed).
- 264** "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father as the first principle and, by the eternal gift of this to the Son, from the communion of both the Father and the Son" (St. Augustine, *De Trin.* 15, 26, 47: PL 42:1095).
- 265** By the grace of Baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," we are called to share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, here on earth in the obscurity of faith, and after death in eternal light (Cf. Paul VI, *CPG* § 9).
- 266** "Now this is the Catholic faith: We worship one God in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal" (Athanasian Creed; DS 75; ND 16).
- 267** Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are also inseparable in what they do. But within the single divine operation each shows forth what is proper to him in the Trinity, especially in the divine missions of the Son's Incarnation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter six: Writing & Stories of Francis & Clare

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

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The Testament (1226)^a

Those “who were with him,” the brothers who write *The Assisi Compilation*, tell of a number of documents or “testaments” which Francis dictated as his health deteriorated and death drew near: that of Siena in which he outlined basic principles of his Gospel vision, that concerning the Portiuncula in which he asked his brothers to care for this special symbol of their life, and another in which he provided guidelines for building new dwellings.^b This document, which has come to be known as “The Testament,” has remained a primary expression of Francis’s profound wisdom and vision. While popular tradition maintains that it was written at the Portiuncula when he was dying, the document’s different styles of writing suggest that it was written at different moments of those final days and was prompted by different questions swirling around his simple Gospel vision.

¹The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed to bitter for me to see lepers.

²And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy* to them.^c ³And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world.

Sir 35:4

⁴And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would pray with simplicity in this way and say: ⁵“We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in

a. It is difficult to determine the meaning of *testamentum* (testament) as the title of this work. Its profane or legal sense suggests a last will and “testament” concerning one’s goods or possessions. Pope Gregory IX, in the papal document, *Quo elongati* (1230), suggests this meaning when he states: “Toward the end of his life [Francis] made a command, which is called a ‘Testament.’” In 1295 Peter Olivi in a letter to Conrad of Offida claims the title was given by others and calls it simply a letter. A short time later, Ubertino da Casale reflects upon the tension between the title and the text when he writes: “... in his *Testament*, as he himself calls the document ...” In recent times, Auspicius van Corstanje has suggested a biblical interpretation and interpreted the work as an expression of God’s covenant (*testamentum*) with the poor Francis and his brothers, cf. *The Covenant with God’s Poor*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1966).

b. Cf. AC 59, 56, 106, 23.

c. The phrase *feci misericordiam* [I showed mercy] has a rich biblical tradition, one that is frequently associated with penance. Forms of the phrase *facere misericordiam* appear almost fifty times in the Vulgate edition, most of them in the Old Testament. Of these, the editors have chosen to suggest a reference to Sirach 35:4 “*qui faciet misericordiam offert sacrificum* [whoever shows mercy offers sacrifice].”

all Your churches throughout the whole world and we bless You because by Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.”^a

⁶Afterwards the Lord gave me, and gives me still, such faith in priests who live according to the rite of the holy Roman Church because of their orders that, were they to persecute me, I would still want to have recourse to them. ⁷And if I had as much *wisdom as Solomon* and found impoverished priests of this world, I would not preach in their parishes against their will. ⁸And I desire to respect, love and honor them and all others as my lords. ⁹And I do not want to consider any sin in them because I discern the Son of God in them and they are my lords. ¹⁰And I act in this way because, in this world, I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others. ¹¹I want to have these most holy mysteries honored and venerated above all things and I want to reserve them in precious places. ¹²Wherever I find our Lord’s most holy names and written words in unbecoming places, I want to gather them up and I beg that they be gathered up and placed in a becoming place. ¹³And we must honor all theologians and those who minister the most holy divine words and respect them as those who minister to us *spirit and life*.

1 Kgs 4:30–31

Jn 6:63

¹⁴And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. ¹⁵And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me. ¹⁶And those who came to receive life gave *whatever they had* to the poor and were content with one tunic, patched inside and out, with a cord and short trousers. ¹⁷We desired nothing more. ¹⁸We clerical [brothers] said the Office as other clerics did; the lay brothers said the *Our Father*; and we quite willingly remained in churches. ¹⁹And we were simple and subject to all.

Tb 1:3

Mt 6:9–13

²⁰And *I worked with my hands*, and I still desire to work; and I earnestly desire all brothers to give themselves to honest work. ²¹Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from desire for wages, but for example and to avoid idleness. ²²And when we are not paid for our work, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms

Acts 20:34

a. This prayer is made up of a liturgical formula recited on the feast of Good Friday and the Exaltation of the Cross: “We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your cross you have redeemed the world.” To this formula, however, Francis made three additions: (a) the name, Jesus Christ; (b) the phrase, in all your churches throughout the world; and (c) the adjective, holy, to describe the cross.

from door to door. ²³The Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say: “*May the Lord give you peace.*”

2 Thes 3:16

²⁴Let the brothers be careful not to receive in any way churches or poor dwellings or anything else built for them unless they are according to the holy poverty we have promised in the Rule.^a *As pilgrims and strangers*, let them always be guests there.

1 Pt 2:11

²⁵I strictly command all the brothers through obedience, wherever they may be, not to dare to ask any letter from the Roman Curia, either personally or through an intermediary, whether for a church or another place or under the pretext of preaching or the persecution of their bodies.^b ²⁶But, wherever they have not been received, *let them flee to another country* to do penance with the blessing of God.

Mt 10:23

²⁷And I firmly wish to obey the general minister of this fraternity and the other guardian whom it pleases him to give me. ²⁸And I so wish to be a captive in his hands that I cannot go anywhere or do anything beyond obedience and his will, for he is my master.

²⁹And although I may be simple and infirm, I nevertheless want to have a cleric always with me who will celebrate the Office for me as it is prescribed in the *Rule*.

³⁰And let the brothers be bound to obey their guardians and to recite the Office according to the Rule. ³¹And if some might have been found who are not reciting the Office according to the Rule and want to change it in some way, or who are not Catholics, let all the brothers, wherever they may have found one of them, be bound through obedience to bring him before the custodian of that place nearest to where they found him.^c ³²And let the custodian be strictly bound through obedience to keep him securely day and night as a man in chains, so that he cannot be taken from his hands until he can personally deliver him into

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- a. *The Testament* takes a decidedly different direction at this point as Francis ceases to reminisce about the early days of his life and those of his brothers and begins a series of exhortations and commands. This change has led some to conclude that the document was written at different times and, perhaps, with the assistance of different brothers who took his dictation. In this instance, while recognizing the gradual development of accepting churches and residences, a step away from his original view of poverty introduced by the papal document *Cum secundum consilium* (1220) which established the year of probation, Francis encourages the brothers to keep the ideal of poverty before them. Cf. *infra* pp. 560–561.
- b. The encouragement of the previous section becomes a strong command prohibiting the active search for churches or residences regardless of the reason. The papal document, *In eo quod audivimus*, sent to the Archbishop of Pisa and the Abbot of Saint Paul’s on October 4, 1225, provides some insight into the persecution encountered by religious and the protection promised by the Holy See. Three papal documents written during the last years of Francis’s life, *Vineae Domini custodes* (October 7, 1225), *Urgenti officii nostri* (February 20, 1226) and *Ex parte vestra* (March 17, 1226) promise the itinerant brothers the same type of protection and threaten sanctions on those who persecute them. Cf. *infra. Related Documents*, p. 563.
- c. This passage parallels Francis’s *Letter to the Entire Order* 44–46 (hereafter LtOrd) and accentuates his insistence that the Liturgy of the Hours forms a strong link binding the brothers to one another and to the Church.

the hands of his minister. ³³And let the minister be bound through obedience to send him with such brothers who would guard him as a prisoner until they deliver him to the Lord of Ostia, who is the Lord, the Protector and the Corrector of this fraternity.

³⁴And the brothers may not say: “This is another rule.”^a Because this is a remembrance, admonition, exhortation, and my testament, which I, little brother Francis, make for you, my blessed brothers, that we might observe the Rule we have promised in a more Catholic way.

³⁵And let the general minister and all the other ministers and custodians be bound through obedience not *to add to* or *take away* from these words. ³⁶And let them always have this writing with them together with the Rule. ³⁷And in all the chapters which they hold, when they read the Rule, let them also read these words. ³⁸And I strictly command all my cleric and lay brothers, through obedience, not to place any gloss upon the Rule or upon these words saying: “They should be understood in this way.” ³⁹But as the Lord has given me to speak and write the Rule and these words simply and purely, may you understand them simply and without gloss and observe them with a holy activity until the end.

Dt 4:2; 12:32

⁴⁰And whoever observes these things, let him be blessed *in heaven with the blessing* of the Most High Father, and *on earth* with the blessing of His Beloved Son with the Most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and all the powers of heaven and with all the saints. ⁴¹And, as far as I can, I, little brother Francis, your servant, confirm for you, both within and without, this most holy blessing.

Gn 27:27–28

a. This passage introduces the question of the nature of this document, a question which Francis himself must have suspected would arise in light of the exhortations and commands contained in its final paragraphs. The answer to the question is found in Francis’s calling to mind the ideals of the primitive fraternity in light of the reality of its growth. Thus, rather than establish new legislative positions, he strongly re-interprets many of the ideals articulated in the Rule.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder

“The Legend of the Three Companions” (1240–1241)

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Chapter IV

HOW HE BEGAN TO OVERCOME HIMSELF BY HIS DEALING WITH LEPERS,
AND TO CONSIDER SWEET WHAT WAS PREVIOUSLY BITTER

¹¹One day, while he was praying enthusiastically to the Lord, he received this response: “Francis, everything you loved carnally and desired to have, you must despise and hate, if you wish to know my will. Because once you begin doing this, what before seemed delightful and sweet will be unbearable and bitter; and what before made you shudder will offer you great sweetness and enormous delight.”

1C 17 He was overjoyed at this and was comforted by the Lord. One day he was riding his horse near Assisi, when he met a leper. And, even though he usually shuddered at lepers, he made himself dismount, gave him a coin, kissing his hand as he did so. After he accepted a kiss of peace from him, Francis remounted and continued on his way. He then began to consider himself less and less, until, by God’s grace, he came to complete victory over himself.

Test 3 After a few days, he moved to a hospice of lepers, taking with him a large sum of money. Calling them all together, as he kissed the hand of each, he gave them alms. When he left there, what before had been bitter, that is, to see and touch lepers, was turned into sweetness. For, as he said, the sight of lepers was so bitter to him, that he refused not only to look at them, but even to approach their dwellings. If he happened to come near their houses or to see them, even though he was moved by piety to give them alms through an intermediary, he always turned away his face and held his nose. With the help of God’s grace, he became such a servant and friend of the lepers, that, as he testified in his *Testament*, he stayed among them and served them with humility.

Test 1–3

1C 6 ¹²Changed into good after his visit to the lepers, he would take a companion, whom he loved very much, to secluded places, telling him that he had found a great and precious treasure. The man was not a little overjoyed, and gladly went with him wherever he was summoned. Francis also led him to a cave near Assisi, and, while

he went alone inside, he left his companion outside, eager for the treasure. Inspired by a new and extraordinary spirit, he would pray to *his Father in secret*, wanting no one to know what was happening within except God alone, whom he consulted about acquiring heavenly treasure.

Mt 6:6

The enemy of the human race, observing him, strove to lure him from the good he had begun by striking fear and dread in him. There was in Assisi a deformed, hunchbacked woman, whom the devil, appearing to the man of God, recalled to him. He threatened to inflict him with her deformity unless he reneged on the plan he had conceived. But the very brave *knight of Christ*, shunning the devil's threats, prayed all the more fervently within the cave that God would direct his path.

2 Tm 2:3

1C 6

He endured great suffering and mental anxiety, unable to rest until he accomplished in action what he had conceived in mind. Different thoughts followed one after the other, and their relentlessness disturbed him even more severely. For he was burning inwardly with a divine fire, unable to conceal outwardly the flame kindled in his soul. He repented that he had sinned so grievously. While his past and present transgressions no longer delighted him, he was not yet fully confident of refraining from future ones. This is why, when he emerged from the cave, he seemed to his companion to have changed into a different man.

*Clare of Assisi, Early Documents: The Lady*The Blessing
(1253)

Introduction

The Legend of Saint Clare 45 describes the last hours of the saint's life and tells of her blessing to the sisters of San Damiano as well as those of the other monasteries and those who would come in the future. This is possibly the source of the special blessings that have been traditionally attributed to Saint Clare. However, there is also evidence of a blessing that Saint Clare sent to Blessed Agnes of Prague, another sent to Ermentrude of Bruges, and a third to all the sisters. The earliest known text of the blessing is found in a Middle High German translation in a manuscript associated with the Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague that is dated 1350.^a A Latin text, associated with Ermentrude of Bruges, comes from a much later period, the seventeenth century,^b and another text addressed to all the sisters is found in various languages in manuscripts of different dates.^c The tradition of the Order of Saint Clare has always considered this text as a precious remembrance similar to that blessing given by Saint Francis to Brother Leo while they were on La Verna.^d

¹*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Mt. 28:19

²*May the Lord bless you and keep you.*

Nm 6:24–26

³*May He show His face to you and have mercy on you.*

⁴*May He turn His countenance to you and give peace to you, my sisters and daughters,* ⁵*and to all others who come and remain in*

- a. Cf. Walter W. Seton, "Some New Sources for the Life of Blessed Agnes of Prague, including some Chronological Notes and a New Text of the Benediction of Saint Clare," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 7 (1914): 185–197. Hereafter AFH; idem, "The Oldest Text of the Benediction of Saint Clare of Assisi," *Revue d'Histoire Franciscaine* 2 (1925):88–90; C. Mark Borkowski, "A Second Middle High German Translation of the Benediction of Saint Clare," *Franciscan Studies* 36 (1976): 99–104.
- b. Cf. David deKok, "De origine Ordinis S. Clarae in Flandria," *AFH* 7 (1914): 244–245.
- c. Cf. Ubald d'Alençon, "Le plus ancien texte de la bénédiction, du privilège de la pauvreté et du testament de sante Claire d'Assise," *Revue d'Histoire Franciscaine* 1 (1924): 469–482; Diego Ciccarelli, "Contributi alla recensione degli scritti di S. Chiara," *Miscellanea Francescana* 70 (1979): 353–355; David deKok, "S. Clarae Benedictionis textus neerlandici," *AFH* 40 (1947): 290–291.
- d. Cf. *Francis and Clare*, 99–100.

your company and to others both now and in the future, who have persevered until the end in every other monastery of the Poor Ladies.

Mt 10:22

⁶I, Clare, a handmade of Christ, and a little plant of our most holy father Francis, a sister and mother of you and the other poor sisters, although unworthy, ⁷beg our Lord Jesus Christ through His mercy and the intercession of His most holy Mother Mary and of blessed Michael the Archangel and of all the holy angels of God, of our blessed father Francis, and of all men and women saints, ⁸that the heavenly Father give you and confirm for you this most holy blessing in *heaven* and on *earth*: ⁹on earth, by multiplying you in grace and His virtues among His servants and handmaids in His Church Militant; ¹⁰in heaven, by exalting you and glorifying you among His holy men and women in His Church Triumphant.

Mt 5:16

Gn 27:28

¹¹I bless you during my life and after my death, as I am able, out of all the blessings, ¹²with which the *Father of mercies* has blessed and will bless His sons and daughters *in heaven* and on earth ¹³and a spiritual father and mother have blessed and will bless their spiritual sons and daughters. Amen.

2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3

¹⁴Always be lovers of your souls and those of your sisters.^a

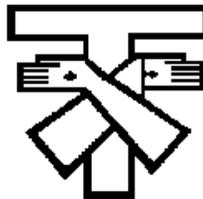
¹⁵And may you always be eager to observe what you have promised the Lord.

¹⁶May the Lord always be with you and may you always be with Him. Amen.

2 Cor 13:11;

Jn 12:26; 1 Thes 4:17

a. While the majority of manuscripts offer this reading, that of the Uppsala Collection (f. 183r–v) adds “of God.” Cf. *Écrits*, 188.



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter seven: A Brief History of SFO & Development of the Rule

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

Earlier Exhortation To the Brothers and Sisters of Penance^a (The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful) (1209–1215)

The earliest manuscript of this writing, located in the Guarnacci Library in the Italian city of Volterra, introduces it with these words: “These are words of life and salvation. Whoever reads and follows them will find life and draw from the Lord salvation.” While Kajetan Esser entitled it “The First Version of the Letter to the Faithful,” it has been more correctly seen as an exhortation given to those first penitents who came to Francis desiring to share his Gospel way of life. Since 1976, when Kajetan Esser brought the text into prominence, it has served as the Prologue to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

In the Name of the Lord!

[Chapter I]
Those Who Do Penance

¹All those who love the Lord *with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength* and love their neighbors as themselves, ²who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, ³who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴and who produce worthy fruits of penance. ⁵O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, ⁶because *the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its home and dwelling place among them,* ⁷and they are children of the

Mk 12:30
Mt 22:39
Mt 22:39
Is 11:2
Jn 14:23

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- a. In light of the scholarship of Raffaele Pazzelli, the editors have chosen to propose this as the basic title of this work. Pazzelli argues convincingly that Esser erred in seeing this document as simply an earlier version of the Letter to the Faithful. Cf. Raffaele Pazzelli, “The Title of the ‘Recensio Prior of the Letter to the Faithful:’ Clarifications regarding Codex 225 of Volterra (cod. Vo),” translated by Nancy Celaschi, *Greyfriars Review*, 4:3 (1990), pp. 1–6.
- b. Francis uses the term *beatus* (in this instance *beati*) within an eschatological perspective, analogous to the use of “blessed” in the Beatitudes of the Gospels. Moreover, he makes explicit reference to both men and women by using *illi et illae*.

heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.^a

Mt 5:45

Mt 12:50

⁸We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹We are brothers to Him when we do *the will of the Father who is in heaven*. ¹⁰We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others.^b

Mt 12:50

1 Cor 6:20

Mt 5:16

¹¹O how glorious it is to have a holy and great Father in heaven!^c

¹²O how holy, consoling to have such a beautiful and wonderful Spouse! ¹³O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and, above all things, desirable: to have such a Brother and such a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who laid down His life for His sheep and prayed to His Father, saying:

Jn 10:15

¹⁴*Holy Father, in your name, save those whom you have given me in the world; they were yours and you gave them to me.* ¹⁵The words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and have believed in truth that I came from you and they have known that you have sent me.

Jn 17:11; Jn 17:6

Jn 17:8

¹⁶I pray for them and not for the world. ¹⁷Bless and sanctify them; I sanctify myself for them. ¹⁸I pray not only for them, but for those who will believe in me through their word that they might be sanctified in being one as we are.

Jn 17:9; Jn 17:17

Jn 17:19

Jn 17:20; Jn 17:23

Jn 17:11

¹⁹I wish, Father, that where I am, they also may be with me that they may see my glory in your kingdom. Amen.

Jn 17:24

Mt 20:21

a. Francis frequently uses the title “Spirit of the Lord” to refer to the Third Person of the Trinity (*Admonitions* I 12 [hereafter Adm]; Adm XII 1; *First Letter to the Faithful* I 6 [hereafter 1LtF]; *Second Letter to the Faithful* 48 [hereafter 2LtF]; *Later Rule* X 9 [hereafter LR]. While in this instance the biblical reference is to Isaiah 11:2, in most instances there is a reflection of a Pauline pneumatology in which the Holy Spirit is described as “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9), “the Spirit of His Son” (Gal 4:6), and “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:19). Since the saint perceives the Spirit of the Lord as the dynamic principle of the life of his followers, it is helpful to understand the Christological implications of these passages.

b. Francis frequently uses the phrase *sancta operatio*, holy activity, (cf. 1LtF II 21; 2LtF 53; LR X 8; *Testament* 39 [hereafter Test]. It is used most frequently in conjunction with the Spirit of the Lord or the words of Francis himself which echo those of Jesus and are “spirit and life” (cf. Jn 6:64). Thus, Francis underscores the dynamic principle of the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit, which must be ever operative in the life of a Christian.

c. The Latin text contains an ambiguous grammatical construction: *O quam gloriosum est, sanctum et magnum in caelis habere patrem!* If we take *sanctum* and *magnum* as neuter and not masculine, the phrase could be translated: “how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven!” However, if *sanctum* and *magnum* are masculine accusatives agreeing with Father, we would translate the phrase: “how glorious it is to have in heaven a holy and great Father!” In view of the parallel constructions of sentences 11, 12 and 13, it seems best to follow the latter translation.

[Chapter Two]

Those Who Do Not Do Penance

¹All those men and women who are not living in penance, ²who do not receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, ³who practice vice and sin and walk after the evil concupiscence and the evil desires of their flesh, ⁴who do not observe what they have promised to the Lord, ⁵and who in their body serve the world through the desires of the flesh,^a the concerns of the world and the cares of this life: ⁶They are held captive by the devil, whose children they are, and whose works they do. ⁷They are blind because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸They do not possess spiritual wisdom because they do not have the Son of God, the true wisdom of the Father. ⁹It is said of them: *Their wisdom has been swallowed up and Cursed are those who turn away from your commands.* ¹⁰They see and acknowledge, know and do evil, and knowingly lose their souls.

Jn 8:41

Ps 107:27

Ps 119:21

¹¹See, you blind ones, deceived by your enemies: the flesh,^b the world, and the devil, because it is sweet for the body to sin and it is bitter to serve God, ¹²for every vice and sin flow and *proceed from the human heart* as the Lord says in the Gospel. ¹³And you have nothing in this world or in that to come. ¹⁴And you think that you will possess this world's vanities for a long time, but you are deceived because a day and an hour will come of which you give no thought, which you do not know, and of which you are unaware when the body becomes weak, death approaches, and it dies a bitter death. ¹⁵And no matter where, when, or how a person dies in the guilt of sin without penance and satisfaction, if he can perform an act of satisfaction and does not do so, the devil snatches his soul from its body with such anguish and distress that no one can know [what it is like] except the one receiving it.^c

Mt 15:19; Mk 7:21

¹⁶And every talent, ability, *knowledge, and wisdom* they think they have will be taken away from them. ¹⁷And they leave their wealth to their relatives and friends who take and divide it and afterwards say: "May his soul be cursed because he could have given us more and acquired more than what he distributed to us." ¹⁸Worms eat his body and

2 Chr 1:12

Lk 8:18; Mk 4:25

a. The term "bodily" (*corporaliter*) should not be understood in the narrow sense of "physically." Rather, it signifies in a fuller sense "completely or actually with body and soul" serve the world.

b. It is significant that Francis places the flesh in the first place among the three enemies of the soul.

c. While Francis does not generally distinguish clearly between *suus* and *eius*, in this case he does. The phrase, *rapit animam suam de corpore eius*, denotes that the devil snatches or takes what is his own. The soul submerged in sin, by definition, belongs to the devil. Thus, the soul, which because of sin already belongs to the devil, is taken by the devil from the body of the sinner.

so body and soul perish in this brief world and they will go to hell where they will be tortured forever.

¹⁹In the love which is God we beg all those whom these words reach to receive those fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ written above with divine love and kindness. ²⁰And let whoever does not know how to read have them read to them frequently. ²¹Because *they are spirit and life*, they should preserve them together with a holy activity to the end.

1 Jn 4:16

Jn 6:63

²²And whoever has not done these things will be held accountable *before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ on the day of judgment.*

Rm 14:10; Mt 12:36

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint
The Writings of Francis of Assisi

The Later Rule
(1223)

The Earlier Rule of Francis's brothers had its origins in the statement presented to and approved by Pope Innocent III in 1209/1210. It grew as the experiences and structures of the brothers became more complex. The Rule which received its final redaction at the Chapter of 1221, inspirational as it may have been, received a re-working that its vision would be more succinct and forthright. This later description of the Gospel life became a papal document on November 29, 1223, when Pope Honorius III placed the papal seal on it. Since that time it has been the foundational document forming and inspiring the Gospel vision of Franciscans of the First Order (Conventual, Capuchin Friars as well as those of the Leonine Union), the Sisters of Saint Clare whose Rule incorporates many of its passages, and the Religious and Secular Third Order. While some of the language of this document seems foreign to that of Francis himself and thus suggests the presence of canonists or other religious, e.g. the Cistercians, who helped with its composition, there is no doubt that it expresses his Gospel vision.

Bull of Pope Honorius III

Honorius,
Bishop, Servant of the servants of God,
to His Beloved Sons,
Brother Francis and the other brothers
of the Order of the Lesser Brothers,
Health and Apostolic Benediction.

The Apostolic See is accustomed to grant the pious requests and favorably to accede to the laudable desires of its petitioners. Therefore, beloved sons in the Lord, attentive to your pious prayers, We confirm with Our Apostolic Authority, and by these words ratify, the Rule of your Order, herein outlined and approved by Our predecessor, Pope Innocent of happy memory, which is as follows:

*[Chapter I]^a*In the Name of the Lord!
The Life of the Lesser Brothers Begins

¹The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity.

²Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to our Lord Pope Honorius and his successors canonically elected and to the Roman Church. ³Let the other brothers be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors.

*[Chapter II]*Those Who Wish to Adopt This Life,
and How They Should Be Received

¹If there are any who wish to accept this life and come to our brothers, let them send them to their provincial ministers, to whom alone and not to others is permission granted to receive the brothers. ²Let the ministers examine them carefully concerning the Catholic faith and the sacraments of the Church. ³If they believe all these things, and will faithfully profess them, and steadfastly observe them to the end; ⁴and if they have no wives, or if they have wives who have already taken a vow of continence and are of such an age that suspicion cannot be raised about them, and who have already entered a monastery or have given their husbands permission by the authority of the bishop of the diocese,^b ⁵let the ministers speak to them the words of the holy Gospel that they go and sell all they have and take care to give to the poor. ⁶If they cannot do this, their good will may suffice. ⁷Let the brothers and the minister be careful not to interfere with their temporal goods that they may dispose of their belongings as the Lord inspires them. ⁸If, however, coun-

Mt 19:21/Mk 10:21
Lk 18:22

- a. Unlike ER, this document contains titles for each section. They may have been imposed by a curial official who desired to divide the document into twelve parts to signify its apostolic foundations. However, there are no indications of chapters as suggested by the brackets.
- b. This is taken literally from the *Decretum Gratiani* 22, CXXVII, q.2: "If a married man wishes to enter a monastery, he is not to be received unless he has first been freed from his marriage by a profession of chastity on the part of his wife." Innocent III echoed this teaching in 1198: "Nor may one party turn to the Lord and the other party remain in the world; moreover, one of the spouses may not be received to regular observance unless the other spouse has made a promise of perpetual continence. The other partner must also change his or her way of life, unless perhaps due to his or her age, that partner can remain in the world without suspicion of incontinence." Honorius III, speaking of women entering religious life, declared: "... and is of such an age that no suspicion can be raised against her, but you shall not allow her to be forced against her will to enter a convent and observe a vow of continence." All of these were incorporated into the *Decretals* of Pope Gregory IX, c. 13, III 32, 18.

sel is sought, the minister may send them to some God-fearing persons according to whose advice their goods may be distributed to the poor.

⁹Then they may be given the clothes of probation, namely, two tunics without a hood, a cord, short trousers, and a little cape reaching to the cord, ¹⁰unless, at times, it seems good to these ministers, before God, to act otherwise. ¹¹When the year of probation has come to an end, they may be received to obedience promising always to observe this rule and life. ¹²On no account shall it be lawful for them to leave this Order, according to the decree of our Lord the Pope, ¹³for, according to the Gospel: *no one who puts a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God.*

Lk 9:62

¹⁴Those who have already promised obedience may have one tunic with a hood and another, if they wish, without a hood. ¹⁵And those who are compelled by necessity may wear shoes. ¹⁶Let all the brothers wear poor clothes and they may mend them with pieces of sackcloth or other material with the blessing of God. ¹⁷I admonish and exhort them not to look down upon or judge those whom they see dressed in soft and fine clothes and enjoying the choicest food and drink, but rather let everyone judge and look down upon himself.

[Chapter III]

The Divine Office, Fasting and How The Brothers Should Go About in the World

¹Let the clerical [brothers] recite the Divine Office according to the rite of the holy Roman Church excepting the psalter, ²for which reason they may have breviaries.^a ³The lay [brothers], however, may say twenty-four *Our Fathers* for Matins, and five for Lauds; seven for each of the Hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, and None, twelve for Vespers, and seven for Compline. ⁴Let them pray for the dead.

⁵Let them fast from the feast of All Saints until the Lord's Nativity. ⁶May those be blessed by the Lord who fast voluntarily during that holy Lent that begins at the Epiphany and lasts during the forty days which our Lord consecrated by His own fast; but those who do not wish to keep it will not be obliged. ⁷Let them fast, however, during the other [Lent] until the Lord's Resurrection. ⁸At other times they may not be

Mt 4:2; Lk 4:2

a. When examined in light of the ER III 4 which spoke of celebrating "according to the custom of the clergy," "according to the rite of the holy Roman Church" is a change in the phrasing of this passage. This indicates the changes that had taken place in legislation concerning the Divine Office.

bound to fast except on Fridays. ⁹During a time of obvious need, however, the brothers may not be bound by corporal fast.

¹⁰I counsel, admonish and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ not to quarrel or argue or judge others when they go about in the world; ¹¹but let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle, and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is becoming. ¹²They should not ride horseback unless they are compelled by an obvious need or an infirmity. ¹³Into whatever house they enter, let them first say: “Peace be to this house!” ¹⁴According to the holy Gospel, let them eat whatever food is set before them.

2 Tm 2:14

Lk 10:5

Lk 10:8

[Chapter IV]

Let the Brothers Never Receive Money

¹I strictly command all my brothers not to receive coins or money in any form, either personally or through intermediaries.^a ²Nevertheless, the ministers and custodians alone may take special care through their spiritual friends to provide for the needs of the sick and the clothing of the others according to places, seasons and cold climates, as they judge necessary,^b ³saving always that, as stated above, they do not receive coins or money.

[Chapter V]

The Manner of Working

¹Those brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working may work faithfully and devotedly ²so that, while avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all temporal things must contribute.^c

³In payment for their work they may receive whatever is necessary for the bodily support of themselves and their brothers, excepting coin

a. An important shift in Francis’s thought can be found in his firm prohibition against accepting money. In ER VIII, this prohibition followed Francis’s encouragement to work and his subsequent warning to avoid money as a payment for that work. In this instance, however, Francis strongly commends his brothers to reject the security represented by money.

b. Cf. Benedict, *Rule* LV 1–4 which speaks of changes in religious garb according to “local conditions and climate.”

c. This phrase summarizes ideas found throughout the early writings, e.g. ER XXII, by seeing prayer and devotion fundamentally as activities of the Holy Spirit. The use of the word “devotion” in this context points to an experience of desire or a fervor expressed in a certain enthusiasm for or focus on the Lord.

or money, ⁴and let them do this humbly as is becoming for servants of God and followers of most holy poverty.

[Chapter VI]

Let the Brothers Not Make Anything Their Own;
Begging Alms, the Sick Brothers^a

¹Let the brothers not make anything their own, neither house, nor place, nor anything at all. ²As pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go seeking alms with confidence, ³and they should not be ashamed because, for our sakes, our Lord made Himself poor in this world. ⁴This is that sublime height of exalted poverty which has made you, my most beloved brothers, heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, poor in temporal things but exalted in virtue. ⁵Let this be your portion which leads into the land of the living. ⁶Giving yourselves totally to this, beloved brothers, never seek anything else under heaven for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Pt 2:11

2 Cor 8–9

Jas 2:5

Ps 142:6

⁷Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show that they are members of the same family. ⁸Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, 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! ⁹When any brother falls sick, the other brothers must serve him as they would wish to be served themselves.

1 Thes 2:7

Mt 7:12

[Chapter VII]

The Penance To Be Imposed on the Brothers Who Sin^b

¹If any brother, at the instigation of the enemy, sins mortally in regard to those sins concerning which it has been decreed among the brothers to have recourse only to the provincial ministers, let him have recourse as quickly as possible and without delay. ²If these ministers

a. The teachings on fraternity and poverty which are scattered throughout the ER are brought together in this synthesis underscoring the interconnection found between the two concepts.

b. Cf. the second section of the *Letter to a Minister* 13–20 (hereafter LtMin) in which Francis presents a first draft of this legislation. Its incorporation into this papal document and the distinction of ministers who may not be priests underscores the mixed clerical and lay nature of the Order.

are priests, with a heart full of mercy^a let them impose on him a penance; but, if the ministers are not priests, let them have it imposed by others who are priests of the Order, as in the sight of God appears to them more expedient. ³They must be careful not to be angry or disturbed at the sin of another, for anger and disturbance impede charity in themselves and in others.

[Chapter VIII]

The Election of the General Minister of This Fraternity
and the Chapter of Pentecost

¹Let all the brothers always be bound to have one of the brothers of this Order as general minister and servant of the whole fraternity and let them be strictly bound to obey him. ²When he dies, let the election of his successor be made by the provincial ministers and custodians in the Chapter of Pentecost, at which all the provincial ministers are bound to assemble in whatever place the general minister may have designated. ³Let them do this once in every three years, or at other longer or shorter intervals, as determined by the aforesaid minister.

⁴If, at any time, it appears to the body of the provincial ministers and custodians that the aforesaid general minister is not qualified for the service and general welfare of the brothers, let the aforesaid brothers, to whom the election is committed, be bound to elect another as custodian in the name of the Lord.

⁵Moreover, after the Chapter of Pentecost, the provincial ministers and custodians may each, if they wish and it seems expedient to them, convoke a Chapter of the brothers in their custodies once in the same year.

[Chapter IX]

Preachers

¹The brothers may not preach in the diocese of any bishop when he has opposed their doing so. ²And let none of the brothers dare to preach in any way to the people unless he has been examined and approved by

a. The translator has taken the liberty of translating *miser cordia* more freely as “a heart full of mercy.” This translation follows the more etymological sense of the word, *miser + cor*, that is, a heart sensitive to mercy.

the general minister of this fraternity and the office of preacher has been conferred upon him.

³Moreover, I admonish and exhort those brothers that when they preach their *language be well-considered and chaste* for the benefit and edification of the people, announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and glory, with brevity, because our Lord when on earth kept his word brief.

Ps 13:7; 19:13

Rom 9:28; Is 10:22ff

[Chapter X]

The Admonition and Correction of the Brothers

¹Let the brothers who are the ministers and servants of the others visit and admonish their brothers and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their soul and our rule. ²Let the brothers who are subject, however, remember that, for God's sake, they have renounced their own wills. ³Therefore, I strictly command them to obey their ministers in everything they have promised the Lord to observe and which is not against their soul or our Rule

⁴Wherever the brothers may be who know and feel they cannot observe the Rule spiritually, they can and should have recourse to their ministers. ⁵Let the ministers, moreover, receive them charitably and kindly and have such familiarity with them^a that these same brothers may speak and deal with them as masters with their servants, ⁶for so it must be that the ministers are the servants of all the brothers.

⁷Moreover, I admonish and exhort the brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy and greed, of care and solicitude for the things of this world, of detraction and murmuring. Let those who are illiterate not be anxious to learn, ⁸but let them pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity, ⁹to pray always to Him with a pure heart, to have humility and patience in persecution and infirmity, ¹⁰and to love those who persecute, rebuke and find fault with us, because the Lord says: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you.* ¹¹*Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ¹²*But whoever perseveres to the end shall be saved.*

Mt 13:22; Lk 12:15

Mt 5:44

Mt 5:10

Mt 10:22

a. *Familiaritas* is a difficult word to translate, containing a wide variety of nuances: that of family, of a servant, of familiarity or intimacy, or of solidarity. All of these nuances can be read into this sentence in which Francis attempts to describe a fundamental characteristic of a minister.

*[Chapter XI]*The Brothers May Not Enter the Monasteries of Nuns^a

¹I strictly command all the brothers not to have any suspicious dealings or conversations with women, ²and they may not enter the monasteries of nuns, excepting those brothers to whom special permission has been granted by the Apostolic See; ³and they may not be godfathers to men or women, so that scandal may not arise among the brothers or concerning them on account of this.

[Chapter XII]

Those Going Among the Saracens and Other Non-Believers

¹Let those brothers who wish by divine inspiration to go among the Saracens or other non-believers ask permission to go from their provincial ministers. ²The ministers, however, may not grant permission except to those whom they see fit to be sent.

³In addition to these points, I command the ministers through obedience to petition from our Lord the Pope for one of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, who would be the governor, protector and corrector of this fraternity, ⁴so that, being always submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic Faith, we may observe poverty, humility and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised.

It is forbidden, therefore, for anyone to tamper with this decree which we have confirmed, or rashly dare to oppose it. If anyone presume to attempt this, let him know that he shall incur the anger of Almighty God and of His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at the Lateran, the twenty-ninth day of November, in the eighth year of Our pontificate.

a. This entire paragraph is reflective of Cistercian and Premonstratentian influences. Both religious communities had attracted many female followers, struggled to establish monasteries or religious houses for them close to their own, and thus became increasingly obligated to minister to their needs. As a result of these developments, legislation on the enclosure became more defined at this period of history as the *Form and Manner of Life* imposed by Cardinal Hugolino on the Poor Ladies of San Damiano in 1219 indicates. Cf. *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, edited and translated by Regis J. Armstrong (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1993), page 92ff.

to give his consent to the poor man, the meaning of this vision became evident.

Off 17:ix,d The supreme pontiff gave the twelve brothers his kind consent concerning the confirmation of their rule and also gave them his mandate concerning the preaching of penance. With joy, he blessed and dismissed them, but he promised that later, when their number had increased, he would give them even more.^a

1C 33
1C 34 ²²Therefore, it was not without reason that Blessed Francis thought it a wondrous thing that he had obtained such great benefits from the Vicar of Christ, and so he gave thanks to divine mercy for all. Completing his visit with a prayer at the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, he joyfully left the city with his brothers.

Off 17:ix,d The purpose of the gift moved him to act immediately, lest perhaps he remain ungrateful, and he dutifully began to make plans with the brothers: first, how by observing the rule they could make progress in virtue; and second, how by edifying their neighbors they might earn interest for the Lord on the *silver piece* entrusted to their care.

Lk 19:13

1C 34 As they were dutifully discussing these and other similar things, it happened that they came, *late in the day, to a deserted place* where they seemed to be bereft of all human aid, though they were in need of bodily refreshment because of the hardships of their journey. But divine providence, which was with these poor ones, provided bread through a man who came up unexpectedly and disappeared all of a sudden.^b They ate the bread, marveled at the manner it had been provided, and, returning thanks to the Lord, continued on their journey much comforted. Then they came to a solitary place near the city of Orte, where they remained for almost forty days in great lack of necessities. Some of their number went begging in that same city. There they renewed the beginnings of holy poverty with great joy and confirmed it with a perpetual covenant.^c

Mt 14:15

1C 35 ²³These zealots of a new justice next entered the Spoleto valley, and a pious discussion arose whether in the future they should live in solitary places or among people. But truly, the holy man of God, as if de-

a. Julian here briefly summarizes Thomas of Celano's extended development of the oral approval and commission given by Innocent III.

b. Julian writes, "divine Providence" is at work in this story. Thomas of Celano writes, "God's grace" is operating. Julian, unlike Thomas of Celano, hints at the miraculous. Thomas of Celano writes the man who gave them bread simply left. Julian writes that the man disappeared.

c. In both 1C and Julian, this deserted place has significance for the brothers' bond to poverty. Thomas of Celano writes: *coeperunt propterea cum sancta paupertate ibidem habere commercium*. Julian writes: *ibique cum ingenti gaudio sanctae paupertatis initia renovantes, pacto illam perpetuo firmaverunt*.

- Off 18:i spairing of his own efforts, anticipated every undertaking with devout prayer—through which he infallibly learned what he was to do—and, impelled by a zeal that came from God, chose to live for the gain of his neighbors rather than for himself alone.
- 1C 36 Then, comforted *in the Lord*, Saint Francis began *to speak out more boldly* owing to the apostolic authority he had been granted, and going around through *cities, towns and villages*, he steadfastly preached penance. He was particularly careful *to show himself blameless in all things*, lest he be thought to gloss over the truth with flattering words. Eph 6:10
Acts 9:28
Mt 9:35
- Off 18:ii Educated men marveled at the power of the words of him who had not been taught by man, and seeing the noble and lowborn, rich and poor crowd around him in bands, they astutely made their way to him as though to a new star rising in the darkness. In fact, he provided a plan of salvation to persons of every state and condition, age and sex, giving them all a rule of life. Today, the church rejoices that his felicitous leadership of both sexes has brought about a threefold army of those who are to be saved. Tb 10:13; 2 Cor 6:4
- 1C 36
- 1C 37
- 1C 38; Off 18:iii As we mentioned above, he founded three Orders, the first of which he prized above all others by profession and habit, and which, as he had written in its Rule, he called the Order of Lesser Brothers.^a The Second Order, the Order of the Poor Ladies and virgins of the Lord, also mentioned above, likewise took its fruitful origin from him.^b The Third, also an order of considerable perfection, is called the Order of Penitents, which profitably brings together clerics and laity, virgins, unmarried, and married persons of both sexes.
- LR I 1
- Off 18:iv ²⁴Who will be able to tell in detail just how Blessed Francis himself magnificently served the Order of Lesser Brothers in the perfection of every virtue by going beyond what was asked, or how he instructed his brothers and sons concerning all matters of true religion?^c
- Now sufficiently taught in all things perfect by his tutor, the grace of the Holy Spirit, he wished to come to know in himself every kind of perfection by experience. And so, he first taught his brothers by his example those things which he later urged on them by frequent sweet words.^d

a. See LJS 14, above.

b. See LJS 14 above and 1C 18 which refer to the Second Order, or Poor Clares.

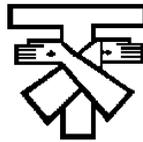
c. See 1C 38–41, which speaks of the virtues of the first brothers. Julian alludes to this material here and also in LJS 26 below.

d. Here Julian summarizes 1C 41.

- 1C 42 How these brothers, personally serving as knights under such a leader, became more proficient in all perfection by his teaching and example, must, I think, be kept secret rather than described in detail with profuse words. For the blessed man *stood watch* with the highest vigilance *over* himself and his brothers. He continually forewarned them most diligently not only lest they suffer some obvious attack of sin, but also lest a secret thought grow into a vice, lest any deceit, under the
- 1C 43 guise of virtue or the occasion of necessity, rush upon them, or death penetrate their inner selves through the unguarded openings of the exterior senses.
- 1C 42 He did not allow in himself or others, any punishable offense to pass with impunity, lest perchance a lax hand bring on the sluggishness of neglect. In fact, he exercised the rigor of justice in himself so greatly that if ever, as sometimes happens, a temptation of the flesh stole over him, if it was winter, he would throw himself into a place full of ice or snow to drive away the illicit impulse.
- 1C 43 ²⁵Seeing him hold himself under such great restraint, the other brothers were moved to do similar things. Thus, as has been said, the man of God not only uncompromisingly repressed the urgings of the flesh, but also secured his bodily senses with bars of the greatest caution, lest they cling to any vanity.
- 1C 42 While he was staying at a place called Rivo Torto near Assisi, it
- 1C 43 happened that the Emperor Otto, with much pomp and a great retinue, was passing on the way to Rome for his coronation. Blessed Francis, who was residing *beside the road* with his brothers in their hovel, wished that neither he nor any of his brothers go out or even look out to see the emperor, but he instructed one of them to proclaim to the emperor continually that this sort of glory would endure only a little while.
- 1C 42 ²⁶That most true zealot of poverty settled himself, together with his brothers, in an abandoned dwelling, in the area noted above, that they might protect themselves there as best they could from the heat and rain. this dwelling was so confining that they were unable to rest comfortably in it. But the narrowness of the place did not constrict the *wideness of their hearts*. Quite the contrary, they lived happily in this extreme want and persisted in *giving thanks and praise to God* continually. The holy man wrote the names of the brothers on the beams of the little house so that no one could disturb in the slightest another who
- Is 21:8; Hb 2:1
- Mt 13:19
- Ps 119:45; Jer 17:1
Is 51:3

wished to rest or pray, and that each brother might know the place assigned to him.

One day a man came to the place with an ass, maybe looking for shade, and wanting to enter freely and without rebuff said to the ass: “Get in there. We’ll do this place a favor yet.” But the man of God liked neither the words nor intentions of this fellow who believed that the brothers had come together there to build houses and enlarge or appropriate the little spot for themselves. So the saint soon left the little house and moved to the place called the Portiuncula, where he had rebuilt a church of the Glorious Virgin.



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter eight: Scripture in SFO Life

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 27–31)

INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

When interpreting Scripture, we should be attentive to what God wanted to reveal through the authors for our salvation. We need to see Scripture as a unified whole with Jesus Christ at the center. We must also read Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church, so that we may come to grasp a true interpretation of the Scriptures. The task of giving an authoritative interpretation of the Word of God has been entrusted to the Magisterium. Last, we need to remember and recognize that there is a coherence of the truths of faith within Scripture (cf. CCC, nos. 112–114).

The Church recognizes two senses of Scripture, the literal and the spiritual. In probing the literal meaning of the texts, it is necessary to determine their literary form, such as history, hymns, wisdom sayings, poetry, parable, or other forms of figurative language. “The *literal sense* is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis [the process scholars use to determine the meaning of the text], following the rules of sound interpretation: ‘All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal’” (CCC, no. 116, citing St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 1, 10).

The spiritual senses of Sacred Scripture derive from the unity of God’s plan for salvation. The text of Scripture discloses God’s plan. The realities and events of which it speaks can also be signs of the divine plan. There are three spiritual senses of Scripture:

1. The *allegorical sense*. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ’s victory over sin and also of Christian Baptism.
2. The *moral sense*. The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written “for our instruction” (1 Cor 10:11).
3. The *anagogical sense*. ... We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem. (CCC, no. 117)

The Church’s Scripture scholars are expected to work according to these principles to develop a better understanding of Scripture for God’s people. Interpretation of Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Magisterium, which exercises the divine commission to hold fast to and to interpret authoritatively God’s Word.

OTHER BIBLICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Our response to God’s call to holiness involves regular, prayerful study of Scripture. “Such is the force and power of the word of God that it can serve ... the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life” (CCC, no. 131, citing

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DV, no. 21. [DV: Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* [*Dei Verbum*]).

Catholic biblical scholars have made distinguished contributions to scriptural studies. Their outstanding service to the Church has assisted believers to grow in their faith by an authentic understanding of Scripture. Two of the various challenges they face come from interpretations posed, on the one hand, by those who interpret the Bible only in a literal fashion, and, on the other hand, by those who deny the supernatural aspects of the Gospels.

FROM THE CATECHISM

1. Why must Revelation be transmitted?

God “[wills everyone] to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”: that is, of Christ Jesus. Christ must be proclaimed to all nations and individuals, so that this revelation may reach the ends of the earth. (CCC, no. 74, citing 1 Tm 2:4; cf. Jn 14:6)

2. How is Apostolic Tradition linked to Apostolic Succession?

Christ the Lord ... commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel. (CCC, no. 75, citing DV, no. 7; cf. Mt 28:19–20; Mk 16:15)

In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them “their own positions of teaching authority.” (CCC, no. 77, citing DV, no. 7; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haeres*)

3. Why does the Church venerate Scripture?

The Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord’s Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God’s Word and Christ’s Body. In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength. (CCC, nos. 103–104; cf. DV, no. 21)

Biblical Literalism

In the United States a certain number of Christians of many denominations—often called *Fundamentalists*—have adopted the supremacy of Scripture as their sole foundation. They also approach Scripture from a viewpoint of private interpretation. This they do in the strictest literal sense without appreciation of the various literary forms that the biblical authors used within the specific cultural circumstances in which they were writing.

The Church’s response to Fundamentalism is that Revelation is transmitted by Apostolic Tradition and Scripture together. The Church and Apostolic Tradition existed before the written New Testament. Her Apostles preached the Gospel orally before writing it down. The Apostles appointed bishops to succeed them with the authority to continue their teaching. Scripture alone is insufficient. Authoritative teaching is also needed. That is given to us by the Church’s teaching office. Catholics, then, accept Scripture and Tradition as one “sacred deposit of the Word of God” (CCC, no. 97, citing DV, no. 10). Although this sets us apart from those who believe only in the Bible as their source of revelation, Catholics accept and honor both Scripture and Tradition “with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (CCC, no. 82, citing DV, no. 9).

In response to biblical literalism, the Church holds that “the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures” (DV, no. 11). At the same time, the Church recognizes that the interpreter of Scripture needs to attend to the literary forms—such as poetry, symbol, parable, history, song, or prayer—in which the Bible is written. The interpreter “must look for that meaning which the sacred writer . . . given the circumstance of his time and culture, intended to express and did in fact express, through the medium of a contemporary literary form” (DV, no. 12).

Historical Reductionism

Another challenge comes from scholars and others who deny the supernatural aspects of the Gospels, such as the Incarnation, Virgin Birth, miracles, and the Resurrection. We call this *reductionism* because it reduces all Scripture to the natural order and eliminates the reality of divine intervention.

The Church’s Pontifical Biblical Commission has dealt with approaches of this kind in its publications *Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels* and *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. The Pontifical Biblical Commission lists five unacceptable assumptions found in forms of scriptural interpretation:

1. the denial of a supernatural order;
2. the denial of God’s intervention in the world through revelation;
3. the denial of the possibility and existence of miracles;
4. the incompatibility of faith with historical truth;
5. an almost *a priori* denial of the historical value of the nature of the documents of revelation. (Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Historical Truth of the Gospels* [1964], no. 5).

The Church approaches Scripture as God’s revealed Word. Its authors wrote under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is more than a human work; it is God’s words put into human words. It will always be a fountain of faith for those who read it in a spirit of prayer.

Pope Paul VI: “On Evangelization in the Modern World” (Evangelii Nuntiandi), Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, December 8, 1975

21. Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization. The above questions

will ask, whether they are people to whom Christ has never been proclaimed, or baptized people who do not practice, or people who live as nominal Christians but according to principles that are in no way Christian, or people who are seeking, and not without suffering, something or someone whom they sense but cannot name. Other questions will arise, deeper and more demanding ones, questions evoked by this witness which involves presence, sharing, solidarity, and which is an essential element, and generally the first one, in evangelization.”[51]

All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers. We are thinking especially of the responsibility incumbent on immigrants in the country that receives them.

22. Nevertheless this always remains insufficient, because even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified--what Peter called always having “your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have”[52] --and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed. The history of the Church, from the discourse of Peter on the morning of Pentecost onwards, has been intermingled and identified with the history of this proclamation. At every new phase of human history, the Church, constantly gripped by the desire to evangelize, has but one preoccupation: whom to send to proclaim the mystery of Jesus? In what way is this mystery to be proclaimed? How can one ensure that it will resound and reach all those who should hear it? This proclamation--kerygma, preaching or catechesis--occupies such an important place in evangelization that it has often become synonymous with it; and yet it is only one aspect of evangelization.

23. In fact the proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it. An adherence to the truths which the Lord in His mercy has revealed; still more, an adherence to a program of life--a life henceforth transformed--which He proposes. In a word, adherence to the kingdom, that is to say, to the “new world,” to the new state of things, to the new manner of being, of living, of living in community, which the Gospel inaugurates. Such an adherence, which cannot remain abstract and unincarnated, reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers. Thus those whose life has been transformed enter a community which is itself a sign of transformation, a sign of newness of life: it is the Church, the visible sacrament of salvation.[53] Our entry into the ecclesial community will in its turn be expressed through many other signs which prolong and unfold the sign of the Church. In the dynamism of evangelization, a person who accepts the Church as the Word which saves[54] normally translates it into the following sacramental acts: adherence to the Church, and acceptance of the sacraments, which manifest and support this adherence through the grace which they confer.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

The Praises of God and the Blessing
(The Parchment Given to Brother Leo on LaVerna)^a
(1224)

Leo of Assisi, who was with Francis on LaVerna in the Fall of 1224, wrote in red ink on one side of this piece of parchment: “Two years before his death, the blessed Francis spent forty days on Mount LaVerna from the Feast of the Assumption of the holy Virgin Mary until the September Feast of Saint Michael, in honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and the blessed Michael the Archangel. And the Lord’s hand was upon him. After the vision and message of the Seraph and the impression of Christ’s stigmata upon his body, he composed these praises written on the other side of this page and wrote them in his own hand, thanking God for the kindness bestowed on him.”

In the other side of the same parchment Brother Leo wrote: “The blessed Francis wrote this blessing for me with his own hand.” Then: “In a similar way he made with his own hand this sign TAU together with a skull.”

The original parchment is now preserved in the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. In preparing his edition of these texts, Kajetan Esser relied on the work of Duane Lapsanski who had examined the original parchment with the help of infrared technology and was able to read the passages now illegible to the naked eye.^b Even with the aid of technology, the parchment was still illegible in certain places, particularly at the edges and on the folds, Lapsanski then had recourse to early manuscript copies of the texts. These supplemental readings will be indicated by placing the text in bold print. Esser, relying on a broader examination of those manuscripts, changed some of Lapsanski’s readings. These variants will be noted in the footnotes.

a. The original text of these writings can be found in a small piece of parchment on which Francis wrote on both sides. It is one of the two autographs of Francis which remain.

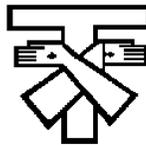
b. Cf. Duane Lapsanski, “The Autographs of the ‘Chartula’ of St. Francis of Assisi,” *AFH* 67 (1967) 18–37.

A: The Praises of God

(Edition of Duane Lapsanski and Kajetan Esser)

- ¹You are the **holy** Lord God *Who does wonderful things.*^a Ps 77:15
- ²You are strong. *You are great.* You are the most high. Ps 86:10
 You are the almighty king. You *holy Father,* Jn 17:11
 King of *heaven and earth.* Mt 11:25
- ³You are three and one, the Lord *God of gods;* Ps 136:2
 You are the good, all good, the highest good,
 Lord God *living and true.* 1 Thes 1:9
- ⁴You are love, charity; You are wisdom, You are humility,
 You are **patience, You are beauty, You are meekness,** Ps 71:5
 You are security, You are rest,
 You are gladness and joy, You are our hope, You are justice,
 You are moderation, You are all our riches to sufficiency.
- ⁵You are beauty, Your are meekness,
 You are *the protector,* You are our custodian and defender, Ps 31:5
 You are *strength,* You are refreshment. ⁶You are our hope, Ps 43:2
 You are our faith, Your are our charity,
 You are all our sweetness, **You are our eternal life:**
Great and wonderful Lord, Almighty God, Merciful Savior.

a. Passages in italics indicate scriptural quotations or allusions found in Kajetan Esser's edition.



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Supplemental Readings

Chapter nine: Vatican II & SFO Rule and Constitutions

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder

Thomas of Celano: "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul" (The Second Life of Saint Francis) (1245–1247)

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Chapter XV

THE DISCERNMENT OF SAINT FRANCIS^a

AC 50 ²²One night while all were sleeping, one of his flock cried out: "Brothers! I'm dying! I'm dying of hunger!" At once that extraordinary shepherd got up, and hurried to treat the sick lamb with the right medicine. He ordered them to set the table, although filled with everyday fare. Since there was no wine—as often happened—they made do with water. Francis started eating first. Then, he invited the rest of the brothers to do the same, for charity's sake, so their brother would not be embarrassed.

Once *they had taken their food in the fear of the Lord*, so that nothing would be lacking in this act of charity, the father wove for his sons a

Acts 2:46,
9:31

long parable about the virtue of discernment. He ordered them to *season with salt every sacrifice to God*. With concern he reminded them that in offering service to God each one should consider his own strength.

Lv 2:13
Jn 16:12

He insisted that it was just as much a sin to deprive the body without discernment of what it really needed as, prompted by gluttony, to offer it too much. And he added: "Dear brothers, realize that, what I just did by eating was not my own choice, but an exception,^b demanded by fraternal charity. Let the charity, not the food, be an example to you, for the latter feeds the belly while the former feeds the spirit."

- a. The Latin word *discretio* is translated as discernment. Benedicta Ward notes: "Since the eighteenth century, 'discretion' has been increasingly used in connection with good behavior, especially in speech, but earlier it was synonymous with 'discernment', both coming from '*discretio*' the Latin form of '*diakresis*.'" Cf. Benedicta Ward, "Discernment: A Rare Bird," in *The Way Supplement* 64 (1989): 10–18.
- b. The Latin word *dispensatio* [exception] is used in a sense close to *epikeia*, exceptions to a rule that in itself is good.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder
St. Bonaventure: "The Minor Legend of Saint Francis" (1260–1263)

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Sixth Lesson

- LMj VII 1 Through the love of the most sublime poverty, the man of God prospered and grew rich in holy simplicity. Although he certainly possessed nothing of his own in this world, he seemed to possess all good things in the very Author of this world. With the steady gaze of a dove, that is, the simple application and pure consideration of the mind, he referred all things to the supreme Artisan and recognized, loved, and praised their Maker in all things.^a It came to pass, by a heavenly gift of kindness, that he possessed all things in God and
- LMj VIII 6 God in all things. In consideration of the primal origin of all things, he would call all creatures, however insignificant, by the names of brother and sister since they came forth with him from the one source. He embraced those, however, more tenderly and passion-

a. Bonaventure's use of literary and artistic terminology in his theology of God bears consideration in the context of liturgy. As the book of Creation, the world speaks eloquently of the divine Author. Learning to read the book of Creation parallels the process of learning how to read the Psalter, as both activities are synonymous with prayer; see: *The Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, c. 18, n. 16 (VII, 470b–471a) and *The Rule for Novices*, c. 1 (VIII, 475a–476b). The supreme Artisan's activity in the world offers insight into the ultimate significance of the religious art. Just as creatures are visual expressions reflecting the divine Artist's creativity, so, too, is liturgical art a visual reminder of God's presence in the world, see: *The Commentary on the First Book of Sentences*, d.3, art. unicus, q.2, concl. (I, 72b) and *The Commentary on the Fourth Book of Sentences*, d. 9, art. 1, q.2, concl. (III, 203b). Bonaventure likens God's presentation of saints to the Church to the actions of a master painter who offers students models to reproduce in their own paintings. By attempting to depict these models, they themselves will become masters, see: *The Sermon on the Birth of John the Baptist* (1), (IX, 539a).

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- LMj VIII 7–9 ately, who portray by a natural likeness the gracious gentleness of Christ and exemplify it in the Scriptures. It came to pass by a supernatural influx of power that the nature of brute animals was moved in some gracious manner toward him. Even inanimate things obeyed his command, as if this same holy *man, so simple and upright*, had already returned to the state of *innocence*. Jb 2:3



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Supplemental Readings

Chapter ten (Prologue): **Candidacy** in the SFO

Pope Benedict XVI: "Sacrament of Charity" (Sacramentum Caritatis) — "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons, and the Lay Faithful on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission," 22 February 2007

The all-encompassing effect of eucharistic worship

71. Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (*1 Cor* 10:31). Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape. The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. *Rom* 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (cf. *1 Cor* 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God. (203)

(203) Cf. Saint Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, IV, 20, 7: PG 7, 1037.

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition*

From Chapter 4: 'The Lord Led Me Among Them'

74–75

FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS

In his care of people with Hansen's disease, Francis was following that example of Jesus that he knew from the gospel. Jesus calls others, after his wilderness retreat, to conversion, to repent, to change their lives. To show the effects of this turning to God Jesus does something specific: he heals people who are suffering from disease, both physical disease and sickness of spirit (Matthew 4:23–4). Later in the Gospel, Matthew says, 'When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him, and a leper came to him,' whom Jesus healed (Matthew 8:1–3).

The special role of people with leprosy appears in the exceptions that Francis makes where they are concerned, even in the Rule. Despite his strict prohibitions about receiving money, he makes special

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provisions for one group of people: the brothers ‘may accept money for urgent needs of the lepers’.⁶ He places in his list of the ‘companions of Jesus’ the sick, those who beg, and lepers, including them with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the disciples among those who live by alms. The brothers should ‘rejoice’ to be in their company.

In his own writings Francis does not speak of the voice from the crucifix at San Damiano telling him to ‘rebuild the church’. He never refers to the marks on his body (the stigmata), which others associated with his profound compassion for the sufferings of Christ. Rather Francis speaks about people with leprosy as the context for his conversion to the gospel way of life, the practical experience of ‘being with’ them and serving them. Here he found the suffering members of Christ’s Body, and beginning with this experience he participated in the passion of Christ.

Penitents served in the leper hospital of Assisi already, so Francis ‘did mercy’ most likely in the midst of other brother and sister penitents who had taken on this service at the risk of contracting the disease themselves (a widespread fear at the time). To go ‘among the lepers’ meant exposing himself to risk, for the sake of others considered ‘dead to the world’. There may even be reasons to suggest that Francis’ multiple illnesses in later life may have derived from infection with the tubercular form of Hansen’s disease. And during his lifetime, or shortly thereafter, a place for the brothers who contracted the disease was established at San Lazzaro del Valloncello, outside Assisi.⁷

6. RegNb [Earlier Rule] 8:12.

7. ‘Lebbroso’ in *Dizionario Francese* (Padua: Messaggero, 1983), col. 851.

Pope Benedict XVI: “Saved in Hope” (*Spe Salvi*), 30 Nov. 2007

26. It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of this present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of “redemption” which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot by itself resolve the question of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed by death. The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Rom* 8:38- 39). If this absolute love exists, with its absolute certainty, then—only then—is man “redeemed”, whatever should happen to him in his particular circumstances. This is what it means to say: Jesus Christ has “redeemed” us. Through him we have become certain of God, a God who is not a remote “first cause” of the world, because his only-begotten Son has become man and of him everyone can say: “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal* 2:20).



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Chapter eleven (1-2-3): The SFO Rule

Pope Benedict XVI: "Saved in Hope" (*Spe Salvi*), 30 Nov. 2007

27. In this sense it is true that anyone who does not know God, even though he may entertain all kinds of hopes, is ultimately without hope, without the great hope that sustains the whole of life (cf. *Eph* 2:12). Man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God—God who has loved us and who continues to love us "to the end," until all "is accomplished" (cf. *Jn* 13:1 and 19:30). Whoever is moved by love begins to perceive what "life" really is. He begins to perceive the meaning of the word of hope that we encountered in the Baptismal Rite: from faith I await "eternal life"—the true life which, whole and unthreatened, in all its fullness, is simply life. Jesus, who said that he had come so that we might have life and have it in its fullness, in abundance (cf. *Jn* 10:10), has also explained to us what "life" means: "this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (*Jn* 17:3). Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life. If we are in relation with him who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life. Then we "live".

Vatican II: "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*), Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, 7 December 1965

34. Throughout the course of the centuries, men have labored to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort. To believers, this point is settled: considered in itself, this human activity accords with God's will. For man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness;(1) a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all. Thus, by the subjection of all things to man, the name of God would be wonderful in all the earth.(2)

This mandate concerns the whole of everyday activity as well. For while providing the substance of life for themselves and their families, men and women are performing their activities in a way which appropriately benefits society. They can justly consider that by their labor they are unfolding the Creator's work, consulting the advantages of their brother men, and are contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan.(3)

Thus, far from thinking that works produced by man's own talent and energy are in opposition to God's power, and that the rational creature exists as a kind of rival to the Creator, Christians are convinced that the triumphs of the human race are a sign of God's grace and the flowering of His own mysterious design. For the greater man's power becomes, the farther his individual and community responsibility extends. Hence it is clear that men are not deterred by the Christian

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message from building up the world, or impelled to neglect the welfare of their fellows, but that they are rather more stringently bound to do these very things.(4)

35. Human activity, to be sure, takes its significance from its relationship to man. Just as it proceeds from man, so it is ordered toward man. For when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources, he goes outside of himself and beyond himself. Rightly understood this kind of growth is of greater value than any external riches which can be garnered. A man is more precious for what he is than for what he has.(5) Similarly, all that men do to obtain greater justice, wider brotherhood, a more humane disposition of social relationships has greater worth than technical advances. For these advances can supply the material for human progress, but of themselves alone they can never actually bring it about.

Hence, the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and that it allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it.

2. Cf. *Ps.* 8:7 and 10.

3. Cf. John XXIII, encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), p. 297.

4. Cf. Message to all mankind sent by the Fathers at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, Oct. 20, 1962: AAS 54 (1962), p. 823.

5. Cf. Paul VI, Address to the diplomatic corps Jan 7 1965: AAS 57 (1965), p. 232.

Vatican II: "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*), Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, 21 November 1964

42. "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in Him".(227) But, God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us;(228) thus the first and most necessary gift is love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God. Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each one of the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues. For charity, as the bond of perfection and the fullness of the law,(229) rules over all the means of attaining holiness and gives life to these same means.(12*) It is charity which guides us to our final end. It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ.

Since Jesus, the Son of God, manifested His charity by laying down His life for us, so too no one has greater love than he who lays down his life for Christ and His brothers.(230) From the earliest times, then, some Christians have been called upon—and some will always be called

upon—to give the supreme testimony of this love to all men, but especially to persecutors. The Church, then, considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the fullest proof of love. By martyrdom a disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world—as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood. Though few are presented such an opportunity, nevertheless all must be prepared to confess Christ before men. They must be prepared to make this profession of faith even in the midst of persecutions, which will never be lacking to the Church, in following the way of the cross.

Likewise, the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel by Our Lord to His disciples.(13*) An eminent position among these is held by virginity or the celibate state.(231) This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls,(232) whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart. (14*) This perfect continency, out of desire for the kingdom of heaven, has always been held in particular honor in the Church. The reason for this was and is that perfect continency for the love of God is an incentive to charity, and is certainly a particular source of spiritual fecundity in the world.

The Church continually keeps before it the warning of the Apostle which moved the faithful to charity, exhorting them to experience personally what Christ Jesus had known within Himself. This was the same Christ Jesus, who “emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave . . . becoming obedient to death”,(233) and because of us “being rich, he became poor”.(234) Because the disciples must always offer an imitation of and a testimony to the charity and humility of Christ, Mother Church rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who very closely follow their Saviour who debased Himself to our comprehension. There are some who, in their freedom as sons of God, renounce their own wills and take upon themselves the state of poverty. Still further, some become subject of their own accord to another man, in the matter of perfection for love of God. This is beyond the measure of the commandments, but is done in order to become more fully like the obedient Christ.(15*)

Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive. Let all then have care that they guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love. Let them heed the admonition of the Apostle to those who use this world; let them not come to terms with this world; for this world, as we see it, is passing away.(235)(16*)

227 1 Jn. 4:16.

228 Cf. Rom. 5:5.

229 Cf. Col. 3:14; Rom. 13:10.

230 Cf. 1 Jn. 3:16; Jn. 15:13.

231 Cf 1 Cor. 7:32-34.

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter eleven — 4

232 Cf Mt. 19:11; 1 Cor.7:7.

233 Phil. 2:7-8.

234 2 Cor. 8:9.

235 Cf 1. Cor. 7:31ff.

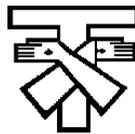
(12*) Cfr. S. Augustinus, Enchir. 121, 32: PL 40 288. S. Thomas Summa Theol. II-II, q. 184, a. 1. Pius XII, Adhort. Apost. Menti nostrae, 23 sept. 1950: AAS 42 (1950) p. 660.

(13*) De consiliis in genere, cfr. Origenes, Comm. Rom. X, 14: PG 14 127S B. S. Augustinus, De S. Virginitate, 15, 15: PL 40, 403. S. Thomas, Summa Theol. I-II, q. 100, a. 2 C (in fine); II-II, q. 44, a. 4 ad 3

(14*) De praestantia sacrae virginitatis, cfr. Tertullianus, Exhort. Cast. 10: PL 2, 925 C. S. Cyprianus, Hab. Virg. 3 et 22: PL 4, 443 B et 461 A. A. S. Athanasius (?), De Virg.: PG 28, 252 ss. S. Io. Chrysostomus, De Virg.: PG 48, 533 u.

(15*) De spirituali paupertate et oboedientia testimonia praccipua S.Scripturae et Patrum afferuntur in Relatione pp. 152-153.

(16*) De praxi effectiva consiliorum quae non omnibus imponitur, cfr. S. Io. Chrysostomus, In Matth. Hom. 7, 7: PG S7, 8 I s. 5. Ambrosius, De Vidu s, 4, 23: PL 16, 241 s.



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter twelve (4): A Focus on Christ

Vatican II: "Dogmatic Constitution of the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*) Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, 21 November 1964

42. "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in Him".(227) But, God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us;(228) thus the first and most necessary gift is love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God. Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each one of the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues. For charity, as the bond of perfection and the fullness of the law,(229) rules over all the means of attaining holiness and gives life to these same means.(12*) It is charity which guides us to our final end. It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ.

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The Church continually keeps before it the warning of the Apostle which moved the faithful to charity, exhorting them to experience personally what Christ Jesus had known within Himself. This was the same Christ Jesus, who "emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave . . . becoming obedient to death",(233) and because of us "being rich, he became poor".(234)

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter twelve — 2

Because the disciples must always offer an imitation of and a testimony to the charity and humility of Christ, Mother Church rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who very closely follow their Saviour who debased Himself to our comprehension. There are some who, in their freedom as sons of God, renounce their own wills and take upon themselves the state of poverty. Still further, some become subject of their own accord to another man, in the matter of perfection for love of God. This is beyond the measure of the commandments, but is done in order to become more fully like the obedient Christ.(15*)

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(13*) De consiliis in genere, cfr. Origenes, Comm. Rom. X, 14: PG 14 127S B. S. Augustinus, De S. Virginitate, 15, 15: PL 40, 403. S. Thomas, Summa Theol. I-II, q. 100, a. 2 C (in fine); II-II, q. 44, a. 4 ad 3

(14*) De praestantia sacrae virginitatis, cfr. Tertullianus, Exhort. Cast. 10: PL 2, 925 C. S. Cyprianus, Hab. Virg. 3 et 22: PL 4, 443 B et 461 A. A. S. Athanasius (?), De Virg.: PG 28, 252 ss. S. Io. Chrysostomus, De Virg.: PG 48, 533 u.

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(16*) De praxi effectiva consiliorum quae non omnibus imponitur, cfr. S. Io. Chrysostomus, In Matth. Hom. 7, 7: PG S7, 8 I s. 5. Ambrosius, De Vidu s, 4, 23: PL 16, 241 s.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

The Undated Writings

The Admonitions

A medieval admonition was more than a warning or a calling to mind; it had more of a religious sense in which a biblical passage or image was presented and, in light of it, a practical application was made. Thus these twenty-eight teachings of Francis offer insights into his biblical thought and the ways in which he translated them into the ordinary experiences of daily life. Although some of these pieces offer clues as to their composition or deliverance, they are difficult to date. The five manuscript collections of the thirteenth century contain only one consistent document: the following twenty-eight pieces or admonitions. This attests to their importance in the early Franciscan tradition and to their place as Francis's "Canticle of Minority."

[I. The Body of Christ]

¹The Lord Jesus Christ says to his disciples: *I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.* ²*If you knew me, you would also know my Father; and from now on, you do know him and have seen him.* ³*Philip says to him: Lord, show us the Father and it will be enough for us.* ⁴*Jesus says to him: Have I been with you for so long a time and you have not known me? Philip, whoever sees me sees my Father as well.*

Jn 14:6–9

⁵The Father dwells in *inaccessible light*, and *God is spirit*, and *no one has ever seen God.* ⁶Therefore He cannot be seen except in the Spirit because *it is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh has nothing to offer.* ⁷But because He is equal to the Father, the Son is not seen by anyone other than the Father or other than the Holy Spirit.

1 Tm 6:16; Jn 4:24

Jn 1:18

Jn 6:63

⁸All those who saw the Lord Jesus according to the humanity, therefore, and did not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Divinity that He is the true Son of God were condemned. ⁹Now in the same way, all those who see the sacrament sanctified by the words of the Lord upon the altar at the hands of the priest in the form of bread and wine, and who do not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Divinity that it is truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, are condemned. ¹⁰[This] is affirmed by the Most High Himself Who says:

*This is my Body and the Blood of my new covenant [which will be shed for many];*¹¹ and *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.*¹² It is the Spirit of the Lord, therefore, That lives in Its faithful, That receives the Body and Blood of the Lord.¹³ All others who do not share in this same Spirit and presume to receive Him eat and drink *judgment on themselves.*

Mk 14:22,24
Jn 6:55

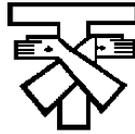
¹⁴Therefore: *children, how long will you be hard of heart?*¹⁵ Why do you not know the truth and believe *in the Son of God?*¹⁶ Behold, each day He humbles Himself as when He came *from the royal throne* into the Virgin's womb;¹⁷ each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly;¹⁸ each day He comes down *from the bosom of the Father* upon the altar in the hands of a priest.^a

1 Cor 11:29
Ps 4:3
Jn 9:35
Phil 2:8
Wis 18:15
Jn 1:18

¹⁹As He revealed Himself to the holy apostles in true flesh, so He reveals Himself to us now in sacred bread.²⁰ And as they saw only His flesh by an insight of their flesh, yet believed that He was God as they contemplated Him with their spiritual eyes,²¹ let us, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, see and firmly believe that they are His most holy Body and Blood living and true.²² And in this way the Lord is always with His faithful, as He Himself says: *Behold I am with you until the end of the age.*

Mt 28:20

a. These verses reflect the influence of the *Tractatus de Corpore Domini* written by the anonymous Cistercian, the Pseudo-Bernard. (cf. PL 184:1149–1150).



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter thirteen (5): Encounters with Jesus

Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

15. This principle is the starting-point for understanding the great parables of Jesus. The rich man (cf. *Lk* 16:19-31) begs from his place of torment that his brothers be informed about what happens to those who simply ignore the poor man in need. Jesus takes up this cry for help as a warning to help us return to the right path. The parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. *Lk* 10:25-37) offers two particularly important clarifications. Until that time, the concept of "neighbour" was understood as referring essentially to one's countrymen and to foreigners who had settled in the land of Israel; in other words, to the closely-knit community of a single country or people. This limit is now abolished. Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbour. The concept of "neighbour" is now universalized, yet it remains concrete. Despite being extended to all mankind, it is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now. The Church has the duty to interpret ever anew this relationship between near and far with regard to the actual daily life of her members. Lastly, we should especially mention the great parable of the Last Judgement (cf. *Mt* 25:31-46), in which love becomes the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life's worth or lack thereof. Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Mt* 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbour have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God.

***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (pp. 17-18)**

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

- Revelation is the self-disclosure of the living God and his plan to save us. Revelation shows us that God desires to have an intimate and loving relationship with everyone.
- The process of Revelation took centuries to unfold. God gradually communicated the divine mystery by words and deeds.
- From the beginning, God established a personal relationship with our first parents. After the Fall, he encouraged them with the hope of Salvation by promising them Redemption.
- God's Revelation resulted in a relationship with people that is called a *covenant* in Scripture. Scripture tells us that God entered into a covenant with Noah and all living beings (cf. *Gn* 9:16).
- Revelation is an act by which God speaks to and forms a covenant people beginning with Abraham. He then chose Moses through whom the divine law was given to the covenant people.

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter thirteen — 2

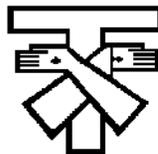
- Through the prophets God prepared the covenant people to look forward to the coming of the Messiah who would bring the salvation destined for all people.
- Revelation reached its fullness in God's Son, Jesus Christ. The Son is the Father's definitive Word. No new public revelation will occur before the final, glorious manifestation of Jesus Christ.
- God's Revelation is transmitted to us by Apostolic Tradition and Scripture. This is the topic of our next chapter.

MEDITATION

Jesus Christ is the definitive revelation of God:

Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1–2: "In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word—and he has no more to say ... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty."

—CCC, no. 65, citing St. John of the Cross,
The Ascent of Mount Carmel, 2, 22, 3–5



The Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings

Chapter fourteen (6): A Rebuilding Task

Pope Benedict XVI: "Saved in Hope" (*Spe Salvi*), 30 Nov. 2007

47. Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Saviour. The encounter with him is the decisive act of judgement. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves. All that we build during our lives can prove to be mere straw, pure bluster, and it collapses. Yet in the pain of this encounter, when the impurity and sickness of our lives become evident to us, there lies salvation. His gaze, the touch of his heart heals us through an undeniably painful transformation "as through fire". But it is a blessed pain, in which the holy power of his love sears through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God. In this way the inter-relation between justice and grace also becomes clear: the way we live our lives is not immaterial, but our defilement does not stain us for ever if we have at least continued to reach out towards Christ, towards truth and towards love. Indeed, it has already been burned away through Christ's Passion. At the moment of judgement we experience and we absorb the overwhelming power of his love over all the evil in the world and in ourselves. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy. It is clear that we cannot calculate the "duration" of this transforming burning in terms of the chronological measurements of this world. The transforming "moment" of this encounter eludes earthly time-reckoning—it is the heart's time, it is the time of "passage" to communion with God in the Body of Christ^[39]. The judgement of God is hope, both because it is justice and because it is grace. If it were merely grace, making all earthly things cease to matter, God would still owe us an answer to the question about justice—the crucial question that we ask of history and of God. If it were merely justice, in the end it could bring only fear to us all. The incarnation of God in Christ has so closely linked the two together—judgement and grace—that justice is firmly established: we all work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (*Phil 2:12*). Nevertheless grace allows us all to hope, and to go trustfully to meet the Judge whom we know as our "advocate", or *parakletos* (cf. *1 Jn 2:1*).

[39] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1030-1032.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

The Prayer before the Crucifix
(1205/06)

While Thomas of Celano and Saint Bonaventure characterize the early years of Francis's life as a struggle to discern God's will, the author of *The Legend of the Three Companions*, according to two manuscripts, summarizes Francis's yearnings in this simple prayer and places it on his lips as he kneels before the Crucifix of the crumbling church of San Damiano in Assisi.^a The prayer may have been influenced by the liturgical opening prayer of the Eucharistic liturgy. This version of the prayer is based on the simple text found in the majority of Latin manuscripts. As it became more popular, the prayer was embellished and lost some of its simplicity.^b

Most High,
glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart
and give me
true faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord,
that I may carry out
Your holy and true command.

a. Cf. L3S 13 in a manuscript in the Barcelona's Biblioteca Central, Codex 665, which is dated 1405, and the Fribourg Biblioteque des Cordeliers, Codex 23J60, which is dated 1406.

b. Cf. Kajetan Esser, *Die Opuscula des Hl. Franziskus von Assisi* (Grottaferrata-Rome: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Aquas Claras, 1976) 354–362; *Opuscula Sancti Patris Francisci Assiensis* (Grottaferrata-Rome: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Aquas Claras, 1978) 223–224.

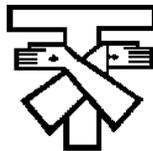
Ilia Delio, OSF: *Franciscan Prayer* (p. 147)

IMITATION: BECOMING WHAT WE LOVE

One of the most popular works in the history of Christian spirituality is *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. This book provides a set of directives that appeal to the imagination and senses on following Jesus in this life and gaining the merits of eternal life. More recently the WWJD (“what would Jesus do?”) movement, a revival of the nineteenth-century Protestant movement, has gained popularity, as people strive to live the gospel life by following the example of Jesus Christ. While these imitations of Christ (*imitatio Christi*) paths may be helpful, the notion of imitation as described in the Franciscan path of prayer does not follow the logic of these other movements. The difference between the Franciscan *imitatio Christi* and the Thomas à Kempis/WWJD movements is that, in the latter, the Incarnation is extrinsic to the believer. When I ask, “what would Jesus do?” I am looking to the example of Jesus as a moral guide to make the right decision or perform the right action. Jesus leads and I follow.

The Franciscan path is different because it does not ask, “what would Jesus do?” but “how does Jesus live in me?” For the Franciscans, the Incarnation is intrinsic to human personhood. What we are about as humans and what we are to become as children of God is integrally related to the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is not merely a person we follow, as if following John or Jim, nor is salvation about the “dos and don’ts” of being saved. Rather Christ, the Word incarnate, is the person in whom each person finds his or her unique meaning and origin. The logic of the Franciscan *imitatio Christi* is God’s self-emptying love which is incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. To say that Jesus is the theophany or manifestation of God means that in the form of Jesus’ life, God has been fully revealed. Jesus Christ is the image of God because Christ is the “Word” or the perfect self-expression of the Father. Therefore, it is Christ who is the perfect image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15).¹

1. Peter Casarella, “The Expression and Form of the Word: Trinitarian Hermeneutics and the Sacramentality of Language in Hans Urs Von Balthasar’s Theology,” *Renasence* 48.2 (Winter, 1996): 114–115.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter fifteen (7): Gospel, Conversion, and Reconciliation

Kenan B. Osborne, OFM: *Sacramental Guidelines: A Companion to the New Catechism for Religious Educators* (pp. 104–105)

The Sacrament of Holy Reconciliation *Teachings of the Ordinary Magisterium*

There are several main documents which present the teachings of the ordinary magisterium on the sacrament of reconciliation. The primary document is, of course, the revised ritual for this sacrament, with its three liturgical forms and a fourth form to be used in the emergency of death. There are also other documents: (1) *Normae Pastorales: Sacramentum paenitentiae*, issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Faith [1972], a document which provides norms for general absolution; (2) a letter from this same congregation [Jan. 14, 1977] to the bishops of the United States, with additional comments on the pastoral norms for general absolution; (3) a joint declaration from two congregations, the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *Sanctus Pontifex*, which discusses first reconciliation prior to first eucharist; (4) a clarification on first reconciliation, *In quibusdam Ecclesiae partibus*, which the two congregations sent to the bishops of the United States; and (5) *Omnis utriusque* of Lateran IV, with its regulation for annual confession. All these documents contain certain aspects of the ordinary magisterium. Finally, the revised code of canon law has a section on the sacrament of reconciliation, with a variety of canons. This, too, is part of the ordinary magisterium.

These documents do not exhaust the material of the ordinary magisterium on the issue of the sacrament of penance. Of major importance are those parts of the Vatican II documents which set up norms for sacramental celebrations. These norms were cited above in the section on sacraments in general, but they apply with vigor to the celebration of this sacrament. A major norm was this: communal celebration of the sacraments is preferred to more private celebrations. This conciliar norm, however, has been juxtaposed with almost an opposing regulation by the ordinary magisterium which time and again stresses “private” confession.

Religious education teachers must continually realize that all the above documents are ordinary magisterium, that is, they are official documents, but they do not *per se* present any immutable teachings of the church. Immutable teachings might be included in these documents, but the documents themselves are official, but changeable. The changeable material in these documents should be presented to religious education students as official, but changeable.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 242-243)

RECOGNIZE SIN—PRAISE GOD’S MERCY

The Sacrament of Penance is an experience of the gift of God’s boundless mercy. Not only does it free us from our sins but it also challenges us to have the same kind of compassion and forgiveness for those who sin against us. We are liberated to be forgivers. We obtain new insight into the words of the Prayer of St. Francis: “It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.”

By the help of God’s grace, our call to holiness will be clearer when we recover an awareness of the reality of sin and evil in the world and in our own souls. Scripture will be enormously helpful in this since it reveals sin and evil clearly and fearlessly. Scriptural realism does not hesitate to pronounce judgment on the good and evil that affects our lives. The New Testament is filled with calls to conversion and repentance, which need to be heard in our culture today.

If we say, “We are without sin,” we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. (1 Jn 1:8-9)

In our churches, we behold Jesus nailed to the Cross, an image that reminds us of his painful sacrifice to bring about the forgiveness of all our sins and guilt. If there were no sin, Jesus would not have suffered for our redemption. Each time we see the crucifix, we can reflect on the infinite mercy of God, who saves us through the reconciling act of Jesus.

Despite society’s efforts to downplay the reality of sin, there is an instinctive recognition of its existence. Children generally know, even when not told, when they have done something morally wrong. Adults readily admit the evil of terrorism, unjust war, lies, unfair treatment of people, and similar matters. Society as a whole must also learn to admit the evil of abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and obtaining stem cells from embryos, which results in the death of embryonic human life. Denying evil corrupts us spiritually and psychologically. Rationalizing our own evil is even more destructive.

Jesus laid the foundation for the Sacrament of Penance during his ministry and confirmed it after his Resurrection. When Peter asked the number of times a person should forgive, Jesus told him that there should be no limit to forgiving. Jesus forgave Peter his triple denial, showed mercy to the woman taken in adultery, forgave the thief on the cross, and continually witnessed the mercy of God.

Jesus entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to the Church. The Sacrament of Penance is God’s gift to us so that any sin committed after Baptism can be forgiven. In confession we have the opportunity to repent and recover the grace of friendship with God. It is a holy moment in which we place ourselves in his presence and honestly acknowledge our sins, especially mortal sins. With absolution, we are reconciled to God and the Church. The Sacrament helps us stay close to the truth that we cannot live without God. “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). While all the Sacraments bring us an experience of the mercy that comes from Christ’s dying and rising, it is the Sacrament of Reconciliation that is the unique Sacrament of mercy.

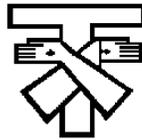
Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

25. Thus far, two essential facts have emerged from our reflections:

a) The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.[17]

b) The Church is God's family in the world. In this family no one ought to go without the necessities of life. Yet at the same time *caritas-agape* extends beyond the frontiers of the Church. The parable of the Good Samaritan remains as a standard which imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter "by chance" (cf. *Lk* 10:31), whoever they may be. Without in any way detracting from this commandment of universal love, the Church also has a specific responsibility: within the ecclesial family no member should suffer through being in need. The teaching of the *Letter to the Galatians* is emphatic: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (6:10).

[17] Cf. Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores* (22 February 2004), 194, Vatican City 2004, p. 213.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter sixteen (8): When you pray ...

Ilia Delio, OSF: *Franciscan Prayer* (pp. 127-129)

CONTEMPLATION: SEEING AND LOVING

A student once wrote in a paper, “I never thought I could strive for contemplation. I thought contemplation is for special people, not for the ordinary person like me.” My response to him was, “no person is too ordinary to contemplate God. It is essential to living the Christian life.” The idea that everyone is called to contemplation was entirely new for this student and I am sure for many others as well. We don’t view the Christian life as one of contemplation and we certainly don’t speak of Christian life as a contemplative life or hear it preached this way on Sunday. Yet, if we have been following the path of Franciscan prayer all along, we realize that this path of prayer is a contemplative one. The progression of prayer that leads to contemplation begins with the gaze on the crucified Christ and continues to penetrate the depths of this reality until the one who gazes comes to see the heart of charity hidden in the heart of Christ. We have already described contemplation as a penetrating vision but we must also concede that it is a deepening of love, a continuous action of ongoing transformation, since nothing is more liberating and active than love. This love not only enables one to see more clearly and deeply into the depths of the Spouse, the heart of Christ, but to feel and taste the hidden sweetness of God.¹

In his first *Admonition*, Francis describes contemplation as seeing God in Christ with the eyes of the Spirit. He describes contemplation as the vision of God’s humility. The Father who dwells in “inaccessible light,” he writes, is humbly present in the Son through the love of the Spirit. This is the meaning of Incarnation which we encounter in the Eucharist, God’s humbling movement toward humanity: “Each day he humbles himself as when he came from the royal throne into the Virgin’s womb; each day he himself comes to us, appearing humbly.”² Contemplation for Francis and Clare is a penetrating gaze that gets to the heart of reality.³ It is looking into the depths of things and seeing them in their true relation to God. Bonaventure calls this type of penetrating vision “contuition” whereby one sees concrete reality in itself and in God.⁴

For Clare, contemplation begins with the mirror of the crucified Christ. That is why she advised Agnes to see herself in the mirror each day. It is Clare, I believe, who provides a common path to contemplation because what she advocates is daily prayer before the cross—something every person can do. To accept God in the Crucified is to accept God in our own lives and this means to accept who we are. Clare draws a relationship between contemplation and self-identity. The more we contemplate or dwell on the mystery of Christ by gazing upon the Crucified, the more we discover our own identity. We might say that the cross provides the most honest reflection of ourselves. When we gaze on this mirror of the cross we not only see who God is, self-giving love, but gazing on this God of humble love leads us to reflect on our own

lives. So the gaze is self-reflective. The crucified Christ, who is the image of God, is the image in which we are created and thus the basis of our identity.⁵ If we gaze long enough, that is, if gazing becomes a way of life then it will lead to a new level of self-knowledge. We will come to a new understanding of ourselves and this understanding will be creative, since it will transform the one who gazes in the mirror of the cross into a reflection of the image itself. That is, the more we contemplate Christ by gazing upon the cross, the more we will come to resemble Christ. This image of God, revealed in the one who gazes on the mirror of the Crucified, will be expressed as a new “birth” of Christ in the believer. To place oneself in the mirror of the cross, therefore, is to expose oneself to the joys and sorrows of being human, the joy of God’s all-embracing love and the sorrow of the Spouse “despised, struck, and scourged.”⁶ By dwelling in the mirror of the cross—heart, mind and soul—we are called to “transform our who being into the image of the Godhead itself.”⁷ In this way, we are called to a life of contemplation.

Clare had particular insight with regard to the capacity of the human person to image God. In her fourth letter to Agnes, she draws a relationship between contemplation and the human face. She tells Agnes to “gaze upon that mirror each day . . . and continually *study your face* within it, so that you may adorn yourself *within and without* with beautiful robes.”⁸ Although Clare does not define the goal of contemplation explicitly, she describes this goal broadly as conversion through imitation of Christ and interior transformation in order to reflect the face of Christ to the world. She is certain that such transformation can only take place in the mirror of the cross. She speaks of the human face as the sign of transformation because the face discloses the person in a particular way and therefore reflects one’s personal identity or self-expression.⁹ The face symbolizes the person because it both reveals what a person is and yet conceals the inner depth of the person. The idea of the “face” not only connotes uniqueness and distinction, that which makes a person who she or he is, but it connotes form or expression since it is the face that one sees. To study one’s face in the cross means to question the form or shape of one’s life. The face is the epiphany of God. Only by becoming truly human, like the beloved spouse, does one disclose the face of God.

If contemplation is to study one’s face in the mirror of the cross, then contemplation is the way the self achieves its true form as image of God. To study one’s face in the cross is to ask, what am I? What distinguishes me? For Clare, we cannot really answer these questions without looking at our image in the mirror of the cross. The self is not a substance separate from God, according to Clare, but is created precisely in relationship to God. To come to the knowledge of who we are is to discover the treasure within each of us, the image of God in which we are created and by which we are in relationship with God.¹⁰

1. Clare of Assisi, 3 *LAG* 14 (*Écrits*, 103). Clare writes, “So that you too may feel what his friends feel as they taste the hidden sweetness of God.” Engl. trans. Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 45.

2. Francis of Assisi, *Admonition* 1.16–17 (*Écrits*, 92). Engl. trans. *FA:ED* I, 129; Michael W. Blastic, “Contemplation and Compassion,” 162.

3. Blastic describes this phenomenological type of contemplation as distinctive of both Francis and Clare’s paths of contemplation. See Blastic, “Contemplation and Compassion,” 165.

4. For a definition of “contuition” see Delio, *Simply Bonaventure*, 199.

5. See Delio, “Clare of Assisi: Beauty and Transformation,” 75.

6. Clare of Assisi, 2 *LAG* 20 (*Écrits*, 96). Clare writes: “Your Spouse ... was despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout his entire body, and then died amidst the sufferings of the cross.” Engl. trans. Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 42.
7. Clare of Assisi, 3 *LAG* 12–13 (*Écrits*, 102). “Pone mentem tuam in speculo aeternitatis, pone animam tuam in splendore gloriae, pone cor tuum in *figura* divinae substantiae et *transforma* te ipsam totam per contemplationem *in imagine* divinitatis ipsius.”
8. Clare of Assisi, “The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague” (4 *LAG*) 14–16 (*Écrits*, 112–114). Engl. trans. Armstrong, *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, 50. See Delio, “Clare of Assisi: Beauty and Transformation,” 75.
9. The postmodern philosopher Emmanuel Levinas claims that the face of the genuine other should release us from all desire for totality and open us to a true sense of the infinite because inscribed in the face of the other is the trace of a transcendence. One cannot grasp the other in knowledge, for the other is infinite and overflows in the totality of comprehension and of being. See Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism: revisioning moral philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 148; Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 64–6.
10. Bonaventure also makes this point in his *Soul’s Journey to God*. See Itin. chs. 3–4 (V, 303–308).

“A Letter to the Entire Order” (1225–1226)

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

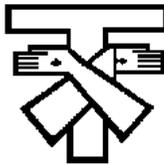
²⁶Let everyone be struck with fear,
 let the whole world tremble,
 and let the heavens exult
 when Christ, the Son of the living God,
 is present on the altar in the hands of a priest!
²⁷O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity!
 O sublime humility!
 O humble sublimity!
 The Lord of the universe,
 God and the Son of God,
 so humbles Himself
 that for our salvation
 He hides Himself
 under an ordinary piece of bread!
²⁸Brothers, look at the humility of God,
 and *pour out your hearts before Him!*
 Humble yourselves
 that you may be exalted by Him!
²⁹Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves,
 that He Who gives Himself totally to you
 may receive you totally!

Ps 62:9

1 Pt 5:6; Jas 4:10

Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

41. Outstanding among the saints is Mary, Mother of the Lord and mirror of all holiness. In the *Gospel of Luke* we find her engaged in a service of charity to her cousin Elizabeth, with whom she remained for "about three months" (1:56) so as to assist her in the final phase of her pregnancy. "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*", she says on the occasion of that visit, "My soul magnifies the Lord" (Lk 1:46). In these words she expresses her whole programme of life: not setting herself at the centre, but leaving space for God, who is encountered both in prayer and in service of neighbour—only then does goodness enter the world. Mary's greatness consists in the fact that she wants to magnify God, not herself. She is lowly: her only desire is to be the handmaid of the Lord (cf. Lk 1:38, 48). She knows that she will only contribute to the salvation of the world if, rather than carrying out her own projects, she places herself completely at the disposal of God's initiatives. Mary is a woman of hope: only because she believes in God's promises and awaits the salvation of Israel, can the angel visit her and call her to the decisive service of these promises. Mary is a woman of faith: "Blessed are you who believed", Elizabeth says to her (cf. Lk 1:45). The *Magnificat*—a portrait, so to speak, of her soul—is entirely woven from threads of Holy Scripture, threads drawn from the Word of God. Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the Word of God; the Word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the Word of God. Here we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the Word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate. Finally, Mary is a woman who loves. How could it be otherwise? As a believer who in faith thinks with God's thoughts and wills with God's will, she cannot fail to be a woman who loves. We sense this in her quiet gestures, as recounted by the infancy narratives in the Gospel. We see it in the delicacy with which she recognizes the need of the spouses at Cana and makes it known to Jesus. We see it in the humility with which she recedes into the background during Jesus' public life, knowing that the Son must establish a new family and that the Mother's hour will come only with the Cross, which will be Jesus' true hour (cf. Jn 2:4; 13:1). When the disciples flee, Mary will remain beneath the Cross (cf. Jn 19:25-27); later, at the hour of Pentecost, it will be they who gather around her as they wait for the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14).



The Franciscan Journey

Supplemental Readings

Chapter seventeen (9): The Mother of God & our Mother

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* (pp. 55–57)

MARY AS THE FULL IMAGE OF HUMANITY

When the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was solemnly proclaimed on 8 December 1854, many Franciscans saw the event as an honour, not only to Mary, but also to Scotus. As a corollary of his view of Christ, incarnate because of love, not because of sin, he maintained that Mary of Nazareth was conceived without sin. Without analysing here the various texts of Scotus about Mary, I would like to offer a simple explanation of some of his thinking about the notion of Mary as the fully human person.³⁹

It often seems that when we speak of Mary's conception without sin we imply that something is 'missing' in her, namely 'original sin'. But we also say that sin is the *lack* of something: it is *not being* like God. What this doctrine celebrates is that Mary is fully and clearly what a human person is meant to be, what all of us are created to be: clear images of God. To understand the beauty of this approach, we may take a moment to look at Scotus' view of the human person in Christ.

Because Scotus always considered Christ first, he saw person as the living image of the Word incarnate. In Scotus' view (we call this the Primacy of Christ or Christocentrism) creation is modelled on the humanity of Christ. That human person is the goal of creation. Everything is made through him, for him, and in him. He is really Adam, the first Adam. The Adam of Genesis is his image. The beginning of Genesis, the story of the world and humanity before sin, is the image of who Christ is.

God plans all things in view of the human form of the Son, Christ, and intends the Son to be 'born of woman'. To use the mundane metaphor of making a plan, we could say that after deciding that the Son shall be incarnate as a human, the trinitarian God next chose the woman who will be invited to share her humanity with God.

What kind of human being shall she be? The clearest image of the Son, the most appropriate: she will be *fully* human. And so she was, as God intended, a woman who lived as a fully human person. Only now can we move to the beginning of Genesis. God's logic moves backwards, it seems, from one point of view. God starts with the New Testament and then goes to the beginning of the Old Testament: Christmas comes logically before creation. Christ precedes Adam, and Mary precedes Eve. The medieval Scholastics had a Latin phrase for this: *primum in intentione, ultimum in executione*, 'the thing you first intended is the last thing completed'.

Following this logic, Christ comes first, then Mary, then Adam and Eve. As we read the Genesis story, we see the full God-image of Adam and Eve change, as they freely choose to be something else than God's full image. That decision makes them less who they really are as human persons; it is the denial of full humanity, but it was their choice and God does not prevent them from making it. To take away their freedom would make them incomplete images of the free Son.

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter seventeen — 2

We call that choice ‘original sin’, and according to the Scriptures, that choice has an impact in the next generation, with Cain and Abel, and the next and the next, through Noah to Abraham to Moses to David to Solomon, to our own day.

But the image of God is not lost, it is obscured. It is harder to see true humanity, Christ’s humanity, but the image, tarnished, is still there.

With the conception of Mary, the Great Plan, the book before Genesis, begins. A human person is conceived in *full* humanity. Mary is who we really are: freely, fully, soul and body, her humanity *for* Christ, *in* Christ, *of* Christ.

It would be better to give a different name to this doctrine. It is the doctrine of Mary-who-was-conceived-without-sin. But why define someone by what they are *not*? This could be named the doctrine of Mary, Fully Human. For in God’s logic, that is what all of us are to be, ultimately, and what we *are* in God’s design.

Was she conceived without sin? I saw this answer in the crude lettering on a shrine at the friary of Belmonte in Northern Italy. Mary is painted there, Scotus on the left beside her crude image and Francis on the right. Above her, the words badly lettered, is a Scotist’s explanation of God’s reasons — *Potuit, Decuit, ergo Fecit*: ‘It could be done, it should be done, so God did it.’ A traditional hymn, sung on Saturday evenings in Franciscan houses around the world, has brought this Scotistic message home over the centuries:

*Tota pulchra es, Maria
Et macula originalis
Non est in te.
Tu, gloria Ierusalem!
Tu, laetitia Israel!
Tu, honorificentia populi nostri!
Tu, advocata peccatorum!
Oh, Maria! Oh, Maria!
Virgo prudentissima,
Mater clementissima,
Ora pro nobis.
Intercede pro nobis
Ad Dominum Iesum Christum.*

Mary, you are the most beautiful
No stain from the beginning
is in you.
You, glory of Jerusalem!
You, Israel’s joy!
You, our people’s pride!
You, sinners’ advocate!
Oh, Mary, oh Mary!
Wise virgin
Merciful mother,
Pray for us,
Intercede for us,
With the Lord, Jesus Christ.

39. For a discussion of the texts, see Carolus Balic OFM, *Theologiae Marianae elementa* (Sibenik: Typographia Kačić, 1933).

Vatican II: “Dogmatic Constitution of the Church” (*Lumen Gentium*), Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, 21 November 1964

IV. The Cult of the Blessed Virgin in the Church

66. Placed by the grace of God, as God’s Mother, next to her Son, and exalted above all angels and men, Mary intervened in the mysteries of Christ and is justly honored by a special cult in the Church. Clearly from earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title of Mother of God, under whose protection the faithful took refuge in all their dangers and necessities.(21*)

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter seventeen — 3

Hence after the Synod of Ephesus the cult of the people of God toward Mary wonderfully increased in veneration and love, in invocation and imitation, according to her own prophetic words: "All generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me".(301) This cult, as it always existed, although it is altogether singular, differs essentially from the cult of adoration which is offered to the Incarnate Word, as well to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and it is most favorable to it. The various forms of piety toward the Mother of God, which the Church within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine, according to the conditions of time and place, and the nature and ingenuity of the faithful has approved, bring it about that while the Mother is honored, the Son, through whom all things have their being (302) and in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell,(303) is rightly known, loved and glorified and that all His commands are observed.

67. This most Holy Synod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and at the same time admonishes all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the magisterium of the Church toward her in the course of centuries be made of great moment, and those decrees, which have been given in the early days regarding the cult of images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, be religiously observed.(22*) But it exhorts theologians and preachers of the divine word to abstain zealously both from all gross exaggerations as well as from petty narrow-mindedness in considering the singular dignity of the Mother of God.(23*) Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Holy Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's magisterium, let them rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which always look to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity and piety. Let them assiduously keep away from whatever, either by word or deed, could lead separated brethren or any other into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church. Let the faithful remember moreover that true devotion consists neither in sterile or transitory affection, nor in a certain vain credulity, but proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.

(301) Lk. 1:48.

(302) Cf. Col. 1:15-16.

(303) Col 1:19.

(21*) Sub tuum praesidium

(22*) Conc. Nicaenum II, anno 787: Mansi 13. 378-379; Denz. 302 (600-601) . Conc. Trident., sess. 2S: Mansi 33, 171-172.

(23*) Cfr. Pius XII, Nuntius radioph., 24 oct. 1954: AAS 46 (1954) p. 679. Litt. Encycl. Ad coeli Reginam, 11 oct. 1954: AAS 46 (1954) p. 637.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 143–148)

GOD’S PLAN FOR MARY

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that Mary is a member of the Church who “occupies a place in the Church which is the highest after Christ and also closest to us” (LG, no. 54). She is the first and the greatest of all the disciples of Christ.

When the Gospel of St. Luke (1:26–38) narrates God’s call to Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth, to be the Mother of the Savior, his Son, from all eternity, she consents to this call with profound faith and trust. Thus, she “gave to the world the Life that renews all things, and who was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role” (LG, no. 56).

“BLESSED ARE YOU AMONG WOMEN”

An essential part of God’s plan for the mother of his Son was that she be conceived free from Original Sin. “Through the centuries the Church became ever more aware that Mary, ‘full of grace’ through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception” (CCC, no. 491).

In anticipation that she was to bear the Son of God, Mary was preserved from the time of her conception from Original Sin. We call this the Immaculate Conception. No sin would touch her, so that she would be a fitting and worthy vessel of the Son of God. The Immaculate Conception does not refer to the virginal conception and birth of Christ, but rather to Mary’s being conceived without inheriting Original Sin.

In the course of time, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception became more precisely enunciated, as its truth—long supported by the universal popular devotion of the faithful—was better understood by deepening theological inquiry. In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed this dogma infallibly: that is, in his role as supreme teacher of the Church, he declared that this doctrine is divinely revealed and must be accepted with faith by the entire Church.

It is also the faith of the Church that Mary is to be called the “Mother of God.” The One whom she conceived as man by the power of the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence, the Church confesses that Mary is truly the ‘Mother of God’” (CCC, no. 495, citing Council of Ephesus: DS 251). In the Eastern Churches Mary is honored by use of the Greek expression *Theotokos* or “Birth-giver of God” (sometimes translated as “God-Bearer”).

The Holy Spirit’s power made possible the conception of Jesus in Mary’s womb. There was no human father. The Gospels clearly present the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work (cf. Mt 1:18–25; Lk 1:26–38).

Mary was always a virgin, both in conceiving Jesus, giving birth to him, and remaining virgin every after. God granted her this privilege to emphasize that this was a unique moment in history—the birth of Jesus who is the Son of God and the Son of Mary. The liturgy of the Church speaks of Mary as “ever virgin.” In the early Church some denied this, arguing that the Gospels speak of the brothers and sisters of Jesus, and thus maintained that Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus. But already in the fourth century, theologians pointed out that the Greek word for brother used in the New Testament can refer also to cousin. A second explanation was that these brothers and sisters were children of Joseph by a previous marriage. However, it is the constant teaching of the Church that Mary remained a virgin even after the birth of Jesus. In her virginity, Mary lived a life dedicated exclusively to her Son and his mission. Her example has

been followed by some of Christ's disciples who have lived lives of consecrated virginity and celibacy from apostolic times to the present.

In the mystery of her Assumption, Mary experiences immediately what we all will experience eventually, a bodily resurrection like Christ's own. "The Immaculate Virgin ... when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of death" (CCC, no. 966, citing LG, no. 59).

FROM THE CATECHISM

1. What is the role of Mary's faith in the plan of salvation?

The Virgin Mary "freely cooperat[ed] in the work of man's salvation through faith and obedience" (LG, no. 56). She uttered her yes "in the name of all human nature" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, 1). By her obedience she became the new Eve, the mother of all the living. (CCC, no. 511)

2. Does Mary intercede on our behalf?

This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterrupted. ... Taken up into heaven she did not lay aside this saving office, but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. (CCC, no. 969, citing LG, no. 62)

3. How does the Church honor Mary?

The Church rightly honors the Blessed Virgin with special devotion. "From the earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title Mother of God, whose protection the faithful take refuge together in all their perils and needs. ... This cult ... differs essentially from the cult of adoration, which is offered equally to the Incarnate Word and to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and it is most favorable to it" (LG, no. 66). The liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and Marian prayer, such as the rosary, an "epitome of the whole Gospel," express this devotion to the Virgin Mary. (CCC, no. 971)

Finally, in Mary we behold what the Church is already like during her pilgrimage of faith—and what the Church will become at the end of the journey. "Mary figured profoundly in the history of salvation and in a certain way unites and mirrors within herself the central truths of the faith" (LG, no. 66).

MARY AS MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

At the beginning of the third session of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI announced that Mary would be honored under the title "Mother of the Church."

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter seventeen — 6

From Christ's conception until his death, Mary was united to her Son in his work of salvation. From the Cross, Jesus entrusted his beloved disciple to Mary, telling him to see her as his own mother (Jn 19:27). When the Apostles and disciples gathered to pray after the Ascension of Jesus, Mary was with them praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Mary continues to pray before God for the Church and all humanity.

Like Mary, the Church has a maternal role, giving birth to people in Christ. The Church can never cease to look at Mary, who gave birth to Jesus Christ. The Church contemplates Mary's motherhood in order to fulfill her own calling to be mother of the members of Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. Also like Mary, the Church is virginal. The description of the Church as virginal is used here in the spiritual sense of the undivided heart and of fidelity in its most luminous form. God calls all the members of the Church to fidelity to the union with him begun at Baptism and continued in the other Sacraments.

MARY'S MATERNAL INTERCESSION

In our culture, there can be a discomfort with praying for Mary's intercession on our behalf. This seems to be a mediating role that crosses a line set out in the First Letter to Timothy: "For there is one God. / There is also one mediator between God and the human race, / Christ Jesus, himself human / who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tm 2:5). So Jesus is the one and only mediator. Jesus alone is the Savior.

But this does not deny the possibility that Christ would permit others to share in his mediating role. Here on earth we routinely ask others for prayers. Instinctively, we turn to holy people for their prayers because they seem nearer to God. Why would we stop asking saints for their prayers after they die? If we believe they are in heaven, would not their prayers be even more effective?

From the earliest times, Christians have sought Mary's prayers and help. There has been the basic sense on the part of the Church that Mary continues in heaven to be concerned for the growth of all members of the Church into holiness and an intimate relationship with her Son.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How would you explain to others the connection between Mary as the Mother of God and all her special gifts: the Immaculate Conception, perpetual virginity, and the Assumption? Why is it important to understand that Mary, too, needed to be redeemed?
2. In what ways can you identify with Mary's "yes" to God at the Annunciation? If Mary's life serves as an example for us of an undivided heart in response to the love of God, how are you able to daily demonstrate your love of God?
3. Mary was the greatest disciple of her Son. How are you growing in your call to discipleship?

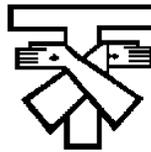
DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

- "What the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ" (CCC, no. 487).
- "When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4).
- An essential part of God's saving plan for the mother of his Son was that she be conceived free of Original Sin. "Through the centuries the Church became ever more aware that Mary,

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‘full of grace’ through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception” (CCC, no. 491). This is the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception.

- At the Annunciation, Mary responded to the angel Gabriel with these words: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). This was her consent to the Incarnation. From that moment onwards the Virgin Mary cooperated freely and in the obedience of faith with the plan of salvation. She uttered her yes to God “in the name of all human nature” (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, 30, 1).
- The Gospels call Mary the “Mother of Jesus.” Mary is truly the Mother of God since she is the mother of the Son of God made man. In the Eastern Churches Mary is honored as the *Theotokos*, or “Birth-giver of God.”
- Mary was always a virgin, in conceiving Jesus, in giving birth to him, and for the rest of her life.
- “The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son’s Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body” (CCC, no. 974). This is the doctrine of her Assumption into heaven.
- “We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ” (Pope Paul VI, *Credo of the People of God*, no. 15).



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter eighteen (10): Being Faithful

Joseph Nangle, OFM: *Engaged Spirituality: Faith Life in the Heart of the Empire* (pp. 89-90)

From Chapter 5: Obedience

Conclusion

A final word about obedience and the Holy Spirit.

At a particularly critical moment in his life, Jesus left us some consoling thoughts regarding the work of the Spirit in our lives and in the world. When he took his last meal with friends the night of his capture, torture and execution, he spoke about his impending departure from them in words his hearers later remembered and wrote down in detail. We read, “The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you” (Jn 14:26). And again, “When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father—and whom I myself will send from the Father—he will bear witness on my behalf” (Jn 15:26). And yet again: “It is much better for you that I go. If I fail to go, the Paraclete will never come to you, whereas if I go, I will send him to you. . . . When he comes, however, being the Spirit of truth he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but will speak only what he hears and will announce to you the things to come” (Jn 16:7, 13).

In looking at all of the new graces God has given us to deal with the ever-changing circumstances history sets before people of faith and good will, these promises of Jesus that we will always have a guiding Spirit ring true. They must have proved enormously consoling and energizing for the disciples who first heard them, as they watched his brutal death and, then, a short time later, when he left his work in their hands. They knew at the first Pentecost that Jesus had kept his word about the help of the Spirit, because these timid, frightened recluses burst out of their hideaway on that day and began the work of preaching Christ Crucified to the ends of the earth. People like Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare, Dominic and Ignatius, Teresa and John of the Cross, John XXIII, Dorothy Day, and Oscar Romero must also have felt the power of the promised Advocate. Where else would they have gotten the audacity to do the bold things they did? Today, we have the same assurance from the Lord, as the Spirit continues to challenge, console, inspire and direct the work of furthering God’s reign on earth through us—flawed human beings. Our task, just like that of every person of faith throughout history, is clear—to recognize the graces given for our times and to respond to them in obedience.

Pope Benedict XVI: “Saved in Hope” (*Spe Salvi*)

31. Let us say once again: we need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what

we, by ourselves, cannot attain. The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope. God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which nevertheless, in our deepest self, we await: a life that is “truly” life. Let us now, in the final section, develop this idea in more detail as we focus our attention on some of the “settings” in which we can learn in practice about hope and its exercise.

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* (pp. 127-130)

8. THE FRANCISCAN TRADITION TODAY

This book [published in 1999] is destined to be among the last of many works on Franciscan spirituality published in the twentieth century and, hopefully, among the first to be read in the twenty-first. Like a previous study of the Franciscan movement, this one is being completed in the Piedmont region of northern Italy.¹ Here, in the *Valli Valdesi*, the movement founded by Peter Waldo, a contemporary of Francis and Clare, lives on in the Waldensian churches. Franciscans, men and women, secular and religious, live here too, following a ‘form of life’ initiated in Assisi, far to the south, eight centuries ago. In this place and at this time I would like to offer a summary of the Franciscan tradition that, like the ancient Roman deity Janus, ancient patron of nearby Genoa, looks from the present backward, at what has been, while looking forward, toward what is to come.

Should the Franciscan tradition teach people to recreate the experience of a Francis or a Clare? Certainly not. The attempt would be fruitless and frustrating. And even if it could succeed, then, like Francis and Clare themselves, it would have to be dead. It continues to be a living tradition today because others have carried on the tradition, in new times and places, in their own words and example. Francis presents us with one example, a moving and inspiring example, but the tradition does not stop with him. In his words, ‘I have done what was mine to do, may Christ now show you what is yours.’ Francis wished that his whole life would point to Christ. To stop at Francis would be to frustrate the intention he had for his followers. Clare also pointed away from herself, holding up the Mirror who is Christ, and indicating Francis as the one who showed her that Mirror. But both Clare and Francis, in their words and gestures, reveal to us, sometimes clearly, sometimes obscurely, intuitions about God-become-human that still remain profoundly challenging. That is the only reason for writing a book like this in our day: to express those intuitions in a language understandable to today’s sincere Christian believer and religious seeker.

What can the medieval Francis and Clare mean today? And what is there in the long Franciscan tradition that merits attention today?

We usually ask questions of the past because we are searching for answers in the present. In the field of spirituality today there is an explosion of interest in the sacred, in ritual, in the recovery of the body and the sacredness of the earth, in the language of women’s voices, and in the rediscovery of community. Sometimes with too great facility proponents of one or the other tradition lay claim to one or all of these areas as the special terrain of their spirituality. I wish to

avoid giving that impression in regard to the Franciscan tradition. Instead, I would like to suggest a possible service that the tradition of Francis and Clare can offer to those who are searching for God, or simply for a sense of meaning in their lives.

The Franciscan tradition can and should begin by doing a ‘disservice’ to the interest of spirituality today. Forms of spirituality, broadly defined as interest in the spiritual, can sometimes be the search for religious experience that takes us away from ourselves, the daily activities of life, the world, the mundane. Some techniques of concentration or ritual point their practitioners toward a completely pure, other, spiritual reality that is characterised by utter lack of feeling, images or materiality. This world and our lives must then be inevitably inferior, if not unreal, in view of that other realm of ‘soul’ or bliss, or spiritual being. Such a view alienates rather than integrates spirituality and life as we live it today.

To this type of spirituality the Franciscan tradition can offer its disservice by pointing to feet. These are the ‘dirty feet’ of the incarnate Word.² Following the example of Francis and Clare, the Franciscan tradition today can point instead to the ‘down-to-earth-ness’ of the experience of God, who made an irrevocable decision to be incarnate.

This is also a service offered to others who are deeply concerned about an interest in spirituality that seduces people away from the pressing needs of contemporary society. A spirituality with consistent emphasis on the God who is revealed in Christ enfleshed, ‘in-mattered’, and in history, can offer a point of dialogue with those who see in much of the contemporary religious quest a denial of responsibility for the world in which we live.

The world at the end of the 1900s is marked by the stark contrast between the affluence of a few individuals and societies and the misery of the majority of others. In such a world, what value can poverty have, a focal point of the Franciscan tradition? Believing or preaching that poverty itself has some value is as meaningless today as it was in the thirteenth century, and can be used to justify evils perpetrated on the poor. As I hope to have made clear in the preceding pages, poverty itself can never be a value. It is the relinquishment of wealth, status and domination over others that the incarnation teaches Francis and Clare in their pursuit of the ‘holy poverty’ of Jesus. Following this example, living *sine proprio*, without anything of one’s own, today implies the refusal to arrogate to one’s self what belongs to all, because all belongs to the Creator. Everything is gift, nothing is ‘property’. The gospel mandate to ‘sell all and give to the poor’, which Francis and Clare followed, far from being meaningless, is as urgent in our own day as it was in theirs.

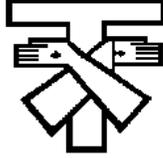
The recovery of a spirituality of creation, linked to contemporary awareness of the global effects of environmental exploitation, can form a bridge between contemporary concerns and this wisdom from the past. For Christians as well as other people of spirit, the world has become a problem or, better said, the effects of human appropriation of the earth have become the problem. In the gentle and non-possessive respect toward ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ water, air, fire and ‘our Sister Mother Earth’, Francis, the patron saint of ecology, can help point us toward a community of creation in which humans take seriously the role of being ‘lesser’, and ‘subject to every creature because of God’.

Not least importantly, the spirituality of reconciliation, so evident in Francis’ peaceful dialogue with Malek el-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade, reminds us of what has been called ‘The Spirit of Assisi’, a spirit of respectful and attentive dialogue among members of differing religious traditions. Wars and threats of war among nations, invoking God as their justification, contradict that Franciscan understanding of ‘the Most High’ God who is ‘good, all good, the highest good’. In the figure of the *Poverello* those continue to struggle for reconciliation among

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter eighteen — 4

nations and individuals may find a sign of hope. Whenever he spoke to people, or birds, or wolves, he always began with these words, with which I end: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’

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1. My study of the history of the Franciscan family, *The Franciscans*.
 2. I am indebted to my colleague Joseph Chinnici OFM for the phrase.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter nineteen (11): A Simple Way to Live

Pope John XXIII: "Encyclical on Christianity & Social Progress" (*Mater et Magistra*), 15 May 1961

Greater Efficiency in Temporal Affairs

257. To search for spiritual perfection and eternal salvation in the conduct of human affairs and institutions is not to rob these of the power to achieve their immediate, specific ends, but to enhance this power.

The words of our divine Master are true for all time: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you." (56) The man who is "light in the Lord" (57) and who walks as a "child of the light" (58) has a sure grasp of the fundamental demands of justice in all life's difficulties and complexities, obscured though they may be by so much individual, national and racial selfishness.

Animated, too, by the charity of Christ, he finds it impossible not to love his fellow men. He makes his own their needs, their sufferings and their joys. There is a sureness of touch in all his activity in every field. It is energetic, generous and considerate. For "charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (59)

(56) *Matt.* 6:33.

(57) *Eph.* 5:8.

(58) Cf. *ibid.*

(59) 1 *Cor.* 13:4-7.

Joseph Nangle, OFM: *Engaged Spirituality: Faith Life in the Heart of the Empire* (pp. 15-17)

From Chapter 1: The Incarnation

Conclusions

We began to think about all these things when our parish team took on the sister-nurse's dilemma that night in Lima. The process of unpacking her crucial question about God's presence in the desperate lives of the impoverished people there went on for a long time—years really—

and, at least for me, continues as a work in progress. I'm sure that coming to understand what the incarnation of God means in the light of human suffering and degradation takes a lifetime. But two further and surprising conclusions came to us back then and serve as fitting conclusions to this chapter.

First, we came to one further “answer” to the question the sister posed about where evidence of God exists in the lives of the sick and poor among us. It's in us. If believing in God's incarnation sheds light on that question, further clarity comes when we realize that it is we ourselves who are the evidence today of God's providence—or, we're not. Back then we came to the challenging insight that the whole purpose of the incarnation—of God-with-us—has become the task of all the people who believe in it and act on it, whether explicitly or implicitly. Jesus has left the scene. It's now just us, left, as the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer puts it, to “complete His work on earth.” Put negatively, if we are not vitally concerned about the worth of each person, the consequences of each relationship, and the effects of each structure, then to that extent the Incarnate Jesus is absent today.

We saw that people who reach out to other people, especially those in most need; people who try to make even difficult relationships work; people who beat their heads and fists against the walls of unjust social systems—these are the hands and feet and smile, the healing action, and yes, the saving death of Jesus today. Jesus said all of this quite simply when he prayed: “[Father,] I do not ask you to take them out of the world. . . . As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (Jn 17:15, 18).

A second “answer” to where evidence of God is in human suffering came to us thanks to the poor themselves. We began to look at them in a new way, noticing that they identified with an incarnate God who also suffered—especially on the cross. We saw that they took a great deal of consolation from that aspect of his life. They related to the suffering God of Good Friday much better than to the triumphant God of Easter Sunday. The crucifixion came much closer to their experience than the resurrection.

In fact, we began to see that for us, the non-poor, just the opposite was true. We related more to Easter than to Good Friday. Since then, I've noticed that very often Christians in the United States begin to wish each other a happy Easter right after the Palm Sunday ceremonies, or surely when the Holy Thursday liturgy has finished. We seem to skip over Good Friday, perhaps because, unlike the poor, our society has rarely had the sort of searing experiences of suffering that they have on a daily basis. This is really an ominous situation for people of faith in the heart of the empire.

And so, our question back in Lima—Where is the evidence of a loving God in the lives of the sick and poor?—had further light shed on it thanks to the example of those same poor and often miserable human beings. They knew a God who shared their pain in the life, especially in the sufferings and death of Jesus. They became truly our teachers. They showed us the way to a realistic spirituality based on what the church there was calling for: a preferential option for the poor. Thanks to those desperately poor, marginalized, oppressed women and men, we came to understand a little better what Jesus the Christ, the incarnation of a loving God, means when, surprisingly, he says to us “as often as you did it—or not—or one of these, the least of my sisters or brothers you did it—or not—for me” (Mt 25:40).

Can we even begin to hope that the same conversion will happen in our country? The poor still have the ability to teach us, to hold out the possibility that we Americans of faith and those of good will can change the course of our history, even now, and begin to serve the impoverished peoples of our nation and the world rather than go on exploiting them. If there is any hope for

this empire, I believe it's with people of faith and good will here who "have the eyes to see," who understand the full dimensions of God's incarnation and who act on that understanding.

Pope Benedict XVI: "Saved in Hope" (*Spe Salvi*), 30 Nov. 2007

26. It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of this present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of "redemption" which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot by itself resolve the question of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed by death. The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Rom* 8:38- 39). If this absolute love exists, with its absolute certainty, then—only then—is man "redeemed", whatever should happen to him in his particular circumstances. This is what it means to say: Jesus Christ has "redeemed" us. Through him we have become certain of God, a God who is not a remote "first cause" of the world, because his only-begotten Son has become man and of him everyone can say: "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (*Gal* 2:20).



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty (12): Freedom to Love

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 310-311)

The Responsible Practice of Freedom

The second element of life in Christ is the responsible practice of freedom. Without freedom, we cannot speak meaningfully about morality or moral responsibility. Human freedom is more than a capacity to choose between this and that. It is the God-given power to become who he created us to be and so to share eternal union with him. This happens when we consistently choose ways that are in harmony with God's plan. Christian morality and God's law are not arbitrary, but are specifically given to us for our happiness. God gave us intelligence and the capacity to act freely. Ultimately, human freedom lies in our free decision to say "yes" to God. In contrast, many people today understand human freedom merely as the ability to make a choice, with no objective norm or good as the goal.

An opposite tendency to one that makes the act of choosing the core of human freedom is one that denies that we are free at all. Some believe that due to outside forces, inner compulsions, social pressures, childhood experiences, or genetic makeup, our behavior is already determined and we are not truly free. Though we do recognize that "the imputability or responsibility for an action can be diminished or nullified by ignorance, duress, fear, and other psychological or social factors" (CCC, no. 1746), normally we are still free and responsible for our actions. Our freedom may be limited but it is real nonetheless.

The best way to grow in freedom is to perform good acts. Good deeds help to make us free and develop good habits. The road to loss of freedom is through evil acts. Sin makes us slaves to evil and reduces our capacity to be free. Freedom comes from being moral. Slavery to sin arises from being immoral.

Pope Benedict XVI: "Saved in Hope" (*Spe Salvi*), 30 Nov. 2007

The true shape of Christian hope

24. Let us ask once again: what may we hope? And what may we not hope? First of all, we must acknowledge that incremental progress is possible only in the material sphere. Here, amid our growing knowledge of the structure of matter and in the light of ever more advanced inventions, we clearly see continuous progress towards an ever greater mastery of nature. Yet in the field of ethical awareness and moral decision-making, there is no similar possibility of accumulation for the simple reason that man's freedom is always new and he must always make his decisions anew. These decisions can never simply be made for us in advance by others—if that were the case, we would no longer be free. Freedom presupposes that in fundamental decisions, every person and every generation is a new beginning. Naturally, new generations can build on the knowledge and experience of those who went before, and they can draw upon the moral treasury

of the whole of humanity. But they can also reject it, because it can never be self-evident in the same way as material inventions. The moral treasury of humanity is not readily at hand like tools that we use; it is present as an appeal to freedom and a possibility for it. This, however, means that:

a) The right state of human affairs, the moral well-being of the world can never be guaranteed simply through structures alone, however good they are. Such structures are not only important, but necessary; yet they cannot and must not marginalize human freedom. Even the best structures function only when the community is animated by convictions capable of motivating people to assent freely to the social order. Freedom requires conviction; conviction does not exist on its own, but must always be gained anew by the community.

b) Since man always remains free and since his freedom is always fragile, the kingdom of good will never be definitively established in this world. Anyone who promises the better world that is guaranteed to last for ever is making a false promise; he is overlooking human freedom. Freedom must constantly be won over for the cause of good. Free assent to the good never exists simply by itself. If there were structures which could irrevocably guarantee a determined—good—state of the world, man's freedom would be denied, and hence they would not be good structures at all.

Vatican II: "Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, 18 November 1965

4. Since Christ, sent by the Father, is the source and origin of the whole apostolate of the Church, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity's living union with Christ, in keeping with the Lord's words, "He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids which are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy.(5) These are to be used by the laity in such a way that while correctly fulfilling their secular duties in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate union with Christ from their life but rather performing their work according to God's will they grow in that union. In this way the laity must make progress in holiness in a happy and ready spirit, trying prudently and patiently to overcome difficulties.(6) Neither family concerns nor other secular affairs should be irrelevant to their spiritual life, in keeping with the words of the Apostle, "What-ever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17).

Such a life requires a continual exercise of faith, hope, and charity. Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in Whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), seek His will in every event, see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves and in their relation to man's final goal.

They who have this faith live in the hope of the revelation of the sons of God and keep in mind the cross and resurrection of the Lord. In the pilgrimage of this life, hidden with Christ in God and free from enslavement to wealth, they aspire to those riches which remain forever and

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter twenty — 3

generously dedicate themselves wholly to the advancement of the kingdom of God and to the reform and improvement of the temporal order in a Christian spirit. Among the trials of this life they find strength in hope, convinced that “the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

Impelled by divine charity, they do good to all men, especially to those of the household of the faith (cf. Gal. 6:10), laying aside “all malice and all deceit and pretense, and envy, and all slander” (1 Peter 2:1), and thereby they draw men to Christ. This charity of God, “which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5), enables the laity really to express the spirit of the beatitudes in their lives. Following Jesus in His poverty, they are neither depressed by the lack of temporal goods nor inflated by their abundance; imitating Christ in His humility, they have no obsession for empty honors (cf. Gal. 5:26) but seek to please God rather than men, ever ready to leave all things for Christ’s sake (cf. Luke 14:26) and to suffer persecution for justice sake (cf. Matt. 5:10), as they remember the words of the Lord, “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Promoting Christian friendship among themselves, they help one another in every need whatsoever.

This plan for the spiritual life of the laity should take its particular character from their married or family state or their single or widowed state, from their state of health, and from their professional and social activity. They should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life, and they should make use of the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the laity who have followed their vocation and have become members of one of the associations or institutes approved by the Church try faithfully to adopt the special characteristics of the spiritual life which are proper to them as well. They should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social customs, namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which no true Christian life can exist.

The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, who while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labors, was always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the work of the Savior. Having now been assumed into heaven, with her maternal charity she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage and remain involved in dangers and difficulties until they are led into the happy fatherland.⁽⁷⁾ All should devoutly venerate her and commend their life and apostolate to her maternal care.

5. cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Liturgy, Chap. 1, no. 11: A.A.S. 56 (1964) pp. 102-103.

6. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, no. 32: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 38; cf. also nos. 40-41: *ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

7. *ibid.*, no. 62, p. 63; cf. also no. 65. *ibid.*, pp. 64-65.



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Chapter twenty-one (13): How to Love People

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 67-68)

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

God willed the diversity of his creatures and their own particular goodness, their interdependence, and their order. He destined all material creatures for the good of the human race. Man, and through him all creation, is destined for the glory of God.

—CCC, no. 353

“God created man in his image ... male and female he created them” (Gn 1:27). In figurative and symbolic language, Scripture describes God’s creating the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, and placing them in Paradise. They were created in friendship with God and in harmony with creation. The Church teaches that theirs was a state of original holiness and justice, with no suffering or death (cf. CCC, no. 376; GS, no. 18).

The first man and woman were qualitatively different from and superior to all other living creatures on earth. They were uniquely made in the image of God, as are all human beings, their descendants. What does this mean? God’s image is not a static picture stamped on our souls. God’s image is a dynamic source of inner spiritual energy drawing our minds and hearts toward truth and love, and to God himself, the source of all truth and love.

To be made in the image of God includes specific qualities. Each of us is capable of self-knowledge and of entering into communion with other persons through self-giving. These qualities—and the shared heritage of our first parents—also form a basis for a bond of unity among all human beings. To be made in God’s image also unites human beings as God’s stewards in the care of the earth and of all God’s other creatures.

Another important aspect of our creation is that God has made us a unity of body and soul. The human soul is not only the source of physical life for our bodies but is also the core of our spiritual powers of knowing and loving. While our bodies come into being through physical processes, our souls are all created directly by God.

God created man and woman, equal to each other as persons and in dignity. Each is completely human and is meant to complement the other in a communion of persons, seen most evidently in marriage.

Finally, we need to recognize that God created the first humans in a state of original holiness and justice, so that we are able to live in harmony with his plan. By his gracious will, he enabled us to know and love him, thus calling us to share his life. Our first parents also had free will and thus could be tempted by created things to turn away from the Creator.

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* (pp. 59–62)

FRANCIS: ‘VIVERE SINE PROPRIO’

In his *Testament* Francis insists that the Lord revealed to him the ‘form of life’ he was to live.⁴ This way of living is fundamentally ‘to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ’, as he wrote at the beginning of the Rule. And that included living ‘without anything of one’s own’ (*vivere sine proprio*).⁵

The phrase occurs frequently in Francis’ writings, especially in his *Admonitions*, which can be read as a commentary on this expression. These are mostly brief sayings, like those of the Desert Fathers of early Christian monasticism. They were most likely written by others who heard them when Francis addressed gatherings of his brothers (the chapters held each year). The various ways in which living *sine proprio* recurs in these sayings echo words of Francis from his own writings.

What does this ‘non-possessing’ life mean? Primarily, it means living as a disciple, following the teaching of the Beatitudes. Those who live without anything of their own are ‘the poor in spirit; theirs is the Kingdom of heaven’ (Matthew 5:3).⁶ They live ‘according to the Spirit’. The opposite of this way of living is ‘to appropriate’, to claim things as one’s own. And those who live in this way live ‘according to the flesh’.

This attitude of radical non-possessing touches every part of human life, from our own will to the doing of good works. We would ‘repeat the sin of our first parents’ if we seek to ‘appropriate’ our own will.⁷ None of the brothers is to ‘appropriate’ a position of authority.⁸ Those who study sacred Scripture are not to use their knowledge to accumulate riches.⁹ No brother is to appropriate anger or disturbances¹⁰ or scandal for wrongs done.¹¹

The *Admonitions* also give us Francis’ reasons for refusing to appropriate anything: it is the ‘Most High’ who ‘says and does’ every good thing.¹² All that is good belongs to the Most High alone, and to appropriate to ourselves anything is ‘blasphemy’, attributing to ourselves what belongs to God. Put in different terms, for Francis, everything is a gift. To pretend that anything we have or are belongs to us as ‘property’ is a kind of *lèse majesté*, an affront to God who is ‘All Good’ and gives ‘every good thing’.

The ‘All Good’ God, Father, Son and Spirit, far from holding on jealously to all good gifts, gives generously, even divine life itself. Francis sees this good God when he looks at Jesus. Quoting John’s Gospel (14:6–9) at the beginning of the *Admonitions*, he recalls that ‘the Lord Jesus’ said to Philip, ‘whoever sees me sees my Father’. Using the Eucharist as his point of reference, Francis declares that ‘every day’ this same Jesus ‘descends’ from the Father into the hands of the priest, and comes to us ‘in humble appearance’, as he did when he ‘descended from the royal throne’ into the ‘womb of the Virgin’.¹³

In the incarnation, as in the Eucharist, Francis sees ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ (and therefore the ‘most holy Father’). Instead of holding onto high status and power (‘the royal throne’) this Lord chooses to ‘descend’, to be among people ‘in humble appearance’. For Francis, poverty begins with the example of God, seen in Jesus. Two texts of St Paul express this ‘poverty of God’ as Francis perceived it, one from the Letter to the Philippians, another from the Second Letter to the Corinthians:

Have this mind among you, which was in Christ Jesus who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and being born in human likeness. And being found in

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter twenty-one — 3

human form he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11)

... our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

The poverty of Francis is a response to Christ Jesus, who did not ‘grasp’ or cling to divine status, but let go of it to be among humans as a servant. This Jesus who was born in lowly status, lived as a poor man and died on the cross, the ultimate ‘letting go’. Since he is ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life’ (John 14:6), as Francis states,¹⁴ the way into God is the way of relinquishment, without grasping or appropriating anything.

Without this christological understanding, poverty becomes a penitential practice in its own right, simply a means of ascetical discipline or moral self-improvement. And to understand poverty primarily as a matter of having fewer of these, or less of that, counting and measuring with the eye of a spiritual accountant, makes a caricature out of Francis’ vision.

In the Rule of the Lesser Brothers, Chapter Six expresses this vision:

The brothers shall claim nothing as their own: neither a house, nor a place, nor anything. As pilgrims and strangers [1 Peter 2:1] in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them confidently seek alms. Nor should they be ashamed, because the Lord made himself poor [cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9] for us in this world. My dearest brothers, this is the excellency of the most high poverty, that makes you heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, making you poor in things but rich in virtues. Let this be your portion that leads you to the land of the living [Psalm 141:6]. Dearest brothers, totally joined to this poverty, do not wish to have anything else under heaven, forever, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁵

The promise of this ‘most high poverty’ is life, abundance, the kingdom of heaven, life with Christ. Francis, the former merchant, sold all he had to possess this treasure; and in the Rule required all those joining the brothers to do the same. Those who want to accept ‘this life’ should be sent to the ministers (superiors), who shall tell them ‘the word of the Holy Gospel’, namely that they ‘go and sell all they have and strive to give it to the poor’.¹⁶ The word of the gospel here is from Matthew 19:21, where the young man with many possessions hears the words of Jesus: ‘If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me.’¹⁷

Francis saw the ‘life according to the Holy Gospel’ as necessarily including this transaction, selling and giving, as a concrete participation in the dynamic of Christ ‘who was rich and made himself poor’ for humanity. Once again, the letting go is not for its own sake, as a moral virtue; it is a letting go for the sake of the poor, modelled on the generous self-giving of God seen in the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

4. Test 16–17.

5. RegB 1:2

6. Adm 14.

7. Adm 2.
8. Adm 4. The Earlier Rule contains a similar expression: ‘Let no one appropriate to himself the charge of superior or the office of preacher’ (RegnB 17).
9. Adm 7.
10. Adm 11.
11. Adm 14–15.
12. Adm 8.
13. Adm 1.
14. Adm 1.
15. RegB 6.
16. RegB 1.
17. Francis also uses a similar passage, from Luke 14:33, ‘Whoever does not renounce everything cannot be my disciple’, in Adm 3.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio: “The Minor Legend of St. Francis (1260–1263),” Chapter II 691

Fifth Lesson

- LMj IV 1 Strengthened then by grace from on high and by the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, Francis with great confidence took the road to the Spoleto valley. He wanted to teach by word and carry out by deed the truth of the evangelical perfection which he had conceived in his mind and solemnly vowed to profess. When the question was raised with his companions whether they should live among the people or go off to solitary places, he sought the pleasure of the divine will by the fervor of prayer.^a Enlightened by a revelation from heaven, he realized that he was sent by the Lord to win for Christ souls which the devil was trying to snatch away. Discerning, therefore, he chose to live for everyone rather than for himself alone, he went to an abandoned hut near Assisi to live with his brothers, according to the norm of holy poverty in every hardship of religious life and preach the word of God to the people whenever and wherever possible. Having been made a herald of the Gospel, he went about the cities and towns *proclaiming the kingdom of God not in such words taught by human wisdom, but in the power of the Spirit* with the Lord directing him by revelations as he spoke *and confirming the preaching by the signs that followed.* Lk 9:60; 1 Cor 1:13
- LMj IV 2
- LMj IV 3
- LMj IV 5

a. Bonaventure holds that constant prayer proffers divine illumination, see: *The Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, c. 18, n. 3 (VII, 449a–b). Francis’s decision to forgo a strictly contemplative life, which was reinforced for the friars and laity in the depiction of his preaching activities in frescoes and panel paintings, mirrors Bonaventure’s theological methodology. Bonaventure maintains the end of theology is found in the moral realm, not in contemplation alone, see: *The Commentary on the First Book of Sentences*, proëm, q. 3, concl. (I, 13b).



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-two (14): Foundations for the Kingdom

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 420–421)

PRACTICE THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHINGS

Man is himself the author, center, and goal of all economic and social life. The decisive point of the social question is that goods created by God for everyone should in fact reach everyone in accordance with justice and with the help of charity.

—CCC, no. 2459

For over a century, the Church, especially through the teaching of the popes, has given special attention to the development of her social doctrine. The Church's social doctrine is related to the understanding of what it means to be a human being, to the origin of human dignity, to the problem of the Fall, and to the promise of Redemption. We are seriously weakened by Original Sin and actual sin but are redeemed by Christ's saving death and Resurrection with its gift of divine life, a source of moral strength (cf. CCC, nos. 355–431).

The Church's social doctrine also relates to an understanding of participation in social life, the role of authority, the importance of the common good, natural law, social justice, and human solidarity (cf. CCC, nos. 1897–1948). Finally, there is the Seventh Commandment, which includes consideration of the relationship between the economy and social justice, the importance of solidarity among nations, and a preferential love for the poor (cf. CCC, nos. 2401–2463).

Catholic social teaching embraces both the Church's perennial concern for people's social needs since New Testament times as well as an explicit social doctrine.

The Church makes a judgment about economic and social matters when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it. She is concerned with the temporal common good of men because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, their ultimate end. (CCC, no. 2458)

The central focus of the Church's social teaching is justice for all, especially for the helpless and the poor. It involves the removal of the symptoms and causes of poverty and injustice.

The Church's social doctrine addresses a wide range of issues that include the dignity of work, the need of workers to receive a salary that will enable them to care for their families, a safe working environment, and the responsibility of the state for areas such as a stable currency, public services, and protecting personal freedom and private property. Church teaching also speaks to the need of business enterprises to consider the good of the employees, not just the profit motive. Wage earners should be able to represent their needs and grievances when necessary.

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter twenty-two — 2

As can be seen in the summary that follows, the major themes of Catholic social doctrine build on each other and complement each other. All of the Church's social teaching is rooted in the fundamental principle of the sacredness of human life and the fundamental dignity of every single individual. Out of these truths flows the rest.

[Note: The "summary that follows" is included in the supplemental readings for Chapter 24 of *The Franciscan Journey*.]

Pope Benedict XVI: "Saved in Hope" (*Spe Salvi*), 30 Nov. 2007

II. Action and suffering as settings for learning hope

35. All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action. This is so first of all in the sense that we thereby strive to realize our lesser and greater hopes, to complete this or that task which is important for our onward journey, or we work towards a brighter and more humane world so as to open doors into the future. Yet our daily efforts in pursuing our own lives and in working for the world's future either tire us or turn into fanaticism, unless we are enlightened by the radiance of the great hope that cannot be destroyed even by small-scale failures or by a breakdown in matters of historic importance. If we cannot hope for more than is effectively attainable at any given time, or more than is promised by political or economic authorities, our lives will soon be without hope. It is important to know that I can always continue to hope, even if in my own life, or the historical period in which I am living, there seems to be nothing left to hope for. Only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere. Certainly we cannot "build" the Kingdom of God by our own efforts—what we build will always be the kingdom of man with all the limitations proper to our human nature. The Kingdom of God is a gift, and precisely because of this, it is great and beautiful, and constitutes the response to our hope. And we cannot—to use the classical expression—"merit" Heaven through our works. Heaven is always more than we could merit, just as being loved is never something "merited", but always a gift. However, even when we are fully aware that Heaven far exceeds what we can merit, it will always be true that our behaviour is not indifferent before God and therefore is not indifferent for the unfolding of history. We can open ourselves and the world and allow God to enter: we can open ourselves to truth, to love, to what is good. This is what the saints did, those who, as "God's fellow workers", contributed to the world's salvation (cf. *1 Cor* 3:9; *1 Th* 3:2). We can free our life and the world from the poisons and contaminations that could destroy the present and the future. We can uncover the sources of creation and keep them unsullied, and in this way we can make a right use of creation, which comes to us as a gift, according to its intrinsic requirements and ultimate purpose. This makes sense even if outwardly we achieve nothing or seem powerless in the face of overwhelming hostile forces. So on the one hand, our actions engender hope for us and for others; but at the same time, it is the great hope based upon God's promises that gives us courage and directs our action in good times and bad.

Pope John XXIII: "Encyclical on Christianity & Social Progress" (*Mater et Magistra*), 15 May 1961

Scientific, Technical and Financial Co-operation

163. Of itself, however, emergency aid will not go far in relieving want and famine when these are caused—as they so often are—by the primitive state of a nation's economy. The only permanent remedy for this is to make use of every possible means of providing these citizens with the scientific, technical and professional training they need, and to put at their disposal the necessary capital for speeding up their economic development with the help of modern methods.

164. We are aware how deeply the public conscience has been affected in recent years by the urgent need of supporting the economic development and social progress of those countries which are still struggling against poverty and economic disabilities.

165. International and regional organizations, national and private societies, all are working towards this goal, increasing day to day the measure of their own technical co-operation in all productive spheres. By their combined efforts thousands of young people are being given facilities for attending the universities of the more advanced countries, and acquiring an up-to-date scientific, technical and professional training. World banking institutes, individual States and private persons are helping to furnish the capital for an ever richer network of economic enterprises in the less wealthy countries. It is a magnificent work that they are doing, and We are most happy to take this occasion of giving it the praise that it deserves. It is a work, however, which needs to be increased, and We hope that the years ahead will see the wealthier nations making even greater efforts for the scientific, technical and economic advancement of those political communities whose development is still only in its initial stages.

Respecting the True Hierarchy of Values

175. Scientific and technical progress, economic development and the betterment of living conditions, are certainly valuable elements in a civilization. But we must realize that they are essentially instrumental in character. They are not supreme values in themselves.

176. It pains Us, therefore, to observe the complete indifference to the true hierarchy of values shown by so many people in the economically developed countries. Spiritual values are ignored, forgotten or denied, while the progress of science, technology and economics is pursued for its own sake, as though material well-being were the be-all and end-all of life. This attitude is contagious, especially when it infects the work that is being done for the less developed countries, which have often preserved in their ancient traditions an acute and vital awareness of the more important human values, on which the moral order rests.

177. To attempt to undermine this national integrity is clearly immoral. It must be respected and as far as possible clarified and developed, so that it may remain what it is: a foundation of true civilization.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-three (15): Justice and Franciscan Life

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* (pp. 30–32)

FRANCIS AND FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

To understand Franciscan spirituality we must begin with the spirituality of Francis himself, *il Poverello*, ‘the little poor man’ of Assisi. And to begin, we may again use some remarks from Martial Lekeux:

The life of the Poverello may seem more cheerful and more peaceful than that of some of the other saints. But the truth is that he was the saint of excesses: excess in sacrifice, excess in love: it was by reason of his excesses that he held to the happy medium, because his disregard for moderation worked both ways, just as a scale insures better equilibrium the longer it is on both sides.

Francis is the saint of excesses and yet he is the saint with a smile, because he always fused the two. For him, penance was love, and sorrow ‘perfect joy.’ Using this standard, folly was wisdom and excess supreme moderation.¹⁴

We must make some sense of this ‘excessive’ saint if we wish to understand the beginnings and the permanent foundation of the Franciscan tradition. But understanding the tradition does not mean stopping with Francis. Otherwise we would have only the spirituality of an individual, not a ‘tradition’. The word itself, from the Latin word for ‘handing over’, indicates that others received something from Francis. What was it? For his contemporaries, friends, companions, brothers and sisters, it was the experience of knowing Francis himself: he was the message. In a popular expression of the times, he taught them ‘by word and example’ (*verbo et exemplo*).¹⁵ And, by their own testimony, he was for them a living example of what he taught: He edified his listeners by his example as well as his words; ‘he made his whole body a tongue’; ‘more than someone who prayed, he had become prayer’: these are some of the descriptions of Francis recalled by Thomas of Celano.¹⁶ That is, his whole person had become the message he was trying to communicate.

And what was that message? In a word, it was Jesus. To express it in such simple terms today may seem banal to us, or pious, or quaint. But for Francis, the discovery of Jesus, ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ’, was the ongoing revelation of his whole life in the twenty years after his conversion. In his early years he discovered Jesus as the one who led him among the lepers, and made their presence ‘sweet’ to him, rather than ‘bitter’. He then discovered Jesus the preacher of conversion, announcing the reign of God. Over the years he began to see more clearly Jesus as the incarnate Son of God at Bethlehem, then as the Suffering Servant on Calvary; and finally, ‘the Lord’ of all things, raised up in glory after his death. And in this Lord, the glorified Son, he also understood the trinitarian God.

It is through ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ that Francis understands Mary, the Church, the Scriptures, priesthood, the poor, his brothers and sisters, and all creatures. It is ultimately through and in Jesus that Francis even understands himself. Though he seldom used the title ‘Christ’ by

itself to refer to Jesus, his spirituality, and that of the Franciscan tradition after him, has been characterised as ‘Christocentric’.

If there is one word which does complete justice to Franciscan theology and spirituality, it is ‘Christocentric,’ and they have this as their distinguishing feature, because the faith and holiness of St Francis were totally centered on Christ. In Jesus Christ the revelation is made to us of what the world, as a whole and in all its parts, means to God.¹⁷

14. Martial Lekeux OFM, *Short-Cut to Divine Love*, tr. Paul J., Oligny OFM (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1962), p. 6.

15. See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Docere verbo et exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979).

16. 1Cel 97; 2Cel 96.

17. Eric Doyle, ‘St Francis of Assisi and the Christocentric Character of Franciscan Life and Doctrine’ in Damian McElrath (ed.), *Franciscan Christology* (St Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1980), p. 2.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder

“The Anonymous of Perugia” (1240–1241)

41–42

Chapter IV

HOW HE ADMONISHED THE BROTHERS AND SENT THEM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

- 1C 26 ¹⁸Saint Francis, since he was already filled with the grace of the
1C 29 Holy Spirit, predicted what would happen to his brothers. And
 calling together his six brothers in the woods next to the church of
 Saint Mary of the Portiuncula where they often went to pray, he told
 them: “My dear brothers, let us consider our calling because God has
 mercifully called us not only for our own good but also for the salva-
 tion of many. Therefore, let us go through the world, encouraging
 and teaching men and women by word and example to do penance
 for their sins and to remember the Lord’s commandments, which
 they have forgotten for such a long time.”
- LK 12:32 He also told them: “*Do not be afraid, little flock*, but have confidence 1C 29
 in the Lord. And do not say among yourselves ‘We are simple and il-
 literate men, how should we preach?’ But be mindful of the Lord’s
 words to his disciples: ‘*You yourselves will not be the speakers; the Spirit of*
Mt 10:20 *your Father will be speaking in you.*’ For the Lord Himself will give you
 spirit and wisdom to encourage and preach to men and their wives
 the way and deeds of the commandments. You will find, however,
 faithful people—meek, humble and kind—who will receive you and
 your words with joy and love. You will find others—unfaithful,
 proud, and blasphemous—resisting and criticizing you and your
 words. Therefore, resolve in your hearts to bear all these things with
 patience and humility.”

MK 16:6 When the brothers heard these words, they were afraid. Realizing that they were frightened, he told them: “*Do not be frightened*. Keep in mind that within a short time many learned, prudent and noble men will be with us. They will preach to nations and peoples, to kings and princes, and many people will be converted to the Lord. And the Lord will make His family grow and increase throughout the entire world.”
1C 27
 After saying this, Francis blessed them and they went on their way.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (p. 318)

LOVE, RULES, AND GRACE

Our culture frequently exalts individual autonomy against community and tradition. This can lead to a suspicion of rules and norms that come from a tradition. This can also be a cause of a healthy criticism of a legalism that can arise from concentrating on rules and norms.

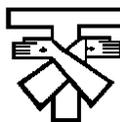
Advocates of Christian morality can sometimes lapse into a legalism that leads to an unproductive moralizing. There is no doubt that love has to be the essential foundation of the moral life. But just as essential in this earthly realm are rules and laws that show how love may be applied in real life. In heaven, love alone will suffice. In this world, we need moral guidance from the Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Precepts of the Church, and other rules to see how love works.

Love alone, set adrift from moral direction, can easily descend into sentimentality that puts us at the mercy of our feelings. Popular entertainment romanticizes love and tends to omit the difficult demands of the moral order.

In our permissive culture, love is sometimes so romanticized that it is separated from sacrifice. Because of this, tough moral choices cannot be faced. The absence of sacrificial love dooms the possibility of an authentic moral life.

Scripturally and theologically, the Christian moral life begins with a loving relationship with God, a covenant love made possible by the sacrifice of Christ. The Commandments and other moral rules are given to us as ways of protecting the values that foster love of God and others. They provide us with ways to express love, sometimes by forbidding whatever contradicts love.

The moral life requires grace. The *Catechism* speaks of this in terms of life in Christ and the inner presence of the Holy Spirit, actively enlightening our moral compass and supplying the spiritual strength to do the right thing. The grace that comes to us from Christ in the Spirit is as essential as love and rules and, in fact, makes love and keeping the rules possible.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-four (16): The Gift of Work

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 421-424)

Reflections of the Catholic Bishops of the United States on the Church's Social Teaching: Major Themes

The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of a modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. In these brief reflections, we wish to highlight several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.

FROM THE CATECHISM

1. What should be the attitude of business toward the environment?

Those *responsible for business enterprises* are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of *profits*. (CCC, no. 2432)

2. Who should have access to employment and professions?

Access to employment and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination: men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. For its part society should, according to circumstances, help citizens find work and employment. (CCC, no. 2433)

3. When is a strike permissible?

Recourse to a *strike* is morally legitimate when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit. It becomes morally unacceptable when accompanied by violence, or when objectives are included that are not directly linked to working conditions or are contrary to the common good. (CCC, no. 2435)

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision of society. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and assisted suicide. The value of human life is being threatened by increasing use of the death penalty. We believe that

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter twenty-four — 2

every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred, but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The family is the central social institution that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31–46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Solidarity

We are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Care for the Environment

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

This summary should only be starting point for those interested in Catholic social teaching. A full understanding can only be achieved by reading the papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents that make up this rich tradition. (USCCB, *Excerpts from Catholic Social Teaching* [card] [Washington, DC: USCCB, 1999])

Ilia Delio, OSF: *Franciscan Prayer* (pp. 82-84)

Francis wanted his followers to live in poverty by confidently making known their needs to one another. In his *Earlier Rule* he wrote: “Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, 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.”¹⁴ Poverty, for Francis, was the key to love. Although poverty played a central role in his way of life, it is interesting that he almost never explains it in his writings. Francis was not really interested in the poverty of material possessions; rather he was concerned for the type of poverty that would lead to interdependence and the love of the brothers for one another. Thus he advocated that his followers live *sine proprio*—not without things but without possessing things, for when we possess things we may think that we do not need other people or have a responsibility of love toward them. Francis had profound insight into the human person and he placed poverty in the context of human relationships. Three areas where he speaks of living *sine proprio* are: 1) our inner selves and what we possess for ourselves; 2) our relationships with others and what we possess in relation to others; and 3) our relationship to God and what we possess in relation to God.¹⁵ In all three areas Francis asked of his followers to “hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that he who gives himself totally to you may receive you totally.”¹⁶

To live as poor persons, for Francis, is to love one another as family, as a mother loves and cares for her son. The poor person is the brother or sister who lives in dependence on others, following the poor Christ. Poverty is being able to say, “I need you,” that is, “I am incomplete without you.” When Jesus asked Peter, “Peter, do you love me?” he was not looking for an exchange of goods but a commitment of fidelity. When Peter exclaimed, “you know I love you!” Jesus said “when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone will fasten the belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go” (John 12:17–18). Poverty is being able to have someone else put a belt around me and lead me to places I may never have thought of or may have preferred not to go. It is to be open and free to follow where God is leading, not only in my own life but in my brothers and sisters in whom God dwells.

Only relationships of poverty and humility, in Francis’ view, can undo the injustices of the self-centered person. Only when we are dependent on another can we renounce autonomy and accept the gift of the other in whom God lives. Existential poverty, the poverty of being created, underlies structures of justice because it forms structures of interdependency by which all share in the common good. But to really live poverty we must ask, how much am I willing to let go? How much can I trust my neighbors, my brothers and sisters? Can I accept God’s goodness in the neighbor who is different from me? Poverty, therefore, relates to our humanity; material poverty is only sacramental of the deeper poverty of being human. Poverty is to help make us human, and to be a human person is to be dependent on another; it is to be an instrument of otherness by which the other shines through in one’s life. There is no sense in giving away all my material possessions if this act does not lead me to a poverty of being interdependent, to accepting goodness from another, and to accepting the other as the goodness of God. Only care for another, in Francis’ view, truly humanizes life.

¹⁴Francis of Assisi, *Later Rule* 6.8 (*Écrits*, 190). Engl. trans. *FA:ED* I, 103.

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter twenty-four — 4

¹⁵For a good discussion of Francis and poverty see Regis J. Armstrong, *Saint Francis of Assisi* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 154–65.

¹⁶Francis of Assisi, “A Letter to the Entire Order” 29 (*Écrits*, 250). Engl. trans. *FA:ED I*, 118.

Pope Benedict XVI: “God is Love” (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

28. In order to define more accurately the relationship between the necessary commitment to justice and the ministry of charity, two fundamental situations need to be considered:

a) The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics. As Augustine once said, a State which is not governed according to justice would be just a bunch of thieves: “*Remota itaque iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?*”.[18] Fundamental to Christianity is the distinction between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God (cf. *Mt* 22:21), in other words, the distinction between Church and State, or, as the Second Vatican Council puts it, the autonomy of the temporal sphere.[19] The State may not impose religion, yet it must guarantee religious freedom and harmony between the followers of different religions. For her part, the Church, as the social expression of Christian faith, has a proper independence and is structured on the basis of her faith as a community which the State must recognize. The two spheres are distinct, yet always interrelated.

Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now. But this presupposes an even more radical question: what is justice? The problem is one of practical reason; but if reason is to be exercised properly, it must undergo constant purification, since it can never be completely free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests.

Here politics and faith meet. Faith by its specific nature is an encounter with the living God—an encounter opening up new horizons extending beyond the sphere of reason. But it is also a purifying force for reason itself. From God’s standpoint, faith liberates reason from its blind spots and therefore helps it to be ever more fully itself. Faith enables reason to do its work more effectively and to see its proper object more clearly. This is where Catholic social doctrine has its place: it has no intention of giving the Church power over the State. Even less is it an attempt to impose on those who do not share the faith ways of thinking and modes of conduct proper to faith. Its aim is simply to help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just.

The Church’s social teaching argues on the basis of reason and natural law, namely, on the basis of what is in accord with the nature of every human being. It recognizes that it is not the Church’s responsibility to make this teaching prevail in political life. Rather, the Church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest. Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation

must take up anew. As a political task, this cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility. Yet, since it is also a most important human responsibility, the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically.

The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply.

b) Love—*caritas*—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable.^[20] The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern. We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need. The Church is one of those living forces: she is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ. This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support. In the end, the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live “by bread alone” (*Mt* 4:4; cf. *Dt* 8:3)—a conviction that demeans man and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human.

[18] *De Civitate Dei*, IV, 4: CCL 47, 102.

[19] Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 36.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-five (17): In Their Family ...

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume III, The Prophet

“The Little Flowers of St. Francis”

585–586

Chapter 12

HOW SAINT FRANCIS PUT BROTHER MASSEO IN CHARGE OF THE DOOR,
ALMS AND COOKING;
THEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE BROTHERS HE REMOVED HIM

DBF XII

Saint Francis wanted to make Brother Masseo humble, so that he would not lift himself up in vainglory because of the many gifts and graces God gave him, but by virtue of humility with these to grow from virtue to virtue. One time when he was staying in a solitary place with those truly holy first companions of his, among whom was the same Brother Masseo, he said one day to Brother Masseo, in front of all the companions: “O Brother Masseo, all these companions of yours have the grace of contemplation and prayer; but you have the gift of preaching the word of God to content the people. So I want you to have charge of the door and alms and cooking, so that these brothers may pursue contemplation. And when the other brothers eat, you will eat outside the door of the place, so that those who come to the place, before they start knocking, can be satisfied by some good words of God from you, so there will be no need then for anyone besides you to go outside. And do this in merit of holy obedience.” Brother Masseo pulled back his capuche and bowed his head and humbly accepted and carried out this obedience for many days, taking charge of the door, alms and cooking.

The companions, as men enlightened by God, began to feel great remorse in their hearts over this, considering that Brother Masseo was a man of great perfection like them and even more, and the whole burden of the place was placed on him and not on them. For this reason all them, moved by one will, went to ask the holy father that he be pleased to distribute those duties among them, since their consciences could not bear that Brother Masseo carry so many burdens. Hearing this, Saint Francis accepted their advice and agreed with their will. He called Brother Masseo and said to him, “Brother Masseo, your companions want to do part of the jobs I gave you, so I want these jobs to be divided.” Brother Masseo said, with great humility and patience, “Father, whatever you assign me, all or part, I’ll consider it all God’s doing.” Then Saint Francis, seeing the humility of Brother Masseo and the charity of the others, preached to them

a wonderful and great sermon about most holy humility, teaching them that the greater the gifts and graces God gives us, the more we must be humble, because without humility no virtue is acceptable to God. When he finished preaching he distributed the jobs with very great charity.

To the praise of Jesus Christ
and the little poor man Francis.
Amen.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 283–285)

THE PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE

The marriage covenant, by which a man and woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament.

—CCC, no. 1660

The *Catechism* teaches that Christ’s grace in the Sacrament of Marriage protects the essential purposes of marriage: the good of the couple and the generation and education of children. These purposes are protected and fostered by the permanence of the marriage bond and mutual fidelity of the spouses.

“What God has joined together, no human being must separate” (Mk 10:9). We have already noted that God’s plan for marriage involves a permanent covenant embraced by the couple. The Church declares every valid sacramental consummated marriage to be indissoluble, that is, no one can dissolve the marriage bond.

The Sacrament obliges marital fidelity between the spouses. Love has a definitive quality about it. It is more than a practical arrangement or a temporary contract. Marital intimacy and the good of the children require total fidelity to conjugal love. This flows from Christ’s own fidelity to the Church, which he loved so much that he died for her. By their mutual fidelity, the spouses continue to make present to each other the love of Christ and lead each other to greater holiness through the grace they receive from the Sacrament.

Married love is ordered to the good of the spouses and to the procreation and education of children. These are the unitive and procreative purposes of marriage. “By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory” (CCC, no. 1652; GS, no. 48). The fruitfulness of married love includes the moral, spiritual, and faith life the parents hand on to their children. Parents, as principal educators of their children, are at the service of life.

FROM THE CATECHISM

1. Why is the family called “the domestic Church”?

The Christian home is the place where the children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family is rightly called “the domestic church,” a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity. (CCC, no. 1666)

2. What is essential in the consent of those to be married?

The parties to a marriage covenant are a baptized man and woman, free to contract marriage, who freely express their consent; “to be free” means:
—not being under constraint;
—not impeded by any natural or ecclesiastical law. (CCC, no. 1625)

3. Why should the couples be prepared for marriage?

So that the “I do” of the spouses may be a free and responsible act, and so that the marriage covenant may have solid and lasting human and Christian foundations, preparation is of prime importance. ... It is imperative to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role and exercise, so that, having learned the value of chastity, they will be able at a suitable age to engage in honorable courtship and enter upon a marriage of their own. (CCC, no. 1632)

Together with their children, parents form what the Second Vatican Council called the domestic church. The Church lives in the daily life of families, in their faith and love, in their prayers and mutual care. The Catechism notes that “All the members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way” (CCC, no. 1657).

Not all married couples are able to have children. “Spouses to whom God has not granted children can nevertheless have a conjugal life full of meaning. ... [and] can radiate a fruitfulness of charity, of hospitality and of sacrifice” (CCC, no. 1654).

EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT

The first effect of the Sacrament of Matrimony is the gift of the bond between the spouses. “The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself (CCC, no. 1639). “The marriage bond has been established by God himself in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved” (CCC, no. 1640).

The grace of this Sacrament perfects the love of husband and wife, binds them together in fidelity, and helps them welcome and care for children. Christ is the source of this grace and he dwells with the spouses to strengthen their covenant promises, to bear each other’s burdens with forgiveness and kindness, and to experience ahead of time the “wedding feast of the Lamb” (Rev 19:9).

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition*

Beginning of Chapter 5: 'THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER AND HOLY DEVOTION'

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Francis and his companions 'followed the footsteps' of Jesus also by integrating prayer with preaching, work and travel. They set aside time daily for liturgical prayer and took opportunities for prayer alone, in hermitages, apart from the surrounding society and towns. In this chapter we will examine some of those activities considered the 'spiritual practices' of the Franciscan tradition.

But we should use that term cautiously, because it suggests a dichotomy between the 'material' side of that tradition (work, travel, relationships) and the 'spiritual' (identified with practices of prayer or meditation). Hopefully, at this point in our treatment of the Franciscan tradition, such a division seems artificial, as it should. Prayer, contemplation, life in the hermitage: these are a part, but only a part, of the 'full gospel' spirituality of Francis, Clare and their followers.

Francis is not notable in the history of spirituality for developing or teaching techniques of prayer or meditation. His preferred phrases describe a basic attitude toward prayer as an underlying condition of life: to have the 'spirit of prayer and holy devotion'; to desire 'the spirit of the Lord and his holy operation'.¹ Preserving this spirit was to take precedence over every kind of work, and every other concern, including the study of theology.² It was not identical with practices of prayer, since some say 'many prayers' but easily grow angry when criticised by others: they are not truly 'poor in spirit', the condition for all genuine prayer.³

1. RegB [Later Rule] 5:3; 10:10.

2. EpAnt [Letter to St. Anthony] 2.

3. Adm [Admonitions] 14.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-six (18): Universal Kinship

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume III, The Prophet

“The Little Flowers of Saint Francis”

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Chapter 22

HOW SAINT FRANCIS TAMED THE WILD DOVES

DBF XXIV A young man one day caught many doves and was carrying them off to sell. Saint Francis met him and, always having singular kindness for meek animals, looking at those doves with a look of pity, said to the young man: “O good young man, I beg you to give them to me, so that such innocent birds, which are compared in Scripture to chaste, humble and faithful souls, may not fall into the hands of cruel people who will kill them.” The young man, inspired by God, gave them all to Saint Francis, and he, taking them to his breast, began to speak sweetly to them: “O my sister doves, simple, chaste and innocent, why did you let yourselves be caught? Now, you see, I want to rescue you from death and make nests for you so that you can bear fruit and multiply according to our Creator’s command.”

And Saint Francis went and made nests for them all. And they used them, and began to lay eggs and raise their young among the brothers. They stayed and behaved tamely with Saint Francis and the other brothers as if they were chickens that the brothers had always fed. And they never departed unless Saint Francis with his blessing gave them permission to leave.

Saint Francis said to the boy who gave him the doves: “Son, you will yet become a brother of this Order and you will graciously serve Jesus Christ.” And so it happened: that young man became a brother, and lived in the Order with great holiness.

To the praise of Jesus Christ
and the little poor man Francis.
Amen.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (page 24)

64. What kind of bond exists between created things?

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There exist an interdependence and a hierarchy among creatures as willed by God. At the same time, there is also a unity and solidarity among creatures since all have the same Creator, are loved by him and are ordered to his glory. Respecting the laws inscribed in creation and the relations which derive from the nature of things is, therefore, a principle of wisdom and a foundation for morality.

65. What is the relationship between the work of creation and the work of redemption?

345-349

The work of creation culminates in the still greater work of redemption, which in fact gives rise to a new creation in which everything will recover its true meaning and fulfillment.

**Vatican II: "Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World"
(*Gaudium et Spes*), Promulgated by Pope Paul VI, 7 December 1965**

69. God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.(8) Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others.(9) On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods.(10) If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others.(11) Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him,"(12) and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves.

In economically less advanced societies the common destination of earthly goods is partly satisfied by means of the customs and traditions proper to the community, by which the absolutely necessary things are furnished to each member. An effort must be made, however, to avoid regarding certain customs as altogether unchangeable, if they no longer answer the new needs of this age. On the other hand, imprudent action should not be taken against respectable customs which, provided they are suitably adapted to present-day circumstances, do not cease to

be very useful. Similarly, in highly developed nations a body of social institutions dealing with protection and security can, for its own part, bring to reality the common destination of earthly goods. Family and social services, especially those that provide for culture and education, should be further promoted. When all these things are being organized, vigilance is necessary to prevent the citizens from being led into a certain inactivity vis-a-vis society or from rejecting the burden of taking up office or from refusing to serve.

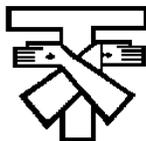
8. Cf. Pius XII, encyclical *Sertum Laetitiae*: AAS 31 (1939), p. 642, John XXIII, Consistorial allocution: AAS 52 (1960), pp. 5-11; John XXIII, encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), p. 411.

9. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*: II-II, q. 32, a. 5 ad 2; *Ibid.* q. 66, a. 2: cf. explanation in Leo XIII, encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*: AAS 23 (1890-91) p. 651; cf. also Pius XII Allocution of June 1, 1941: AAS 33 (1941), p. 199; Pius XII, Birthday radio address 1954: AAS 47 (1955), p. 27.

10. Cf. St. Basil, *Hom. in illud Lucae "Destruam horrea mea,"* n. 2 (PG 31, 263); Lactantius, *Divinarum institutionum*, lib. V. on justice (PL 6, 565 B); St. Augustine, *In Ioann. Ev.* tr. 50, n. 6 (PL 35, 1760); St. Augustine, *Enarratio in Ps. CXLVII*, 12 (PL 37, 192); St. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Ev.*, hom. 20 (PL 76, 1165); St. Gregory the Great, *Regulae Pastoralis liber*, pars III c. 21 (PL 77 87); St. Bonaventure, *In III Sent.* d. 33, dub. 1 (ed Quacracchi, III, 728); St. Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.* d. 15, p. II, a. a q. 1 (ed. cit. IV, 371 b); q. de superfluo (ms. Assisi Bibl. Comun. 186, ff. 112a-113a); St. Albert the Great, *In III Sent.*, d. 33, a.3, sol. 1 (ed. Borgnet XXVIII, 611); *Id. In IV Sent.* d. 15, a. 1 (ed. cit. XXIX, 494-497). As for the determination of what is superfluous in our day and age, cf. John XXIII, Radio-television message of Sept. 11, 1962: AAS 54 (1962) p. 682: "The obligation of every man, the urgent obligation of the Christian man, is to reckon what is superfluous by the measure of the needs of others, and to see to it that the administration and the distribution of created goods serve the common good."

11. In that case, the old principle holds true: "In extreme necessity all goods are common, that is, all goods are to be shared." On the other hand, for the order, extension, and manner by which the principle is applied in the proposed text, besides the modern authors: cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 66, a. 7. Obviously, for the correct application of the principle, all the conditions that are morally required must be met.

12. Cf. Gratian, *Decretum*, C. 21, dist. LXXXVI (ed. Friedberg I, 302). This axiom is also found already in PL 54, 591 A (cf. in Antonianum 27 (1952) 349-366) i.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-seven (19): Bearers of Peace

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume III, The Prophet

“The Little Flowers of Saint Francis”

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Chapter 8

HOW SAINT FRANCIS, WALKING ALONG THE ROAD WITH BROTHER LEO,
EXPLAINED TO HIM
THOSE THINGS THAT ARE PERFECT JOY

DBF VII As Saint Francis was once again going with Brother Leo from Perugia to Saint Mary of the Angels in wintertime, and the very great cold stung him sharply, he called Brother Leo, who was walking in front and said this to him: “Brother Leo, if it should happen that the Lesser Brothers in every land should give great examples of holiness and give good edification, nonetheless write and note carefully that perfect joy is not in that.” And walking along further Saint Francis called

“The Little Flowers of Saint Francis”

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him a second time: “O Brother Leo, even if a Lesser Brother gives sight to *the blind*, straightens the crippled, drives out the attacks of demons, restores hearing to *the deaf* and walking to the lame, speech to the mute and, what is even a greater thing, raises those *dead* for four days, write that perfect joy is not in that.” And walking on a little, Saint Francis cried out loudly, “O Brother Leo, if a Lesser Brother knew all *languages*, all the sciences and all the Scriptures, if he knew how to *prophecy* and reveal, not only future things, but also the secrets of consciences and people, write that perfect joy is not in that.” Walking on a bit further Saint Francis cried out even louder, “O Brother Leo, little lamb of God, even though a Lesser Brother may *speak with the tongue of an angel*, and know the courses of the stars and the powers of herbs, and all the treasures of the earth were revealed to him, and he knew the virtues of birds, *fish* and all animals and stones and waters, write that perfect joy is not in that.” And walking along a bit, Saint Francis cried out loudly, “O Brother Leo, even if a Lesser Brother knew how to preach so well that he converts all the unbelievers to the faith of Christ, write that perfect joy is not in that.”

Mt 11:4

1 Cor 13:2

1 Cor 13:2

1 Kgs 5:13

This way of talking had lasted for a good two miles, when Brother Leo with great amazement asked him and said, “Father, I ask you,

for the sake of God, to tell me where perfect joy is.” And Saint Francis replied to him, “When we come to Saint Mary of the Angels, soaked with rain like this and frozen from the cold and covered with mud and suffering from hunger, and we knock at the door of the place, and the porter comes out angrily and says, ‘Who are you?’ and we say, ‘We are two of your brothers,’ and he says, ‘You are not telling the truth: you are two scoundrels who go around tricking people and stealing the alms of the poor. Go away,’ and he doesn’t open for us, and makes us stay outside in the snow and water, cold and hungry until nighttime, then we patiently endure such insults and cruelty and abuses without becoming upset or complaining about him, and think humbly that that porter in fact recognizes us, that it is God who makes him speak against us: O Brother Leo, write that here is perfect joy. And if we even continue knocking and he comes out upset, and drives us away with curses and blows, like aggravating vagrants, saying ‘Get out of here, you dirty little thieves, go to the hospital, because you’re not going to eat here or stay here;’ if we endure this patiently and with happiness and good love, O Brother Leo, write that here is perfect joy. And if, driven by hunger and cold and night, we knock even more and call out and beg for the love of God with loud crying that he open the door for us and let us at least come inside, and he becomes angrier and says, ‘These are aggravating vagrants, I’ll pay them well for what they’re worth,’ and comes

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outside with a knobby stick and grabs us by the capuche and throws us on the ground and rolls us in the snow and beats us from head to toe with that stick; if we endure these things patiently and with happiness, thinking of the sufferings of the blessed Christ, which we must endure for His love, O Brother Leo, write that here and in this is perfect joy. But hear the conclusion, Brother Leo. Above all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit, which Christ grants to His friends, is that of conquering our own selves and gladly, for the love of Christ, to endure sufferings, injuries and insults and difficulties, because we cannot glory in all the other gifts of God, since they are not ours but God’s, as the Apostle says, ‘*What do you have that you do not have from God, and if you have had it from Him, why do you boast of it, as if you had it from yourself?*’ But in the cross of trouble and affliction we can glory, as the Apostle says, ‘*I do not want to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*’”

1 Cor 4:7

Gal 6:14

To the praise of Jesus Christ
and of the little poor man Francis.
Amen.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 93-94 / 95)

CHRIST IS RISEN! ALLELUIA!

Christ's Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history.

—CCC, no. 648

When we speak of the Paschal Mystery, we refer to Christ's death and Resurrection as one inseparable event. It is a mystery because it is a visible sign of an invisible act of God. It is paschal because it is Christ's passing through death into new life. For us it means that we can now die to sin and its domination in our lives, and we pass over into divine life already here on earth and more completely in heaven. Death is conquered in the sense that not only do our souls survive physical death, but even our bodies will rise again at the end of time at the Last Judgment and resurrection of the dead.

The Resurrection narratives in all four Gospels—though differing in details because of varying viewpoints of the different authors—maintain a similar structure in the narration of the events. At dawn on the Sunday after Christ's death, Mary Magdalene and a companion go to the tomb to anoint the dead body of Jesus. They find the tomb empty. They meet an angel who proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus: "He is not here, for he has been raised" (Mt 28:6). They are told to bring the Good News to the Apostles. Mary Magdalene leads the way and is celebrated in the liturgy of the Church as the first witness to the Resurrection.

Next come the appearance narratives when Jesus appears to the Apostles and disciples in a number of instances. St. Paul summarizes these appearances in his first Letter to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 15:3–8). Finally, the disciples are commissioned to bring the Gospel to the world.

While the empty tomb of itself does not prove the Resurrection, since the absence of Christ's body could have other explanations, it is an essential part of the proclamation of the Resurrection because it demonstrates the fact of what God has done in raising his Son from the dead in his own body. When St. John entered the tomb, "He saw and believed" (Jn 20:8).

A TRANSCENDENT EVENT

The reality of Christ's Resurrection is also something beyond the realm of history. No one saw the actual Resurrection. No evangelist describes it. No one can tell us how it physically happened. No one perceived how the earthly body of Christ passed over into a glorified form. Despite the fact that the risen Jesus could be seen, touched, heard, and dined with, the Resurrection remains a mystery of faith that transcends history.

Its transcendent quality can also be inferred from the state of Christ's risen body. He was not a ghost; Jesus invited them to touch him. He asked for a piece of fish to show them that he could eat. He spent time with them, often repeating teachings from the days before the Passion but now in the light of the Resurrection. Nor was it a body like that of Lazarus, which would die again. His risen body would never die. Christ's body was glorified; it is not confined by space or time. He could appear and disappear before the Apostles' eyes. Closed doors did not bar his entry. It is a real body, but glorified, not belonging to earth but to the Father's realm. It is a body

transformed by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 15:42–44). The Holy Spirit “gave life to Jesus’ dead humanity and called it to the glorious state of Lordship” (CCC, no. 648).

What do we learn from Christ’s Resurrection? If Jesus had not risen, our faith would mean nothing. St. Paul makes this clear in his first Letter to the Corinthians: “But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty, too, is our preaching; empty, too, your faith” (1 Cor 15:12–14). We also learn that, by raising him from the dead, the Father has placed his seal upon the work accomplished by his only begotten Son through his Passion and death. We see now the fullness of Jesus’ glory as Son of God and Savior.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (pp. 90–92)

THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

313. How was sickness viewed in the Old Testament?

1499-1502

In the Old Testament sickness was experienced as a sign of weakness and at the same time perceived as mysteriously bound up with sin. The prophets intuited that sickness could also have a redemptive value for one’s own sins and those of others. Thus sickness was lived out in the presence of God from whom people implored healing.

314. What is the significance of Jesus’ compassion for the sick?

1503-1505

The compassion of Jesus toward the sick and his many healings of the infirm were a clear sign that with him had come the Kingdom of God and therefore victory over sin, over suffering, and over death. By his own passion and death he gave new meaning to our suffering which, when united with his own, can become a means of purification and of salvation for us and for others.

315. What is the attitude of the Church toward the sick?

1506-1513

1526-1527

Having received from the Lord the charge to heal the sick, the Church strives to carry it out by taking care of the sick and accompanying them with her prayer of intercession. Above all, the Church possesses a sacrament specifically intended for the benefit of the sick. This sacrament was instituted by Christ and is attested by Saint James: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call in the presbyters of the Church and let them pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord” (*James* 5:14-15).

316. Who can receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick?

1514-1515

1528-1529

Any member of the faithful can receive this sacrament as soon as he or she begins to be in danger of death because of sickness or old age. The faithful who receive this sacrament can receive it several times if their illness becomes worse or another serious sickness afflicts them. The celebration of this sacrament should, if possible, be preceded by individual confession on the part of the sick person.

317. Who administers this sacrament?

1516
1530

This sacrament can be administered only by priests (bishops or presbyters).

318. How is this sacrament celebrated?

1517-1519
1531

The celebration of this sacrament consists essentially in an *anointing* with oil which may be blessed by the bishop. The anointing is on the forehead and on the hands of the sick person (in the Roman rite) or also on other parts of the body (in the other rites) accompanied by the *prayer* of the priest who asks for the special grace of this sacrament.

319. What are the effects of this sacrament?

1520-1523
1532

This sacrament confers a special grace which unites the sick person more intimately to the Passion of Christ for his good and for the good of all the Church. It gives comfort, peace, courage, and even the forgiveness of sins if the sick person is not able to make a confession. Sometimes, if it is the will of God, this sacrament even brings about the restoration of physical health. In any case this Anointing prepares the sick person for the journey to the Father's House.

320. What is Viaticum?

1524-1525

Viaticum is the Holy Eucharist received by those who are about to leave this earthly life and are preparing for the journey to eternal life. Communion in the body and blood of Christ who died and rose from the dead, received at the moment of passing from this world to the Father, is the seed of eternal life and the power of the resurrection.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-eight (20): Fraternities: Gathering as one

Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

Charity as a responsibility of the Church

20. Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practise love. Love thus needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community. The awareness of this responsibility has had a constitutive relevance in the Church from the beginning: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (*Acts* 2:44-5). In these words, Saint Luke provides a kind of definition of the Church, whose constitutive elements include fidelity to the "teaching of the Apostles", "communion" (*koinonia*), "the breaking of the bread" and "prayer" (cf. *Acts* 2:42). The element of "communion" (*koinonia*) is not initially defined, but appears concretely in the verses quoted above: it consists in the fact that believers hold all things in common and that among them, there is no longer any distinction between rich and poor (cf. also *Acts* 4:32-37). As the Church grew, this radical form of material communion could not in fact be preserved. But its essential core remained: within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life.

Ilia Delio, OSF: *Franciscan Prayer* (p. 113)

Through the Spirit, we are to take on the Word in our own lives so that we become the Word. How? By coming to a true knowledge of who we are and coming to a deeper understanding of who we are meant to be. God utters each of us as a little "word" so that, from all eternity, each of us is meant to express something of God. Because we often live with divided selves—where the spirit longs for God but the flesh longs for something else—we fail to live in the truth of our identity, and thus we fail to be the "word" that God intended us to be. Prayer of the heart, that unceasing prayer where God breathes in us and our hearts are turned toward God, allows us to deepen our identity in God. And in that deepening of life in God by which we become more of our true selves, the Word shines forth in our lives. We become an expression of the Word of God. Thus, when we allow the Word to take root within us through prayer and the indwelling of the Spirit then we bring the Word to life. In Francis' view, nothing is to hinder us from this vocation nor should we desire anything else: "Let us desire nothing else, let us want nothing else, let nothing else please us and cause us delight except our Creator, Redeemer and Savior, the only true God, let nothing hinder us, nothing separate us, nothing come between us."¹⁴ That is, let us focus our energies on God alone.

14. Francis of Assisi, *Earlier Rule*, 23.9–10 (Écrits, 176). Engl. trans. *FA:ED I*, 85.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume III, The Prophet (p. 275)

“A Mirror of the Perfection of the *Status* of a Lesser Brother” (1310)
(The Sabatier Edition, 1928)

24

A BROTHER WHO NEITHER PRAYED NOR WORKED BUT ATE WELL

↓AC 97//2C 75//1MP 3

At the religion’s beginning, when the brothers were staying at Rivo Torto, **near Assisi**, there was a brother among them who prayed little, did not work, and did not want to go for alms; but he ate heartily. Giving the matter some thought, blessed Francis knew through the Holy Spirit that the man was carnal. He told him: “Go on your way, Brother Fly, because you want to feed on the labor of your brothers, but wish to be idle in the work of God, like **a lazy and sterile bee**, that does not gather or work, yet eats the work and gain of the good bees.”

So he went his way. And because he lived according to the flesh, he neither asked for mercy **nor found it**.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter twenty-nine (21): Servant Leadership

Pope John XXIII: "Encyclical on Christianity & Social Progress" (*Mater et Magistra*), 15 May 1961

Practical Suggestions

236. There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act.

237. It is important for our young people to grasp this method and to practice it. Knowledge acquired in this way does not remain merely abstract, but is seen as something that must be translated into action.

When Differences Arise...

238. Differences of opinion in the application of principles can sometimes arise even among sincere Catholics. When this happens, they should be careful not to lose their respect and esteem for each other. Instead, they should strive to find points of agreement for effective and suitable action, and not wear themselves out in interminable arguments, and, under pretext of the better or the best, omit to do the good that is possible and therefore obligatory.

239. In their economic and social activities, Catholics often come into contact with others who do not share their view of life. In such circumstances, they must, of course, bear themselves as Catholics and do nothing to compromise religion and morality. Yet at the same time they should show themselves animated by a spirit of understanding and unselfishness, ready to cooperate loyally in achieving objects which are good in themselves, or can be turned to good. Needless to say, when the Hierarchy has made a decision on any point Catholics are bound to obey their directives. The Church has the right and obligation not merely to guard ethical and religious principles, but also to declare its authoritative judgment in the matter of putting these principles into practice.

Vinal Van Bentham, SFO: *On the Way to Work: Stories and Reflections on Living as Christians Today* (pp. 67-68)

See/Saw

It was just a casual exchange at the train station. The morning was cold and I was standing in line waiting to purchase a cup of coffee. The young woman ahead of me ordered a cup of hot chocolate.

“I haven’t seen in awhile,” came the cheerful voice of the middle-aged woman behind the counter, “haven’t you been taking the train?”

“I haven’t been around for the last couple of months,” the young woman replied.

“You’ve lost some weight, haven’t you?” continued the woman.

“I had a baby. That’s why you didn’t see me. I was on maternity leave.”

“Congratulations!” the older woman exclaimed. “That’s good news!”

“Thank you!” The young woman walked away smiling, recognized, known.

A simple exchange. Nothing particularly striking or “spiritual.” Or was it? There is, some say, a third eye—an all-seeing eye—God’s eye, if you will—that sees into the heart. A simple exchange, a business transaction, really. But one *saw*, and one was *seen*.

“Jesus, looking at him, loved him” (Mk 10:21). We all, in the course of an average day, have many such exchanges—with family, friends, employers, employees, co-workers, store clerks, and so on. We all, in the course of an average day, look at other individuals and in some way address or respond to them. The question is, so we really *see* them?

Joseph Nangle, OFM: *Engaged Spirituality: Faith Life in the Heart of the Empire* (pp. 44-46)

Contemplation

Some years ago three friends and I wrote a book called *St. Francis and The Foolishness of God*.¹ It was a reflection on the impact that saint of the thirteenth century has had on the non-poor of modern times. People seemed to get what we were driving at—that Francis of Assisi still continues to question, inspire, and challenge people of good will even eight hundred years after his time. We writers were a mixed group: two men and two women, two married and two single, two Protestants and two Catholics, two ordained ministers and two laity. Our differences seemed to enrich the discussions we had on the various chapters, and the writing went along very well—until we began to write about contemplation.

The two of us who were Catholics felt that contemplation was basically one further dimension of prayer. There are, we said, private and public prayers, individual and communal prayer, liturgical and devotional prayers—and contemplative prayer. All pretty much equal. We thought that contemplation was simply one expression of prayer among many. So, for example, Francis could be found praying with his brothers, with the people around Assisi, with his friend Clare and her sisters, at Mass—and from time to time he would go off to places like the cave at Mount Alverna and get lost for days in contemplative prayer.

One of our Protestant colleagues saw it quite differently. For her, contemplation was a way of being in the world, a posture with regard to life, a kind of all-inclusive attitude toward oneself, toward others, toward creation, and toward God. Contemplative prayer was not, she believed, a

single slice of one's prayer life—time taken out to “do” contemplation—but a totality of outlook, looking at reality the way God looks at it.

The discussion we had around this subject got tense and emotional at several points, because we all had strong opinions on the matter. But we stayed with it and in the end came to agree that our sister was making a valid point, that whatever the “experts” in such matters might say, contemplation needed to be seen in this integrated way—as a way one moves through life. We wound up writing one of our best chapters on Francis and contemplation in that vein, because as we discussed and wrote, it became clear to all of us that Francis's contemplative life happened not only in those well-documented, mystical experiences of ecstatic prayer before the crucifix at the Church of San Damiano or at Mount Alverna when he received the wounds of Christ on his hands and feet. Those were peak moments for sure. But we realized that Francis also walked through the world consciously contemplating God's handprint on everything. His great hymn to Creation, “Blessed are you, my God, for Brother Sun ... for Sister Moon ... Sister Water ... Brother Fire ... Mother Earth,” speaks of an attitude, an awareness, a life fascinated by and wrapped up in a keen sense of God's presence in every speck of creation. His was an ongoing, contemplative response to life.

Whatever the theological merits of our discussion and decision to write about Francis and contemplation that way, it seems clear to me that understanding contemplation as a way of moving through life—trying to see everything in and around us through the eyes of God—is worth thinking about. For one thing, this way of viewing takes the contemplative vocation out of the exclusive domain of cloistered religious like the Trappists and puts it squarely in the nine-to-five, nitty-gritty marketplaces of this world, within the reach of busy, modern people of faith. It invites us to see all reality through the eyes of the Creator and to love the world as God loves it. It also means, I believe, that each of us is called to be a contemplative.

Before continuing with this line of thought and citing examples of contemplatives in the noise and clamor of the world, let me say a word about the traditional cloistered contemplatives. I have no intention whatsoever to imply that the vocation of Trappists or Poor Clares or Carmelites has no place in our hyperactive, goal-oriented society. On the contrary, the men and women who answer the call to spend their lives in the cloister can themselves speak a truly prophetic, corrective word to this empire where “time is money” and where people are judged on how much they have or how much they get done. In that way our contemplative communities do the rest of us an enormous and necessary service, saying with their own lives that the “wasted time” of prayer and silence has a place even and especially in our frenetic culture.

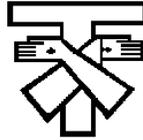
In addition, many of our sisters and brothers who have sensed within themselves a call to the cloistered life find themselves very much in contact with our hurting world. I once led a retreat for a Poor Clare community and found the sisters very much aware and interested in my reflections on engaged spirituality. They kept us with events by reading the newspapers and watching the news on TV, and they showed a lively interest in all sorts of current issues. Naturally, they took all of this to their main work—prayer. Today the Maryknoll Sisters, famous for their activist missionaries, maintain cloistered communities in Sudan, Thailand, and Guatemala. That's a telling statement from a group of “doers” about the need for praying with God's word and the newspaper in extremely conflicted areas of the world.

The rural diocese where I served during my years in Bolivia covered a vast area, and our work there with indigenous communities was endless. The bishop of the area took the trouble to invite cloistered sisters into the diocese so that they could learn all about the enormous pastoral challenges we faced and pray for us and with us. Once, during the bishop's absence, I took it on

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter twenty-nine — 4

myself to invite a couple of these sisters, who happened to be nurses, on a short mission trip with me. That began a short-lived experience for the nuns, who seemed to appreciate firsthand contact with the extremely poor, marginalized people we were serving. However, the bishop on his return put an immediate stop to the experiment. He insisted that the cloistered religious were there to know about the lives of the people, yes, but above all and exclusively to pray for them. I'm still not sure which of us was right—me with my sort of action-contemplation thrust or the bishop who wanted prayer above all.

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1. Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, O.F.M., Cynthia Moe-Lobeta, and Stuart Taylor, *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter thirty (22): Fraternity Life

Pope Benedict XVI: "Saved in Hope" (*Spe Salvi*), 30 Nov. 2007

30. Let us summarize what has emerged so far in the course of our reflections. Day by day, man experiences many greater or lesser hopes, different in kind according to the different periods of his life. Sometimes one of these hopes may appear to be totally satisfying without any need for other hopes. Young people can have the hope of a great and fully satisfying love; the hope of a certain position in their profession, or of some success that will prove decisive for the rest of their lives. When these hopes are fulfilled, however, it becomes clear that they were not, in reality, the whole. It becomes evident that man has need of a hope that goes further. It becomes clear that only something infinite will suffice for him, something that will always be more than he can ever attain. In this regard our contemporary age has developed the hope of creating a perfect world that, thanks to scientific knowledge and to scientifically based politics, seemed to be achievable. Thus Biblical hope in the Kingdom of God has been displaced by hope in the kingdom of man, the hope of a better world which would be the real "Kingdom of God". This seemed at last to be the great and realistic hope that man needs. It was capable of galvanizing—for a time—all man's energies. The great objective seemed worthy of full commitment. In the course of time, however, it has become clear that this hope is constantly receding. Above all it has become apparent that this may be a hope for a future generation, but not for me.

And however much "for all" may be part of the great hope—since I cannot be happy without others or in opposition to them—it remains true that a hope that does not concern me personally is not a real hope. It has also become clear that this hope is opposed to freedom, since human affairs depend in each generation on the free decisions of those concerned. If this freedom were to be taken away, as a result of certain conditions or structures, then ultimately this world would not be good, since a world without freedom can by no means be a good world. Hence, while we must always be committed to the improvement of the world, tomorrow's better world cannot be the proper and sufficient content of our hope. And in this regard the question always arises: when is the world "better"? What makes it good? By what standard are we to judge its goodness? What are the paths that lead to this "goodness"?

***United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* (pp. 122–123)**

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

- The word *Church* is based on both the Greek word *ekklesia* and the Hebrew word *qahal*, which mean the gathering of the community. It was first applied to the people of Israel, whom God called into existence. The Church was planned and formed by God, who called together into one those who accepted the Gospel.
- The Father prepared for the Church through a series of covenant events described in the Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled the divine plan for the Church through his saving death and Resurrection. The Holy Spirit manifested the Church as a mystery of salvation.
- The Church is a visible society and a spiritual community; she is a hierarchical institution and the Body of Christ; she is an earthly Church and one filled with heavenly treasures. Hence the Church is a complex reality that has human and divine elements.

The reality of the mystery of the Church is expressed in a variety of ways as follows:

- The Church is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and instrument of our communion with God (cf. CCC, nos. 774–776).
- The Church is the People of God. “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. . . . Once you were ‘no people,’ / but now you are God’s people.” (1 Pt 2:9–10). We become members of God’s People through faith and Baptism (cf. CCC, nos. 781–786).
- The Church is the Body of Christ. Christ is the head, and we are the members. In the unity of this Body, there is a diversity of members and roles, yet everyone is linked together by Christ’s love and grace, especially the poor, the suffering, and the persecuted (cf. CCC, nos. 787–795).
- The Church is the Bride of Christ. “Christ loved the Church and handed himself over [to death] for her that he might sanctify her” (Eph 5:25–26; cf. CCC, no. 796).
- The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. “We are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16; cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17, Eph 2:21; cf. CCC, nos. 797–801).
- The Church is a communion. The starting point of this communion is our union with Jesus Christ. This gives us a share in the communion of the Persons of the Trinity and also leads to a communion among men and women (cf. CCC, nos. 813, 948, 959).
- These truths about unity and communion in the Church call us to become a source of unity for all peoples.

MEDITATION

Christians do not make a house of God until they are one in charity. The timber and stone must fit together in an orderly plan, must be joined in perfect harmony, must give each other the support as if it were of love, or no one would enter the building. When you see the stones and beams of a building holding together securely, you enter the building with an easy mind. . . .

The work we see complete in this building is physical; it should find its spiritual counterpart in your hearts.

— St. Augustine, Sermon 336, 1, 6

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume I, The Saint

“The Writings of Francis of Assisi: The Undated Writings”

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From “The Admonitions”

[V. Let No One Be Proud, but Boast in the Cross of the Lord]

¹Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you *to the image* of His beloved Son according to the body and *to His likeness* according to the Spirit.

1 Gn 1:26

²And all creatures under heaven serve, know, and obey their Creator, each according to its own nature, better than you. ³And even the demons did not crucify Him, but you, together with them, have crucified Him and are still crucifying Him by delighting in vices and sins.

⁴In what, then, can you boast? ⁵Even if you were so skillful and wise that you possessed *all knowledge*, knew how to interpret every *kind of language*, and to scrutinize heavenly matters with skill: you could not boast in these things. ⁶For, even though someone may have received from the Lord a special knowledge of the highest wisdom, one demon knew about heavenly matters and now knows more about those of earth than all human beings.^a

1 Cor 13:2

1 Cor 12:28

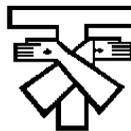
⁷In the same way, even if you were more handsome and richer than everyone else, and even if you worked miracles so that you put demons to flight: all these things are contrary to you; nothing belongs to you; you can boast in none of these things.

⁸But we can boast *in our weaknesses* and in carrying each day the holy cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Cor 12:5

Lk 14:27

a. The pursuit of wisdom or knowledge is a prominent theme in *The Admonitions* as is seen in this passage. Adm VII points out the dangers of knowledge of Sacred Scripture without possessing its Spirit. Adm X 3 speaks of the wisdom of keeping our enemy in control, while Adm XXI of the person who wisely keeps his counsel. The presence of words such as *sapiens*, *sapientiores*, *sapienter* and *sapientia* confirm the belief that the pursuit of knowledge and the risks it presents is one of the strong themes of *The Admonitions*.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter thirty-one (23/25): Membership in the SFO

Ilia Delio, OSF: *Franciscan Prayer* (p. 134)

Contemplation is the fruit of union in love; it is the vision of the lover who gazes on the beloved. The biographers of Francis tell us that after he encountered the God of compassionate love in the visible figure of the crucified Christ, Francis' "vision" began to change. Prayer that leads to an openness of the Spirit and the indwelling of the Word and Father leads to an experience of penetrating vision by which one sees God in concrete reality. The Spirit, welcomed in the silence of prayer, transforms the vision of our hearts to see the invisible presence of God hidden in the depths of ordinary reality. As Francis "ascended" the mountain of love in union with Christ, he began to see the world around him differently—the leper became his brother and the poor and sick were visible expressions of God's overflowing love. What was initially "bitter" for Francis became "sweet" as he contemplated the goodness of God in fragile humanity.

Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume II, The Founder

"The Assisi Compilation" (1244–1260)

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We who were with him bear witness to this fact about him: from the time he began to have brothers, and also during his whole lifetime, he was discerning with the brothers, provided that in the matter of food and other things, they did not deviate at any time from the norm of the poverty and decency of our religion, which the early brothers observed. Nevertheless, even before he had brothers, from the beginning of his conversion and during his whole lifetime, he was severe with his own body, even though from the time of his youth he was a man of a frail and weak constitution, and when he was in the world he could not live without comforts.

One time, perceiving that the brothers had exceeded the norm of poverty and decency in food and in things, he said in a sermon he gave, speaking to a few brothers, who stood for all the brothers: "Don't the brothers think that my body needs special food? But because I must be the model and example for all the brothers, I want to use and be content with poor food and things, not fine ones."

[51]

LP 2

[HE PERSUADES THE BROTHERS TO GO JOYFULLY BEGGING FOR ALMS]

When Francis began to have brothers, he was so happy about their conversion and that the Lord had given him good company,

that he loved and revered them so much that he did not tell them to go for alms, especially because it seemed to him that they would be ashamed to go. Rather, sparing them shame, he himself would go alone for alms every day. His body was worn out by this, especially

since in the world he had been a refined man, and of a weak constitution; and he had become weaker from the day when he left the world because of the excessive fasting and suffering he endured.

LR VI 3 He considered that he could not bear so much labor, and that they were called to this, even though they would be ashamed, and did not fully understand; but neither had they been discerning enough to tell him: “We want to go for alms.” So he talked to them. “My dearest brothers and sons, don’t be ashamed to go for alms, because *the Lord for our sake made Himself poor in this world*. Therefore, because of His example, we have chosen the way of the most genuine poverty and that of His most holy Mother.^a This is our inheritance, which the Lord Jesus Christ acquired and bequeathed to us and to all who want to live in holy poverty according to His example.” And he told them: “I tell you the truth: many of the noblest and wisest of this world will come to this congregation and they will consider it a great honor to go for alms. Therefore, go for alms confidently with joyful hearts with the blessing of the Lord God. And you ought to go begging more willingly and with more joyful hearts than someone who is offering a hundred silver pieces in exchange for a single penny, since you are offering the love of God to those from whom you seek alms. Say to them: ‘Give alms to us for the love of the Lord God: compared to this, heaven and earth are nothing!’”

2 Cor 8–9

They were still few in number so that he could not send them out two by two, so he sent each one separately through the towns and villages. When they returned, each one showed blessed Francis the alms he had collected, one saying to the other, “I collected more alms than you!”

This gave blessed Francis reason to rejoice, seeing them so happy and cheerful. From then on each of them more willingly asked permission to go for alms.



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter thirty-two (24): Young & Old Enriching the Franciscan Spirit

Pope Benedict XVI: "Sacrament of Charity" (*Sacramentum Caritatis*) – "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons, and the Lay Faithful on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission," 22 February 2007.

Spirituality and eucharistic culture

77. Significantly, the Synod Fathers stated that "the Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life." (216) This observation is particularly insightful, given our situation today. It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – "as if God did not exist" – is now evident to everyone. Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit" (*Rom* 8:4ff.; cf. *Gal* 5:16, 25). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the *Letter to the Romans* where he invites his hearers to offer the new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). In this way the Apostle of the Gentiles emphasizes the link between true spiritual worship and the need for a new way of understanding and living one's life. An integral part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life is a new way of thinking, "so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (*Eph* 4:14).

(216) *Propositio* 39.

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (pp. 6-7)

A GENERATION OF SEEKERS

Religious seekers in the United States live within a culture that in some important ways provides support for belief in God while at the same time also discourages and corrodes the faith in practice. It is encouraging that many are finding the move to secularism to be an unsatisfactory approach and continue to search for a deeper meaning in life.

Particularly encouraging is that a number of young people, who had once drifted away from faith, today are seeking a connection with a church community. Among the many causes of this hunger for

God, two stand out: the experience of having children who need a proper education and upbringing, and the experience of one's own longing for direction, meaning, and hope.

Catholicism in the United States continues to attract thousands of new members each year as the Holy Spirit works through the Church to awaken a thirst for the Lord. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the pastoral process for initiating new members into the Church, is ministering to great numbers of seekers. The Church is leading them to knowledge of the truths of faith, to the celebration of the Seven Sacraments, to commitment to the moral life—including the forming of a social conscience—and to the practice of prayer, and at the same time, the Church responds to their desire for community.

The Church does more than welcome new members; she forms disciples. Seekers can begin to find in the Church fulfillment of their heart's desires. They are invited to undertake a spiritual journey that is focused on Jesus Christ and his Kingdom of salvation, love, justice, and mercy. Jesus reminds us that this Kingdom is already in our midst, and as his disciples we are called to assist him in bringing it to its fullness.

This is the Church's invitation to seekers who want to discover a satisfying answer to their spiritual hungers. Her invitation is rich: to seekers, old and new, and to those who might label themselves as alienated or indifferent, the Church offers Jesus Christ and his love, the fulfillment of hope. The Church offers a way of belonging that teaches truths that free one from sin and its power. The Church initiates members into an intimate relationship with God—indeed, into a participation in the divine life—where one will find genuine joy and fulfillment. This is all possible because of Jesus Christ and his love.

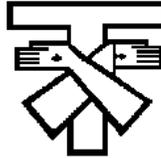
Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*)

33. With regard to the personnel who carry out the Church's charitable activity on the practical level, the essential has already been said: they must not be inspired by ideologies aimed at improving the world, but should rather be guided by the faith which works through love (cf. *Gal* 5:6). Consequently, more than anything, they must be persons moved by Christ's love, persons whose hearts Christ has conquered with his love, awakening within them a love of neighbour. The criterion inspiring their activity should be Saint Paul's statement in the *Second Letter to the Corinthians*: "the love of Christ urges us on" (5:14). The consciousness that, in Christ, God has given himself for us, even unto death, must inspire us to live no longer for ourselves but for him, and, with him, for others. Whoever loves Christ loves the Church, and desires the Church to be increasingly the image and instrument of the love which flows from Christ. The personnel of every Catholic charitable organization want to work with the Church and therefore with the Bishop, so that the love of God can spread throughout the world. By their sharing in the Church's practice of love, they wish to be witnesses of God and of Christ, and they wish for this very reason freely to do good to all.

35. This proper way of serving others also leads to humility. The one who serves does not consider himself superior to the one served, however miserable his situation at the moment may be. Christ took the lowest place in the world—the Cross—and by this radical humility he redeemed us and constantly comes to our aid. Those who are in a position to help others will realize that in doing so they themselves receive help; being able to help others is no merit or achievement of their own. This duty is a grace. The more we do for others, the more we understand and can appropriate the words of Christ: "We are useless servants" (*Lk* 17:10). We recognize that we are not acting on the basis of any superiority or greater personal efficiency, but because the Lord has graciously enabled us to do so. There are times when the burden of need and our own limitations might tempt us to become discouraged. But precisely then we are helped by the knowledge that, in the end, we are only instruments in the Lord's hands; and this

Franciscan Journey Supplemental Readings, Chapter thirty-two — 3

knowledge frees us from the presumption of thinking that we alone are personally responsible for building a better world. In all humility we will do what we can, and in all humility we will entrust the rest to the Lord. It is God who governs the world, not we. We offer him our service only to the extent that we can, and for as long as he grants us the strength. To do all we can with what strength we have, however, is the task which keeps the good servant of Jesus Christ always at work: “The love of Christ urges us on” (2 *Cor* 5:14).



The Franciscan Journey: Supplemental Readings

Chapter thirty-three (26): Franciscan Family Connections

Pope Benedict XVI: "God is Love" (*Deus Caritas Est*), 25 Dec. 2005

INTRODUCTION

1. "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (*1 Jn 4:16*). These words from the *First Letter of John* express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us".

We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John's Gospel describes that event in these words: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should ... have eternal life" (3:16). In acknowledging the centrality of love, Christian faith has retained the core of Israel's faith, while at the same time giving it new depth and breadth. The pious Jew prayed daily the words of the *Book of Deuteronomy* which expressed the heart of his existence: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might" (6:4-5). Jesus united into a single precept this commandment of love for God and the commandment of love for neighbour found in the *Book of Leviticus*: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (19:18; cf. *Mk 12:29-31*). Since God has first loved us (cf. *1 Jn 4:10*), love is now no longer a mere "command"; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.

In a world where the name of God is sometimes associated with vengeance or even a duty of hatred and violence, this message is both timely and significant. For this reason, I wish in my first Encyclical to speak of the love which God lavishes upon us and which we in turn must share with others. That, in essence, is what the two main parts of this Letter are about, and they are profoundly interconnected. The first part is more speculative, since I wanted here—at the beginning of my Pontificate—to clarify some essential facts concerning the love which God mysteriously and gratuitously offers to man, together with the intrinsic link between that Love and the reality of human love. The second part is more concrete, since it treats the ecclesial exercise of the commandment of love of neighbour. The argument has vast implications, but a lengthy treatment would go beyond the scope of the present Encyclical. I wish to emphasize some basic elements, so as to call forth in the world renewed energy and commitment in the human response to God's love.

Ilia Delio, OSF: *Franciscan Prayer* (pp. 183–185)

The problem today is that we love many things—our freedom, independence, financial wealth, status, power and whatever else our culture tells us will make us happy; thus, there is little room within us to fully embrace God. God, in a sense, has to push through all the things that clutter our lives in order to dwell within us. Franciscan prayer calls us back to poverty, penance, conversion and a heart full of mercy, values and attitudes that are counter-cultural but life-giving. Only when we acknowledge our need for God can we begin to find God. Prayer begins in the poverty of the desert and is the cry of the poor person who is far from home and seeks the way to the source of life.

The mark of our relationship with God is freedom. Franciscan prayer reminds us that God loves us freely and calls us to love freely. We are not forced to become the body of Christ, we are invited by God's grace into the banquet of life. It is precisely for this reason that Christian life is obscure today in western culture. We have so many other invitations to consider, it is difficult to discern the invitation of a humble God bent over in love. Our tendency, therefore, is to participate in the rituals of prayer and worship with little extra effort. We do what is perfunctory and then we expect God to do the rest. The Franciscan path to prayer, centered on the Incarnation, tells us that God is with us, but will not bring about the fullness of life without us. *Our complete participation is required.* We are not simply to pray—we are to become prayer—living flames of love that ignite the world. Fire is a constant image in the writings of Bonaventure primarily because it represented for him the intensity of love. Love is attractive, and living in the intensity of love is alluring, but when we come to understand the demands of love we withdraw our resolution to pray. We fear the demands of love and prefer mediocre lives that remain unfulfilled. We prefer the safety and comfort of individualism and isolationism than the risk of relationship. For love, like prayer, is relational. Only when we attain a deep relationship with God can we dare to love in a way that is transforming. Prayer is to lead us into the depths of transforming love, so that the image in which we are created can shine out as the presence of God among us, and we can proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ: “This is my body, this is my blood”—not with words but with the example of our lives.

At the heart of it all, Franciscan prayer is about gospel living. It is not really concerned with knowledge or intellectual contemplation. It is concerned with the human person and the transformation of the human person in God. It is about living Christ and making the Good News of the Incarnation alive. How desperately this path of prayer is needed in our world today! We seek healing of divisions, hate and violence. We desire wholeness, unity and peace. How shall these things come about? Are they merely ideas or values that must be given flesh and blood? To live the gospel is to put flesh and blood on God and proclaim throughout the universe, the glory of God is fully alive! Without flesh and blood, the Good News that God has become human and healed the divisions of humankind and all creation is not news at all. Christian life demands human participation or it simply does not exist. It is an empty title in a broken world. If we desire justice, peace and love among humankind and throughout creation, then we humans must become justice, peace and love. This is the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Good News of being Christian—to live in the depths of God's faithful love in a way that resounds throughout all creation. The path of Franciscan prayer is a way to live fully the Gospel life by living fully in the mystery of Christ. We must descend with Christ into the darkness of our humanity so that we may rise with Christ in the unity of love. In a world marked by violence and death, suffering does not have the last word. The last word is love and that love is the fullness of Christ, the Word of God.

O God,

I pray that I may know You and love You

*So as eternally to rejoice in You.
And if, in the present life, I cannot do so fully,
Grant that my love and knowledge may at least grow on earth
That my joy may be fully in heaven:
A joy expected here and there fulfilled.
O Lord our Father,
You counseled, or rather commanded through Your Son,
That we ask for this fullness of joy; and You promised to grant it.
I ask of You, O Lord, that which, through Your Wonder-Counselor,
You encouraged us to ask and promised to grant:
That our joy may be full!
Let my mind meditate on this joy, my tongue speak of it,
My heart desire it, my words extol it,
My soul hunger for it, my flesh thirst for it,
My whole substance yearn for it,
Until I enter into the joy of my God
Who is Triune and One,
Blessed forever.
Amen.*

—Bonaventure

Soliloquy

William Short, OFM: *Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition* (pp. 74–75)

FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS

In his care for people with Hansen’s disease, Francis was following that example of Jesus that he knew from the gospel. Jesus calls others, after his wilderness retreat, to conversion, to repent, to change their lives. To show the effects of this turning to God Jesus does something specific: he heals people who are suffering from disease, both physical disease and sickness of spirit (Matthew 4:23–4). Later in the Gospel, Matthew says, ‘When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him, and a leper came to him,’ whom Jesus healed (Matthew 8:1–3).

The special role of people with leprosy appears in the exceptions that Francis makes where they are concerned, even in the Rule. Despite his strict prohibitions about receiving money, he makes special provisions for one group of people: the brothers ‘may accept money for urgent needs of the lepers’.⁶ He places in his list of the ‘companions of Jesus’ the sick, those who beg, and lepers, including them with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the disciples among those who live by alms. The brothers should ‘rejoice’ to be in their company.

In his own writings Francis does not speak of the voice from the crucifix at San Damiano telling him to ‘rebuild the church’. He never refers to the marks on his body (the stigmata), which others associated with his profound compassion for the sufferings of Christ. Rather Francis speaks about people with leprosy as the context for his conversion to the gospel way of life, the practical experience of ‘being with’ them, and serving them. Here he found the suffering members of Christ’s Body, and beginning with this experience he participated in the passion of Christ.

Penitents served in the leper hospital of Assisi already, so Francis ‘did mercy’ most likely in the midst of other brother and sister penitents who had taken on this service at the risk of contracting the disease themselves (a widespread fear at the time). To go ‘among the lepers’ meant exposing himself to risk, for the sake of others considered ‘dead to the world’. There may even be reasons to suggest that Francis’ multiple illnesses in later life may have derived from infection with the tubercular form of Hansen’s disease. And during his lifetime, or shortly thereafter, a place for the brothers who contracted the disease was established at San Lazzaro del Valloncello, outside Assisi.⁷

6. RegNb [Earlier Rule] 8:12.

7. ‘Lebbroso’ in *Dizionario Franceseano* (Padua: Messaggero, 1983), col. 851.

