

FRANCISCAN Meditation & Contemplation



THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

PURPOSE OF FRANCISCAN PRAYER



- **Prayer is a way of life for followers of Francis and Clare.**
- **Adoration flowed freely from the depths of the inner lives of these saints.**
- **This is the holiness to which we are called.**
- **The purpose of Franciscan prayer is to give God ceaseless praise and thanksgiving for all that is.**

St. Francis Style of Prayer



By Ilia Delio, O.S.F.

- He saw prayer not as a matter of "fleeing the world" but as a way of discovering God in the world and in our lives.

The Franciscan Path

- The Franciscan path "to God" is an inversion of monastic values. Rather than fleeing the world to find God, God is to be found in the world. The idea that "the world is our cloister" finds its root in Francis of Assisi.

Implications of Prayer



- For Francis, God loves us where we are—with our frailty, weaknesses and insecurities. This is the meaning of his encounter with the God of compassionate love as seen in the cross of San Damiano.



God Loves You!



- Francis understands that while God is incomprehensible and ineffable, he is at the same time “bent over” in love for us, in and through the Son, Jesus Christ. God is infinite in love and **intimate** in love, far beyond us yet intensely close to us.



Bonaventure



- Bonaventure describes this encounter in his *Major Legend* (1.6) where he writes: “While [Francis] was praying and all of his fervor was totally absorbed in God, Christ Jesus appeared to him as fastened to a cross.”
- Bonaventure indicates that there was no exchange of words. Rather, “his [Francis’] soul melted at the sight, and the memory of Christ’s passion was impressed on the innermost recesses of his heart.”

Christ leads us to the Father



- By following in the footprints of Jesus Christ, we are led to the Father of incomprehensible love through the Spirit, who joins us to Christ, who in turn leads us to the Father. For Francis, Christ is the center of the Trinity and the center of our relationship to God.
- For Francis, prayer is not a flight from the world toward a transcendent God; rather it centers on the mystical body of Christ and our participation in this mystery. God took on our flesh that we might discover his eternal face in ourselves. This is the good news of Jesus Christ and of our lives in Christ. Prayer channels us into the depths of the Christ mystery where the fullness of our humanity—and our happiness—lies.

MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION



- **Meditation is done with the head.**
All of us daydream at some time or the other. But instead of us being the center of the dream, let Christ and Mary in the Gospel be your daydream. This is why we pray the rosary.
- **Contemplation is done w/the heart. If you feel something while you meditate, then you are experiencing contemplation.**

1ST STEP TO MEDITATION



- The 1st step is to **place yourself in God's presence.**
- This doesn't mean you must be physically in a church. You just need to think of yourself being watched over by God, not being alone. He is always very close, waiting for us to come to Him.

BEFORE BEGINNING



- Before beginning to meditate, it is important to bring to mind God's presence. Sometimes this can be done quickly, sometimes it can take quite a while. But even if it doesn't come easily, it is important to do that before beginning to try to meditate.
- The most ideal spot is before the tabernacle in a Church, or before the Blessed Sacrament exposed.
- You can also go to www.savior.org to do online adoration. Or you can use your favorite photo of Jesus.

THE 2nd STEP TO MEDITATING



- The 2nd step is to **ask for God's help**.
- A person can do nothing without God's help. It is necessary to recognize the fact that any benefits from meditation are God's free gift and not the result of our own natural thought processes.
- In addition to asking God for His help directly, it is wise to ask for help from the saints as well. We can ask for the Blessed Mother to intercede in gaining God's help in the meditative prayer. If you're in a church, it makes sense to ask the saint to whom the church is dedicated for his help too.
- Don't' forget to ask your guardian angel for assistance. He wants to help you grow closer to God! You can also seek the help of any other saint you feel inclined to turn to. How about Francis and Clare!?! How about your deceased loved one???

BEGINNING TO MEDITATE



- The 3rd step is the **actual meditation**.
- The first thing to do is to imagine the scene you have chosen to meditate on. Think about what the environment might have looked like. The more detail you can add, the better. Picture the place and the people: what they look like, what they are doing.

USING IMAGES!



- Besides imagining the appearance, also imagine the sounds that would be heard there. Imagine hearing the people involved in the scene saying the words they are saying.
- Include any background noises there might be.
- If there are any noticeable smells, you can include them too in your imaginary scene. You want to make the scene as vivid and realistic as you possibly can!

CONTINUED STEPS



- After you've done that, the second phase of meditating is to place yourself into that scene you've just been imagining. Imagine yourself interacting with the people there as much as you can. You can think about what you might have said or done had you actually been there.
- You can talk to people there, and listen to what they have to say.

THE 4TH STEP!



- **GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR HELPING YOU AND ALLOWING YOU TO EXPERIENCE HIS GOODNESS AND MERCY THIS WAY!**
- **THANK YOU, JESUS!**

THE ROSARY OF OUR LORD AND LADY



- Let's start by using the rosary as an example. How about the Glorious mysteries? The first one is the Resurrection of Our Lord.

**JESUS IS RAISED
FROM THE DEAD!**

^a But at daybreak on the first day of the week they took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Luke:24



Mary Magdalene



Luke continued



- ***While they were puzzling over this, behold, two men in dazzling garments appeared to them. They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They said to them, “Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day.”***
- And they remembered his words. Then they returned from the tomb and announced all these things to the eleven and to all the others. The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; the others who accompanied them also told this to the apostles, but their story seemed like nonsense and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone; then he went home amazed at what had happened.

CONTEMPLATION



**MEDITATION IS
OUR GIFT TO GOD**

**CONTEMPLATION IS
GOD'S GIFT TO US**

Infused Contemplation or Mystical Union



- Infused or higher contemplation, also called intuitive, passive or extraordinary, is a supernatural gift by which a person's mind and will become totally centered on God. It is a form of mystical union with God, a union characterized by the fact that it is God, and God only, who manifests himself. Under this influence of God, which assumes the free cooperation of the human will, the intellect receives special insights into things of the spirit, and the affections are extraordinarily animated with divine love. This union that it entails may be linked with manifestations of a created object, as, for example, visions of the humanity of Christ or an angel or revelations of a future event, etc. They include miraculous bodily phenomena sometimes observed in ecstasies.

HELP FROM ST. CLARE



- In her Second Letter to St. Agnes of Prague, Clare directed her toward a relationship with the God of self-giving love. Take some time to meditate on the following words of Clare and consider whether or not your relationship with God is leading you more deeply into the mystery of Christ:
- **“Gaze upon [Him], Consider [Him], Contemplate [Him], As you desire to imitate [Him]. If you suffer with Him, you shall reign with Him, [if you] weep [with Him], you shall rejoice with Him, [if you] die [with Him] on the cross of tribulation, you shall possess heavenly mansions in the splendor of the saints and, in the Book of Life, your name shall be called glorious among people.”**

LECTIO DIVINA



- Lectio Divina: “Lectio”
- (to hear the Word of God)

- “Meditatio” (to reflect upon the Word)

- “Oratio” (the Word touches the heart), and
 - “Contemplatio” (to rest in God).

TRANSFORMATION



In other words, it is not enough just to spend time in contemplative prayer and not have it affect what we do with the rest of our lives. To “love” is a verb, which makes prayer a decision. However, the prayer itself is not the end. We decide to love by spending time in prayer, but it is how prayer transforms us which is important. As it transforms us, it leads to action, so the easiest way to tell if we are on the right path is to look for the fruits of it in our apostolic life.

- Do our actions reflect God or are they left wanting?
- Does our prayer affect what we do?

IMITATING CHRIST



St. Clare insists that unity is not enough! She insists on imitating Him as the last step in contemplative prayer. We need to put this unity with God into the real world.

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http://www.nafra-sfo.org/tau-usa/articles/fallo7/franciscan_living_fallo7.pdf

UNITY WITH CHRIST IN THE WORLD



We might not know how God does this transformation in us, but rest assured that He does.

We spend time in prayer in unity with the Crucified Lord because we desire it and when we are transformed into the likeness of the Crucified, then we carry Him to others. We become the image of the Godhead to others. This is what makes us Franciscan contemplatives.

This is Franciscan prayer.