

# FRANCISCAN GOSPEL LIFE in a myopic time

*“MYOPIA”: nearsightedness*

- faraway objects appear blurry
- the condition may develop gradually or rapidly
- it has become more prevalent in recent years
- treatment options include eyeglasses, contact lenses, and surgery such as LASIK
- contemporary symptoms of myopia.....**

# FRANCISCAN GOSPEL LIFE

Some treatment for myopia: how does a Franciscan woman or man see?

1. The eyes (lenses) of the Beatitudes
  - an introduction and context: GRATITUDE
2. The eyes (lenses) of Contemplation
  - the “gaze” of our sister Clare of Assisi
3. FGL I the vision of holiness in Vatican II and *Guadete et Exultate*: Chapter One
4. FGL II: the perspective of *Rejoice and Be Glad*
5. FGL III: looking up and out and ahead...

# GRATITUDE: THE HEART OF “BEATITUDE” AND OF PRAYER, LITURGICAL AND PERSONAL

- Waking up: “Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise” and “Let us go up with joy, to the House of the Lord”
  - The people of God perish without a vision (of God)
- View from the beginning (Ps 139 and Jer 1:5): “Blessed ARE you, poor and pure and peaceful...and persecuted: the Kingdom of God IS yours.”
  - “I have chosen you”, not the other way around
- View from the end: “:Welcome, Sister Death” (Francis) and “Gracias, Señor, porque me creaste” (Clare)

***-Reflection Question: What has been the relationship between gratitude and simplicity in my Franciscan Gospel life?***

# CONTEXT AND CONTENT OF MATTHEW 5: 1-12

- Mount Sinai and the “mount” of Beatitudes
- Image a Conversation between Moses, Jesus and Francis...
- Blessed? Happy? Dichoso? [Congratulations!]

KEY: Magnificat of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The “JOY OF THE GOSPEL” (Pope Francis)

- Eight beatitudes and a promise
- From “they” to “you”

# Clare: (Capuchin) Franciscan Contemplation

(written by CPMA formation council)

CONTEMPLATION IS THE ACT OF LISTENING TO, GAZING UPON  
AND BEING WITH GOD WHO REVEALS HIMSELF  
IN US AND AROUND US THROUGH HIS WORD AND SPIRIT.  
CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER IMPLIES CHOOSING A TIME, A PLACE  
AND A QUIET APART FROM EXTERIOR HUMAN ACTIVITIES  
IN ORDER TO BE MORE FULLY ATTENTIVE TO THE INTERIOR ACTIVITY  
OF CHRIST AND HIS SPIRIT.

IN THE CAPUCHIN-FRANCISCAN TRADITION,  
PRIVILEGED PLACES OF PRAYER ARE THE CHAPEL,  
THE CELL, THE HERMITAGE AND NATURE;  
THE TIME DEDICATED TO MENTAL PRAYER IS ONE TO TWO HOURS DAILY;  
AND THE CENTRAL IMAGE TO GAZE UPON IS  
THE POOR AND HUMBLE CHRIST, ON THE CROSS, IN THE EUCHARIST,  
AND IN THE POOR. [ed. OR AT THE DOOR.]

# CLARE: GAZE UPON THE LORD

- -HER LIFE AND VOCATION : gracias, porque me creaste
- -HER LETTERS: a “method” of prayer and discernment
- -HER MIRROR: the opposite of myopic selfie: Jesus the Other as the mirror of our creation, redemption and fullness of life
- -OTHER MIRRORS (for non-contemplatives)
  - our children and parents and neighbors
  - creation and nature: LAUDATO SÍ

# Letters of Clare to her dear friend (“half of my soul”) Agnes of Prague

- (III: 18-20) *But as a poor virgin*, embrace the poor Christ. *Look upon Him Who became contemptible for you*, and follow Him, making yourself contemptible in this world for Him. *Most Holy Queen, gaze, consider, contemplate* desiring to **imitate** your Spouse.

[mirror imagery in spiritual literature at the time of Clare]

- (IV: 15-18) Gaze upon that mirror each day, O Queen and Spouse of Jesus Christ, and continually study your face in it, that you may adorn yourself completely, within and without, covered *and arrayed in needlework* and similarly adorned with the flowers and garments of all the virtues, as is becoming, the daughter and dearest bride of the Most High King. Indeed in that mirror, blessed poverty, holy humility and inexpressible charity shine forth as, with the grace of God, you will be able to contemplate throughout the whole mirror.

# ***LAUDATO SÍ: On Care for the Our Common Home. (“Mother” Earth)***

[from section III. Loss of Biodiversity: 32-42]

#33: It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.

**-gaze, consider, contemplate, desire to imitate**

# ST. FRANCIS (deSales, 1609), *LUMEN GENTIUM* and “GAUDETE ET EXULTATE”

- Tradition of the “Devout Life” (=holiness)
- *Light of the World: Universal Call to Holiness*
  - L.G 40:2 – “Laity” first group called to holiness, the “perfection of charity
- “REJOICE AND BE GLAD (Mt 5:12)” March 19, 2018
  - not an abstract theological treatise on holiness but a practical way of holiness for our time (vintage Francis)
  - Benedict XVI: “holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full” (and the “first sin” is to not desire holiness)
  - M. Kolbe: there is no love without sacrifice!
  - holiness: rooted in practical love...for spouse and family, for co-workers and local communities, in self-sacrificing service, as missionary disciples building God’s Reign

# REJOICE AND BE GLAD: I

## The Call to Holiness

*The only real sadness, the only real failure, the only great tragedy is not to become a saint. (Leon Bloy)*

- **A. The Saints who Accompany Us (and Come for Us)**

Lois and Eunice, Aloysius Gonzaga, martyrs past and present  
("middle class of martyrs" #7,16)

- each according to your baptism, his/her own way
- holiness is the most attractive face of the Church

*Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel (#19).*

- **B. Activity Sanctifies Us**

- God's people can never be a distraction from God
- practicing the presence of God, contemplation in action
- spirituality of the budget, the ball park and the kitchen

- **C. More Alive, More Human (#32)**

- abundant life, and the human person fully alive

# REJOICE AND BE GLAD: II

## Two Subtle Enemies of Holiness

### 1. Contemporary Gnosticism: the mind without mystery and without flesh

-John: *If you say you “know” Jesus but do not love, you are a liar, the Antichrist*

-(some) prefer “a God without Christ, a Christ without the Church, a Church without her people.”

-the Angelus bell in Franciscan tradition

### 2. Contemporary Pelagianism: not really saved by grace; the necessity of belonging

-God **always** loves me first; when I am weak, I am strong

-danger (self-help): perfection w/o prayer, growth w/o grace

-see #57

# REJOICE AND BE GLAD: III

## In the Light of the Master

### A. Going Against the Flow: Matthew 5-7

**-Text: Beatitudes**

-note: those who mourn...

*“Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering, in order that they might have existence.” (Leon Bloy)*

### B. The Great Criterion: Matthew 25

### C. Ideologies Contrary to the Gospel: politics w/o spirituality, spirituality w/o politics

USCC *Justice in the World* (1971) “the promotion of justice and peace is **constitutive** to the preaching of the Gospel”

# REJOICE AND BE GLAD: IV, V

## IV: Signs of Holiness in the World

- Perseverance, Patience, Weakness
- Joy and a Sense of Humor
- Boldness and Passion (“Holiness is also *parrhesía*”)
- In Community
- In Constant Prayer

## V: Spiritual Combat, Vigilance, Discernment

**DISCERNMENT:** know the Spirit by his/her fruits, in the light of the Lord, in the logic of the cross. “...not a form of egotistical introspection, but an authentic process of leaving ourselves behind in order to approach the mystery of God, who helps us to carry out the mission to which he has called us, for the good of our brothers and sisters.” (175)

# BLESSED ARE YOU, HOLY ARE YOU

- Being poor of heart: that is holiness
- Reacting [responding] with meekness and humility: that is holiness
- Knowing how to mourn with others: that is holiness
- Hungering and thirsting for righteousness: that is holiness
- Seeing and acting in mercy: that is holiness
- Keeping a heart free of all that tarnishes love: that is holiness
- Sowing peace all around us: that is holiness
- Accepting daily the path of the Gospel, even though it may cause us problems: that is holiness
- **REJOICE AND BE GLAD, THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS YOURS**