

Franciscan Movement

Part 1 – The Journey of Francis and

Part 2 – Your Own Journey

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Franciscan Movement One: The Journey of Francis

Note: Those who enter Inquiry should be familiar with the life of St. Francis to some degree. In Orientation they are directed to read an overview of his life, perhaps from *The Digests* or a book, such as *The Journey and the Dream* by Murray Bodo.

During Inquiry and especially for use in this session, it is important that they have read a more scholarly presentation on the life of St. Francis; an example might be *St Francis of Assisi: A Biography* by Omer Englebert. Not all inquirers in the group need to read the same book, as the needs of each individual are to be considered when they are choosing various books about St. Francis.

Purpose:

- To facilitate an in-depth study of the life of St. Francis of Assisi.
- To learn how God acted in Francis' life, and how Francis responded to God's call.
- To broaden one's knowledge of those who shared in Francis' life and the world in which he lived.
- To come to an understanding of the source of the "Franciscan charism".
- To view the life of St. Francis as the touchstone of one's own call to the Secular Franciscan Order.
- To view a "Lifeline" of St. Francis of Assisi in preparation for making and sharing their own "Lifeline".

Prerequisites:

- A biography of St. Francis of Assisi - read prior to this session.
- A copy of the illustrated "Lifeline" of St. Francis and accompanying explanation¹ or the option to create one of your own.

¹ The "Lifeline of St. Francis" illustration and accompanying explanation. See FUN CD

- Discussion questions handed out in advance of this session. Inquirers are asked to reflect on these questions as they read the biography of Francis of Assisi.
- Items needed for the closing prayer service, i.e. Bible, San Damiano Cross, candle.
- The formator should have knowledge of “Mutual Invitation”² or similar skills.

Setting:

- The discussion should take place in a comfortable, casual setting. Participants face each other in a circle or semicircle, or are seated around a table.
- Two hours is minimal to adequately cover the material.

Procedure (Lesson Plan):

- Brief welcome and invocation of the Holy Spirit.
- Invitation to share overall impressions of the reading.
- Show the illustrated “Lifeline” of St. Francis³ and accompanying explanation. Post this as a visual aid during discussion.
- Invite all to share thoughts on the Reflection and Discussion Questions.
- Explain their assignment for “Franciscan Movement Two: Our Own Journey”.
- Prior to the Closing Prayer service give an overview and some instruction to those participating in the service.
- Invitation to Closing Prayer Service

² A description of “Mutual Invitation” see *OFS Resource Manual* pp72 (also on FUN CD)

³ The illustrated “Lifeline of St. Francis” and accompanying explanation is available on the FUN CD

Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. What incidents from Francis' life stand out to you? Made the most impact? What could you most relate to?
2. What inspires you about Francis? What puzzles you about him?
3. Discuss the impact Francis had on: his parents, the first brothers (Bernardo, Leo, etc.), Clare, Lady Jacopa, Luchesio and Buona Donna, Bishop Guido, Pope Innocent III, the wider Church, the people of his town.
4. What did you learn from Francis?

Closing Prayer Service

Gather in a circle or semi-circle. Place a Bible, a San Damiano Cross, and a candle in sight.

- Sign of the Cross
- Song: All sing or listen to a musical rendition of Francis' Prayer before the Crucifix or of his prayer, "Deus meus et omnia" (My God and my All).
- Opening Prayer:
Most high, all powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praise, the glory and the honor and every blessing.⁴ Send us your Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds as we listen to your Word.
- Scripture reading: Matthew 10:7-20
- Period of quiet reflection
- All are invited to share one phrase, one word, or one thought that came to them as they listened to this reading.
- All are invited to share spontaneous prayers of praise, thanksgiving or petition.
- All pray together the Lord's Prayer.
- Leader: *Let us bless the Lord!* All: *And give him thanks!*
- Sign of the Cross

⁴ Canticle of Creatures, St. Francis of Assisi, 1225

Assignment for "Franciscan Movement Two: Your Own Journey"

As you look at the illustrated "Lifeline" of St. Francis it is easy to see different steps of a conversion process as they apply to different events in the life of Francis. During this time of discernment it is important for you to ponder the events of Francis' conversion and vocation process, and see how these might relate with your own conversion and vocation process. As a help, you might use the following steps in a conversion process as they apply to the life of St. Francis, and then ask yourself how they might also apply in your own life:

- ❖ Darkness that can lead to openness (Questions and confusion can propel us to God)
- ❖ Listening and hearing (Prayer)
- ❖ Choosing to follow
- ❖ Signs which strengthen our decisions and our walk
- ❖ Finding new direction
- ❖ Life of Christ/Gospel as point of contact and reference
- ❖ Finding support in this newness
- ❖ Walking in faith
- ❖ Trusting even in darkness
- ❖ Darkness that can lead to openness
- ❖ As conversion is ongoing, we "begin again", returning to the top

Your own "Lifeline"

To illustrate this process in your own life, please make a "lifeline" of your own to share at next meeting.

1. Draw a time-line representing your life, indicating different stages and time periods. You might use different colors that reflect how you felt at certain times.
2. Indicate your ups and downs and plateaus by the curves or angles of your line. Lines can also show times when you might have taken a "detour", etc.
3. Draw symbols, if applicable, at significant points along your line, i.e., a rain cloud at a sad time, a flower for growth, a tombstone for the loss of someone, a cross for an especially difficult time, etc.

4. Be as creative as you like, or as simple as you choose, but take time to ponder as you make this life review. Give thought to your life's journey thus far, and reflect on its meaning. Feel free to creatively express your thoughts and feelings as you create your lifeline. Use words, symbols and colors that have meaning to you.
5. Your lifeline is not meant to be a work of art – it is simply meant to be a visual tool to help you see God at work in your life.
6. After creating your lifeline, reflect on its meaning, using the questions that will be provided.

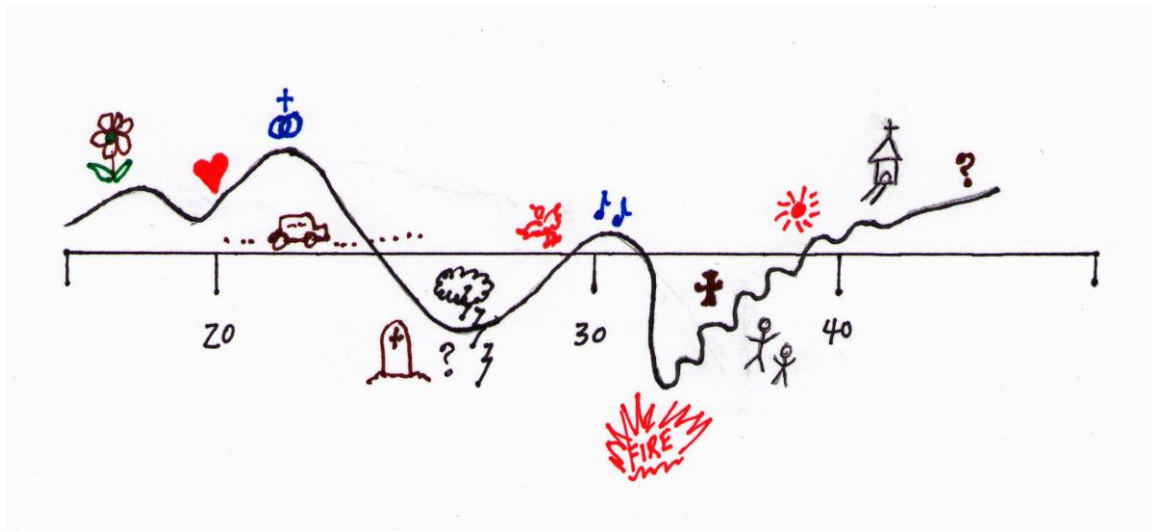


Figure 1 A sample lifeline

Questions for Reflection, Journaling and Sharing your Lifeline

1. As you look at your life line, what feelings well up inside you?
2. What new discoveries have you made about yourself?
3. What surprises you about your life?
4. Are there new insights now that you have recorded these key moments of your life journey?
5. What happened at the time when you experienced God's closeness or absence in your life?
6. Over the course of your life, when did you feel closest to God? Did any event of your life mark a period of drifting or turning away from God? Did you feel God's presence more clearly during painful events or at pleasant times?
7. How has God spoken to you over the course of your life?
8. What is He saying to you now?

Franciscan Movement Two: Your Own Journey

Purpose:

- To facilitate an introspective look at one's own life.
- To discover and share how God has acted in one's life, and how one responds to God's call.
- To broaden one's knowledge of those who have influenced their journey and to understand the circumstances of life during their journey.
- To view one's life in relation to the life of St. Francis as the touchstone of one's own call to the Secular Franciscan Order.
- To facilitate bonding within the group.

Prerequisites:

- In an earlier session during Inquiry (Franciscan Movement One) the Inquirers are given the instructions for preparing a lifeline, and reflection questions to ponder and guide their sharing. Sufficient time is needed prior to this session for the Inquirers to prepare and reflect.
- Inquirers should be aware that any self-disclosure will occur in a group comprised of other Inquirers with whom they have journeyed, and with a formator(s) (professed members or Spiritual Assistant) they have come to know and are comfortable with.
- Prior to this session the formator individually confirms that each Inquirer is comfortable with this assignment. Any concerns should be handled honestly and with great charity.
- The formator(s) for this session is one who has come to know the Inquirers, and is skilled in facilitating group discussions.
- The formator(s) for this session prepares a lifeline to share, and will be the first to share with the group using the reflection questions as a guide for his/her presentation.
- Inquirers should be made aware that all that is shared at this session will be held in strict confidence.
- A copy of the illustrated "Lifeline" of St. Francis⁵ posted to reference as needed.

⁵ The "Lifeline of St. Francis" illustration and accompanying explanation can be found on the "For Up to Now" CD.

- Items needed for the closing prayer service, i.e. Psalm 139 in song or written word, and Francis' "Praises of God"⁶.

Setting:

- The session takes place in a comfortable, casual setting.
- There should be some assurance of privacy for this session.
- Participants face each other in a circle or semicircle.
- Two hours is minimal to adequately cover the material. For a large group more time may be needed.

Procedure (Lesson Plan):

- Brief welcome and invocation of the Holy Spirit.
- The formator asks that no one interrupts during any one person's sharing of their lifeline. Insights can be shared and questions can be asked after each presenter is completely finished; however after presenting their lifeline no one is required to answer any question they do not wish to answer or to engage in ensuing conversation if they choose not to.
- The formator for this session is the first to show his/her lifeline to the group and to share with the group using the reflection questions as a guide.
- One by one all are invited to share their lifelines and their thoughts on the Reflection Questions. Others may give insights and ask questions as noted above.
- Prior to the Closing Prayer service give an overview and some instruction to those participating in the service.
- Invitation to Closing Prayer Service

⁶ Ritual, page 99

Questions for Reflection, Journaling and Sharing your Lifeline

1. As you look at your life line, what feelings well up inside you?
2. What new discoveries have you made about yourself?
3. What surprises you about your life?
4. Are there new insights now that you have recorded these key moments of your life journey?
5. What happened at the time when you experienced God's closeness or absence in your life?
6. Over the course of your life, when did you feel closest to God? Did any event of your life mark a period of drifting or turning away from God? Did you feel God's presence more clearly during painful events or at pleasant times?
7. How has God spoken to you over the course of your life?
8. What is He saying to you now?

Closing Prayer

- Sign of the Cross
- Scripture: Psalm 139 – prayed in song or read taking parts, or all together.
- Period of quiet reflection
- All are invited to share spontaneous prayers of praise, thanksgiving or petition.
- All pray together Francis' "Praises of God"⁷
- Leader: *Let us bless the Lord!* All: *And give him thanks!*
- Sign of the Cross

⁷ Ritual, page 99