



*Spiritual Assistance to the
Secular Franciscan Order
Building With Living Stones
The Call Within the Call*



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Introduction

On August 28th through August 31st, 2018, the Regional Spiritual Assistants and the Regional Formation Directors, along with the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, The National Executive Council, the National Formation Commission members and invited guests gathered in Kansas City, Kansas for Workshops on Spiritual Assistance and Formation Visioning.

It was the first gathering of its kind in the US, bringing together those at the Regional level responsible for facilitating the initial and ongoing formation of the Secular Franciscan Order here in the United States.

The Regional Spiritual Assistant Workshop was held first, and 46 of the 50 who attended that workshop participated in the Formation Visioning Workshop which followed. Father Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, member of the CNSA, gave a presentation which gathered together the challenges and areas of focus for the Spiritual Assistance to our Order in our world today.

In the days that followed, the visions developed by the brothers and sisters together in small groups, echoed the call to “Go Rebuild My House” with the living stones of our Franciscan charism and spirituality. The movement of the Holy Spirit throughout the workshops was palpable.

What follows here in document form is the content of Father Christopher’s presentation. The PowerPoint itself is available for presentations, but this document provides a more condensed format for sharing and reproduction. Cross-references to the slide deck are given for each section.

Our hope is that perhaps Secular Franciscan formators can use sections of the document, or perhaps some of the referenced texts, for ongoing formation and to supplement initial formation.

Purpose (Slides 1-4)

“Now more than ever, certainly more than in past centuries, our intention is to serve people as such and not only Catholics; to defend above all and everywhere the rights of the human person and not only those of the Catholic Church; it is not the Gospel that changes; it is we who begin to understand it better... **The moment has arrived when we must recognize the signs of the times, seize the opportunity, and look far ahead.**”¹

- *Pope John XXIII*

“In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, **it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in.** For those of you who are black – considering the evidence there evidently is that there were white people who were responsible – you can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization – black people amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another. **Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence...with an effort to understand with compassion and love.**”²

- *Robert F. Kennedy, Speech at the news of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr, 1968*

“**The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish** of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.”³

- *Gaudium et Spes, #1*

“Keep us attentive to the needs of all that, **sharing their grief and pain, their joy and hope**, we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation and go forward with them along the way of your Kingdom.”⁴

- *Eucharistic Prayer #3, For Various Needs*

OPENING PRAYER

“Let us refer all good to the Lord, God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him, from whom all good comes, for everything. May He, the Almighty and Most High, the only true God, have, be given, and receive all honor and respect, have, be given, and receive all honor and respect to whom all good belongs, He who alone is good.”

- *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1, pg 76*⁵

Part I – Building with Living Stones (Overview, Slides 5-9)

A Balanced Authority: Tenderness and Strength (Slides 10-15)

Genesis 1, 27...31: “God created the human in God’s image, in God’s image God created the human, male and female God created them ... and God found it very good.”

To be truly and fully human is to accept and respect the difference, to communicate with, admire, marvel at, and make an alliance with the masculinity and femininity within oneself and with others.

Francis and Clare were able to reveal to one another the inner complimentary of their being. Francis accepted the feminine part of himself, his tenderness, recognizing it in Clare; Clare acknowledged the masculine element of her nature, her strength, seeing it in Francis. Both of them became fully human in the image of God.

Pope Francis, elected March 13, 2013, calls for:

- A Revolution of Tenderness
- A radical change, a paradigm shift;
- Not to change the truth but to change our ethos: the character of the culture;
- Radiate more of God’s mercy and tenderness, especially to the poor;
- Be a Church for the poor, and of the poor;
- The Church we incarnate and give life to -- that’s the face of God; and sometimes it doesn’t look good; the Church that doesn’t radiate the mercy of God doesn’t make God look good; if we make God look legalistic, stingy, unprodigal, we are not doing God any favor;
- See the world, not as our enemy, but as our child; the child may be belligerent, may make mistakes, “in your face,” but the child is not your enemy; moral issues like abortion: pro-choice people are not an enemy, they are our sisters and brothers, our families; it’s not them/us, only us; when we see the world as enemy, then we become protective, defensive; you don’t protect yourself against your child;
- Reach out pastorally: By listening, by dialogue, finding the road to mercy within the Rule, to meet situations with compassion and tenderness rather than with juridical rigidity;

Mercy (Slides 16-21)

Francis of Rome and Francis of Assisi:

the message of mercy stands in the center of the Gospel.

Pope St John XXIII, Third Order Franciscan:

“The Church has always opposed errors. However, the Church today must no longer make use of the weapons of severity, but must rather apply the medicine of mercy.”

*(The Opening of the Second Vatican Council)*⁶

Pope St John Paul II: message of mercy:

His experience of the horrors of the Second World War, the Shoah, the Nazi era, and the communist era in Poland;

He wrote his second encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*⁷, and took us the suggestions of Sr. Faustina: Second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: carried mercy's theme in his first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*⁸.

St Francis gives us a key to his spiritual outlook --showing mercy:

if you are looking to discover God, look for the leper in your life, the person who is most troubling to you. His encounter with the leper: Francis acted with *miseriordia* -- mercy -- more accurately, with a heart sensitive to misery;

The mercy that Francis was so eager to show taught him that he needed to experience his own misery before being able to reach out to someone else in their misery.

We are not to judge or see ourselves as better than others, but always keep in mind that, out of love for us, the Son of God entered our history and endured suffering and death.

Francis' deep love of Christ: not the Christ of the Last Judgment, but the Christ of Bethlehem who became one of us because He loved us; the Christ of the Last Supper who gave Himself as food for a spiritually starving humanity; the Christ of Calvary, who died as a sacrifice so that we would be raised up from our own humanity.

“Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He who gave Himself totally to you may receive you totally.”⁹

Franciscan Language for Today¹⁰ (Slides 22-28)

William Short, O.F.M., *Human Person as Divine Image*

“Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord 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.” (Admonition 5¹¹)

All Creation in the Incarnate Word

“Praise be You, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.” (Canticle¹²) Reverence for the person within our tradition is only part of a greater vision of equality: we consider others our brothers and sisters. But these “others,” our “kin,” include a vast family. In his “Canticle of the Creatures,” Francis speaks of every creature, from heavenly bodies to earthly elements, as brothers and sisters to him.

Community is Divine

“You are three and one, the Lord God of gods; You are good, all good, the highest good, Lord God living and true.” (Praises of God¹³) American religious experience has been profoundly shaped by a view of God and the human person that is deeply monistic: a God who is considered only as “the One,” and the “rugged individual” as the image of that God. What is most “godly” is isolation, self-sufficiency, absolute independence.

Christ at the Heart of Reality

*“We thank You for as through Your Son You created us, so through Your holy love...You brought about His birth.”*¹⁴ Christian preachers and televangelists send a constant message: “It’s all about sin.” God sent Jesus Christ into the world because we sinned; He had to suffer because we sinned; the world is a passing theater scene on which the drama of human sin is played out. At the end, the sinners will be punished. It would seem that sin is the center of the universe.

The Incarnation, the fact of Jesus, not the fact of sin, is at the heart of reality. The circumstances of that Incarnation included suffering and death, caused by human sin, and Jesus’ generous giving of life for others reversed the effects of sin. But salvation from sin is a consequence of the Incarnation, not its motivating cause.

Generosity, the Poverty of God

*“Let us refer all good to the Lord God Almighty and Most High, acknowledge that every good is His and thank Him, from whom all good comes, for everything.”*¹⁵ Francis considers every good thing a gift he has received from a generous God, whose “poverty” consists in this constant giving to others in order to enrich their lives. We are “godly” when we enrich others with our generous giving, whether of talent, learning, work, wisdom, or wealth.

All reality belongs to God -- and we thank God by distributing generously to others the gifts we have received. In this way we act out who we really are: images of a generous God. This awareness that everything is a gift lies at the heart of a “Franciscan economics,” in which all things are gifts, to be used to enrich the life of others, not as possessions to be guarded jealously from the needs of others.

Impulses of The Spirit (Slides 29-62)

Seeking Peaceful Solutions to Polarization (Slides 29-35)

Pope Francis' address to the U.S. Congress¹⁶ was an inspiration for all of us to re-assess how we carry out the mission of evangelizing the political culture of the United States.

Georgetown University Gathering: 4 June 2018: *"Can Catholic Social Teaching Overcome Polarization?:"*¹⁷ Researchers' survey results on polarization noted that U.S. Catholics are deeply divided on controversial issues. Catholics feel politically homeless when political parties espouse stances in variance of Catholic teaching. CST on the dignity of all human life, solidarity with the poor, the immigrants and refugees, and care for the environment can unite Catholics in working for the common good.

Fr James Martin, S.J.: "The Holy Spirit drew us here. The Holy Spirit is about unity. In today's social media age, it's important to encounter the person rather than the Twitter handle."

Sr. Teresa Maya: "People understand each other by speaking to one another." Fostering "encounter" on the personal level. What is the major cause or major cost of polarization? Sr. Teresa, an immigrant herself from Mexico: "The fear of the other has poisoned our souls...We've allowed it to divide us...The antidote to fear is hope."

Archbishop Gomez: Pope Francis' pontificate is "an era of change. Everything is changing. He continues: "The simple most obvious thing contributing to polarization is the internet... Secularization also is a major factor."

The Archbishop continues, "Catholics are called to be missionary disciples, to go out of our comfort zone, and be united as a people, and bring the teaching of Jesus Christ to our people.

See-judge-act as a method of discernment. Seeing what current social realities are, judging them in light of the Church's social teaching, then acting to make those realities more just.

Everything is based on God's plan for humanity, for each one of us."

Helen Alvare: "Human rights and the pursuit of truth is threatened deep in the soul of America. Our likes and dislikes, tribal instincts, staying in our bubble, in our neighborhood, with people we know -- feeding our fear. I think we often refuse to credit different "gifts" people bring to the discussion on issues, and so fail to learn from one another. Society being so materialistic also sharply divides people, which is coupled with the fact people are short on time and patience.

Cardinal Cupich: Talking about fear as a major factor causing polarization, describing "merchants of fear actively working in society. If you watch kids of different backgrounds playing together, you see they are not afraid of one another. We are taught to be afraid, and we have to own that. The cost of polarization is the division we face in our nation. We are not just separated by ideas, but separated into groups. That's the difference between partisanship and polarization.

Partisans used to be able to get things done, to reach across the aisle. But we are polarized, we have our own sources of information. Such division leads to lawmakers not getting anything done legislatively, and people dehumanizing "the other" through rhetoric that is anti-immigrant and racist." There is really no contradiction between strong convictions on an issue, and still being able to talk with

people. That's part of our American heritage, public and civic argument that's back and forth...John Paul II told us *what to do*; Benedict said *why we should do it*, and Pope Francis says *do it*."

The Second Vatican Council (Slides 36-39)

...the scientific and technological revolution...The result is that the Church and society do not easily recognize each other. The Gospel and the men and women of today speak in different languages.

The result is a serious breakdown in our dialogue.

...Tradition ensured that the essential meanings and truths and values were handed down from generation to generation. Tradition provided the source of unity and of meaning for individuals and communities. And because that tradition was guaranteed and supported by authority and institution, there is now a resistance to all three: to tradition, authority and institution.

"Whoever has ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (Rev 2,7,11). Only the Holy Spirit is capable of making heard the call of God to conversion, to discernment and to prophetic witness in that interior extended space that is the believing community. His voice reaches us in the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the cries of the men and women who walk with us on the journey of time towards the Kingdom. This attitude of faith, of hope, and of love characterized the event of the Council, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church in our times. (*Pope St John Paul II*)

The Council sought out an original and incisive form of evangelization on two principles: (1) it set out from what is most original in the Gospel, and (2) it aimed at what is most pressing on the stage of the history we are living and in the demands of the culture that challenges everywhere. The Council wished to speak from the heart of God to the heart of the modern world so that modern men and women "by hearing might believe, by believing might hope, by hoping might love." This is precisely what Vatican II had intended to endow Christianity once more with the power to shape history -- Christianity -- at least from the viewpoint of the Catholic Church.

*Lumen Gentium*¹⁸ overcomes inherited ways of thinking that are dichotomies...with something more vital and more foundational, namely, the Church as a communion of created persons caught up in the communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

For the first time, the Church is beginning to take relationships between the Divine Persons as the model of the relationships to be established at every level of the Church, and indeed in the whole of society.

*Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*¹⁹ (Slide 40)

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor and the Vulnerable
- The Dignity of Work and Rights for Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God's Creation

Catholic Social Doctrine (Slides 41-51)

...“a valid instrument of evangelization...it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself.

– (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 54²⁰)

Highlights from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church²¹

3. ...the Church “fulfills her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to man, in the name of Christ, to his dignity and his vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches him the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom” (CCC, 2419²²).

...The Christian knows that in the social doctrine of the Church can be found the principles for reflection, the criteria for judgment, and the directives for action...Making this doctrine known constitutes, therefore, a genuine pastoral priority...to interpret today’s reality and seek appropriate action: “The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church’s evangelizing mission”(John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41²³).

...The Church’s social doctrine is meant to suggest a systematic approach for finding solutions to problems, so that discernment, judgment, and decisions will correspond to reality, and so that solidarity and hope will have greater impact on the complexities of the current situations.

This document...guide to inspire, at the individual and collective levels, attitudes and choices that will permit all people to look to the future with greater trust and hope;

11. ...The lay faithful, who seek the Kingdom of God “by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them to according to God’s will,” (*Lumen Gentium*, 31²⁴)

The Church is “inspired by no earthly ambition and seeks but one solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit. For Christ entered the world to bear witness to the truth, to save and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 3²⁵).

...the question of man’s place in nature and in human society...Who am I? Why is there pain, evil, death, despite all the progress that has been made? What is the value of so many accomplishments if the cost has been unbearable? What will there be after this life? These are the basic questions that characterize the course of human life? (*Gaudium et Spes*, 10)

16. ...challenges facing humanity today...are found in the understanding and management of pluralism and differences at every level: in ways of thinking, moral choices, culture, religious affiliation, philosophy of human and social development; ...the challenge of globalization, since history has witnessed the opening of a new era that concerns humanity’s destiny.

18. The Church journeys along the roads of history together with all of humanity. She lives in the world, and although not of the world, she is called to serve the world according to her innermost vocation.

The Second Vatican Council gave an eloquent demonstration of solidarity, respect and affection for the whole human family by engaging in dialogue with it about many problems, “bringing the light kindled from the Gospel and putting it at the disposal of the human race the saving resources which the

Church has received from her Founder under the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It is man himself who must be saved; it is human society which must be renewed.”

(Gaudium et Spes, 3)

Catholic Social Doctrine: Commitment of the Lay Faithful (Slides 48-51)

541. “It belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will”.

542. The identity of the lay faithful is born in and nourished by the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

543. It is the proper duty of the lay faithful to proclaim the Gospel with an exemplary witness of life rooted in Christ and lived in temporal realities: the family; professional commitment in the world of work, culture, science, and research; the exercise of social, economic, and political responsibilities.

549. The Church’s social doctrine must become an integral part of the ongoing formation of the lay faithful. [1148] “Groups, associations and movements also have their place in the formation of the lay faithful...of offering a formation through a deeply shared experience in the apostolic life, as well as having the opportunity to integrate, to make concrete and specific the formation that their members receive from other persons and communities”. [1149]

550. These associations represent a privileged point of reference in that their presence in the life of society is characterized by their nature as ecclesial bodies; this shows the importance and value of prayer, reflection and dialogue for addressing and improving social realities.

“Go, Rebuild My House” (Slides 52-62)

Let them manifest their love for each other in deeds.” Our Franciscan vocation is a life, not a ministry. Our identity is not in what we do; rather, it is in how we do whatever it is we do. What we bring to any responsibility in which we are engaged, is the quality of presence (an attitude of service).

The deeds that manifest love for one another are more in the arena of making time for each other, to listen, to affirm, to challenge and to encourage.

Franciscan life is fraternal life. Fraternal life has to do with the quality of our relationships.

Pluralism and Multiculturalism

The universality of the Church is becoming unmistakably African, Asian, and Latin American. The movement of vast numbers of immigrants and refugees; diverse peoples present significant challenges to the understanding and identity of “local church.”

How do we contend with cultural differences?

- We discover extreme disparity
- Engagement with diversity
- Separation from the “other”
- Embracing diversity creates unity
- Uniformity creates unity

The task is to understand diversity without destroying essential unity. The rich history of the Church in its multiple settings shows how local cultures have enriched rather than diminished the Church. Through courage and humility, by widening his own space in heart, St Francis moved the Sultan's heart.

Religious pluralism and multiculturalism seem...accompanied by an attitude of intolerance toward others. Why do we have such a hard time with basic decent human interaction when we encounter difference. We distort things because we are trained neither to voice both sides of an issue nor to listen with both ears (Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*²⁶). We look at the world through analytical lenses. We see everything as this or that, plus or minus, on or off, black or white; we fragment reality into either/ors. In a phrase, we think the world apart.

Either/or thinking has given us a fragmented sense of reality that destroys the wholeness and wonder of life. Our educational system points us in the direction of separation and discord rather than cohesion and harmony.

The task, for formation to succeed, includes an in-depth understanding of the essence of Catholic tradition and of the cultural variation found within the tradition. A narrow fundamentalism narrows the wideness of God's mercy and love. A stingy view of faith and of God permeates and poisons our troubled Church and world, a problem corrected by study, patience, and prayer.

From Fragmentation to Integration

William Short, OFM, in "The Franciscans," offers insight to reach mutual understanding and bring together factions through the triumph of charity. To break through the divides and become bridge-builders and reconcilers.

He offers three Franciscan responses:

1. To refocus our energies on the essential rather than the peripheral, that is, on the suffering of our world rather than Church politics; *Recognize, acknowledge and respond to suffering in our world, Church, nation, communities and families.*
2. To be a reconciling presence to all we meet; *Commit ourselves to become reconciling presences in every circumstance of our lives.*
3. To recollect ourselves through pondering the Gospel and praying that we have the courage to live it. *Seek conversion of heart through pondering, praying and preparing to act in Christ's name.*

Life-Giving Union

- *Live the Gospel*
- *Seek to Encounter*
- *Conform*
- *Prayer and Contemplation*
- *Express*
- *Seek*
- *Set Free*
- *To Build*
- *To Be*

We *can* bring into harmony those around us who are estranged. We might *“Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly we will be doing the impossible.”*

As impossible as it may seem that any one of us can make a difference in our fractured world, imagine if 13,000 Secular Franciscans performed one reconciling act every day, what a different world we will know! Thousands of circumstances where healing is imparted.

“At issue is: are we willing to make a covenant of our lives in order to find a heart to face our future without fear and with great trust, to surrender our spirit into God’s hands; to find a heart to call down the flow of God’s abundant holiness and to plunge ourselves into it, to Passover into it; to find a heart to pledge ourselves as bread and wine poured out for others -- Christ again making His covenant, His Passover, in us.”

– Vincent Hovley, SJ, *A Rock to Build On*²⁷

Part II: The Call Within The Call (Slides 64-82)

[“See everything, overlook a great deal, correct a little. Prudent is the one who can keep silent that part of the truth which may be untimely; and by not speaking it, does not spoil the truth of what one said.”^{28]}

Qualities for Effective Relationships (Slides 64-72)

Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*²⁹

- Trust
- Meditation
- Respect
- Patience
- Attentiveness
- Suffering
- Creative Fidelity

Trust

A fundamental openness to the reality of the other.

Involves acceptance of the other.

A fragile condition in the church and in society, nurtured by every individual.³⁰ (*Vol II, Early Documents, Celano “Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, 276-77)*

Respect

An intuition of the dignity of all things created and of their preciousness in God’s eyes.

An awareness that things not only are what they are, but also--however remotely--stand for something absolute.

Acknowledgement of the other, equally worthy as oneself.

Attentiveness

Alertness, receptivity, and “leaning toward the other.”

An intense focusing of the mind in order to see or hear something “accurately.”

When we truly listen to the other, when we contemplate the other.

Clare’s insistence on continual gazing on the mirror of Christ, (*Fourth Letter*³¹), prompted her to the attentive service among her sisters.

Meditation

Meditation on the Other in Silence

“Where there is inner quiet and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor restlessness”³² (*Admonition 27.4*).

Empathy for the other shines through, fosters genuine meeting with another.

Gaze, consider, contemplate, desiring to imitate”³³ (Second Letter, 18-20).

St Bonaventure: “three eyes” – eye of the body, eye of the mind, eye of the soul³⁴

Patience

Persons and situations keep changing

Not to analyze, “not to the figure the person out”

Trust, respect, and attentiveness continue, conclusions are in need of revision

In Clare’s *Form of Life*: “Let them direct their attention to what they should desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and Its holy activity...”³⁵ (123)

Francis’ *Praises of God*, “You are humility. You are patience.”

Admonition 13, patience is opposite to anger³⁶

Admonition 27.2: “Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor disturbance.”³⁷

Suffering

Paschal Mystery as quintessential context (*Hebrews 5, 8*)

Patience is the virtue that makes suffering positive and meaningful. (*Mt 5:10*)

Learning demands suffering - painful to open the mind and the heart to new truth.

How Clare attained union with God (*Fourth Letter*³⁸), praying before the Cross

Cruciform love – to navigate misunderstanding, violence, unforgiveness, and redemptive reconciliation.

Creative Fidelity

Willingness to trust, to be attentive to, and suffer with the other even as the other changes. (*Ron Rolheiser*)³⁹

TOR Rule 25: “Let them neither dominate nor seek power over one another, but let them willingly serve and obey each other with that genuine love which comes from each one’s heart.”⁴⁰

Commitment of the spiritual journey

Blessed John Duns Scotus: creative fidelity shows how the virtues of justice and prudence are relevant in relationships.

Clare’s Second Letter: “What you hold, may you always hold. What you do, may you do and not stop...”⁴¹

Creative fidelity, prudence, reflective insights, move persons to desire and to engage in dialogue

The Gift Of Presence (Slides 73-77)

- Self-giving
- Availability
- Closeness
- Humility
- Mindfulness

(Neil Holm, *Towards the Theology of the Ministry of Presence*⁴²)

- Not what we do, but how we do it
- A faith presence; one who accompanies others on the journey through life
- Is animated by a close relationship with Christ
- Means “being with” others and paying attention to the quality of being with
- Is being open, accepting, respecting, sharing, learning, inviting; being around, being available
- Being seen by being present as a symbol of the presence and availability of God in our lives
- A sacramental presence, an outward sign, reflecting on God in the ordinary events of life
- Exhibiting care and compassion
- Encouraging in speech
- Reflecting regularly to learn how to do it better
- Entails empowering, healing, wholeness, comfort, sufficiency, all connected to the presence of God

Working Definition

Implies self-giving

Means being available with all of one’s self

Involves listening in a way that involves giving of one’s self

Implies closeness, perception, awareness, and involvement

Perceives the other person as “mystery” rather than “problem”

A freely given gift of one’s self, engaging in a mutual and reciprocal dialogue

Biblical Understanding

Implies living in the presence of God

Involves being co-present, in the same space, being attentive to the presence of the other as God!

Describes God’s presence as “the presence of His divine activity”

A Trinitarian understanding

Is relational, co-present, in the same space, but open to the other in a way that we enriched by the other

Recognizing the mutuality and reciprocity in the relationship (*Romans 1, 11-12*)

Our relationship to Christ is formed and nourished through our relationship with others
Grace lies behind caring presence, the foundation for transformations to occur
Prayers is a component of the ministry of presence

Mindfulness⁴³ (Slides 78-82)

By Definition

“The practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one’s thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis.” (*Merriam-Webster*)

“The practice of being aware of your body, mind, and feelings in the present moment, thought to create a feeling of calm.” (*Cambridge*)

Synonyms: alertness, carefulness, caution, circumspection, concentration, concern, conscientiousness, consideration, diligence, direction, effort, enthusiasm, exactness, exertion, focus, heedfulness, interest, particularity, prudence, regard, solicitude, thought, vigilance, watchfulness.

To Organizations

“Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what’s going on around us.” (*Mindful.org*)

“Mindfulness is about observation without criticism; being compassionate with yourself.” (*Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World*)

“Mindfulness is wordless. Mindfulness is meeting the moment as it is, moment after moment after moment, wordlessly attending to our experience as it actually is. It is opening to not just the fragments of our lives that we like or dislike or view as important, but the whole of our experiencing.” (*White Wind Zen Community*)

From Experts

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.” (*Jon Kabat-Zinn*)

“Mindfulness shows us what is happening in our bodies, our emotions, our minds, and in the world. Through mindfulness, we avoid harming ourselves and others.” (*Thich Nhat Hanh*)

“Mindfulness in its most general sense is about waking up from a life on automatic, and being sensitive to novelty in our everyday experiences. With mindful awareness the flow of energy and information that is our mind enters our conscious attention and we can both appreciate its contents and come to regulate its flow in a new way. Mindful awareness involves more than just being aware: it involves being aware of aspects of the mind itself. Instead of being on automatic and mindless, mindfulness helps us awaken, and by reflecting on the mind we are enabled to make choices and thus change becomes possible.” (*Daniel J Siegel*)

“Mindfulness is the aware, balanced acceptance of the present experience. It isn’t more complicated than that. It is opening up or receiving the present moment, pleasant or unpleasant, just as it is, without either clinging to it or rejecting it.” (*Sylvia Boorstein*)

“Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.”⁴⁴ (*OFS Rule, Art. 1*)

End Notes

- ¹ Pope John XXIII's message to the Church on his deathbed can be found at franciscanmedia.org/franciscan-spirit/the-franciscan-saints-john-xxiii
- ² Robert F. Kennedy, Speech at the news of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr, 1968
- ³ *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, was one of the four constitutions resulting from the Second Vatican Council, *the document can be found on the Vatican website at www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/*
- ⁴ Eucharistic Prayer 3, text can be found at ibreviary.com - [3rd Eucharistic Prayer](#)
- ⁵ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press), page 76
- ⁶ Pope Saint John XXIII's Opening Address of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962, text at catholicculture.org - [Opening Address 2nd Vatican Council](#)
- ⁷ Pope Saint John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, November 30, 1980, text can be found at [Vatican Website - Dives et Misericordia](#)
- ⁸ Pope Benedict XV, *Deus Caritas Est*, December 25, 2005, text can be found at [Vatican Website - Deus Caritas Est](#)
- ⁹ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press), A Letter to the Entire Order, p. 118
- ¹⁰ William Short, O.F.M., *Franciscan Language for the 21st Century*, (AFCU Journal: A Franciscan Perspective on Higher Education, vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 2004). Published by Neumann University, Aston, PA.), text can be found at [Franciscan Tradition - Franciscan Language for the 21st Century](#)
- ¹¹ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press) *Admonition V*, page 131
- ¹² Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press) , *Canticle of the Creatures*, page 113
- ¹³ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press) *Praises of God*, page 108
- ¹⁴ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press), *The Earlier Rule*, page 82
- ¹⁵ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press), *The Earlier Rule*, page 76
- ¹⁶ Pope Francis' address to the U.S. Congress, 9/24/2015, text can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/about/leadership/holy-see/francis/papal-visit-2015/media-resources/upload/11-EN-congressional-address.pdf>
- ¹⁷ [Georgetown University - Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life](#)
- ¹⁸ Lumen Gentium
- ¹⁹ Kevin E. McKenna, *A Concise Guide to Catholic Social Teaching*, (Ave Maria Press 2002, Kevin E McKenna, 2013)
- ²⁰ Pope Saint John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus: Centenary of Rerum Novarum*, (Catholic Truth Society [18 September 2001]), also can be found online at [Vatican Website - Centesimus Annus](#)
- ²¹ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, USCCB, Washington, D.C., Publication # 5-692, ISBN 1-57455-692-4, can also be found online on the Vatican Website [Vatican Website - Pontifical Council for Justice and peace](#)
- ²² Catechism of the Catholic Church

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- ²³ Pope Saint John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, December 30, 1987, [Vatican Website - Sollicitudo Rei Socialis](#)
- ²⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1964, text can be found at [Vatican Website - Lumen Gentium](#)
- ²⁵ *Guadium et Spes*, see end note 3
- ²⁶ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, (John Wiley and Sons, 2017, 20th Anniversary Edition)
- ²⁷ **Vincent Hovley, SJ, *A Rock to Build On***
- ²⁸ Pope Saint John XXIII
- ²⁹ Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, Fordham University Press, 1964), 147-74
- ³⁰ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi – The Founder, Vol II*, (New City Press, 2006), *Celano “Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul”, 276-77*
- ³¹ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Clare of Assisi – Early Documents*, (New City Press, 2006) *Clare’s Fourth Letter*, page 54
- ³² Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press) *Admonition XXVII, 4*, page 137
- ³³ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Clare of Assisi – Early Documents*, (New City Press, 2006) *Clare’s Second Letter*, page 48
- ³⁴ Ken Wilber, *Eye to Eye*, Shambhala, 2001
- ³⁵ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Clare of Assisi – Early Documents*, (New City Press, 2006) *Clare’s Form of Life*, page 109
- ³⁶ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press) *Admonition XIII*, page 133
- ³⁷ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Francis of Assisi - The Saint, Vol 1*, (October 1st 2002 by New City Press) *Admonition XXVII, 2*, page 136
- ³⁸ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Clare of Assisi – Early Documents*, (New City Press, 2006) *Clare’s Fourth Letter*, page 54
- ³⁹ **Ron Rolheiser – willingness to trust...**
- ⁴⁰ TOR Rule 25, text can be found at http://www.franciscanstor.org/The_Life/TOR_Rule/
- ⁴¹ Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap., Editor, *Clare of Assisi – Early Documents*, (New City Press, 2006) *Clare’s Second Letter*, page 48
- ⁴² Neil Holm, *Towards the Theology of the Ministry of Presence*, Journal of Christian Education, Volume 52, No. 1, May 2009, text online at http://www.academia.edu/1256854/Toward_a_Theology_of_the_Ministry_of_Presence_in_Chaplaincy
- ⁴³ Mindfulness definitions can be found at [Positive Psychology Program](#)
- ⁴⁴ The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order can be found on the NAFRA Website at [OFS Rule](#)