

Franciscan Journey chapter 6 notes

Writings and Stories of Francis and Clare

Story of the wolf of Gubbio points out...

- Francis shows trust in God, willing to confront evil.
- Francis required the wolf to change his ways and the people to change their ways so that both could live in peace.
- Francis dealt with the cause of the wolf's killing spree by addressing his hunger.
- Both sides had to fulfill the requirements Francis laid out. When they did, they were able to live in peace.

Analogy: in our relationship with God, we must trust in God, dialogue with him, be willing to change, deal with the needs of others, and follow through on promises.

Story of the Christmas celebration...

- Francis gives a new sense of the presence of God among us in Jesus.
- The Incarnation takes on new meaning.
- My observation: Francis thought in concrete terms, as demonstrated here and in other stories. He brought the story of the Nativity to life with live animals, took literally the command to restore the Church, took literally the Gospel call to poverty and to spread the gospel message two by two, etc.

Story of the San Damiano cross...

- Francis responded immediately.
- Even if our first response is not quite on target, it is a beginning.

Relationships: we are spouses when joined with the Holy Spirit, brothers of Jesus when we do the will of The Father, mothers when we carry Jesus in our hearts and give birth to him in our activities.

Clare at home before profession...

- Clare saved food to send to the poor.
- Clare wore a rough garment under her clothes, fasted, and prayed.

Story of Clare and the Saracens...

- Clare focused on the prayerfulness of her community, but also open to the needs of others, especially the poor.
- Clare found ways to keep the link between prayer and care alive in her Franciscan life.

Clare's testament key virtues...

- Holy simplicity, humility, poverty, integrity.
- Loving one another with the love of Christ.
- Grow in the love of God and mutual charity.

Francis of Assisi - The Saint Vol 1 - The Testament

“The Testament,” has remained a primary expression of Francis’s profound wisdom and vision.

- When in sin, Francis found it bitter to see lepers. Once he began doing penance, what was once bitter became sweet.
- Respect, love, and honor for priests because of their role in bringing us the most holy Body and Blood.
- Honor for the Lord’s most holy names.
- Live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel:
 - give all to the poor, live simply and subject to all, honest work and beg door to door when not paid, obedience, prayer.
- “May the Lord give you peace.”

Francis of Assisi - The Founder Vol 2 - Chapter 4: Dealing with Lepers

After his encounter with the leper, Francis began to consider himself less and less, until, by God’s grace, he came to complete victory over himself. He gave alms to the lepers, stayed with them, and served them with humility.

He prayed to the Father in secret in a cave. He endured with great suffering and mental anxiety, unable to rest until he accomplished in action what he conceived in mind.

Clare of Assisi - The Lady - The Blessing

Blessing from *Numbers 6:24-26*. “Always be lovers of your souls and those of all your sisters. And may you always be eager to observe what you have promised the Lord.”

FUN Manual - “The Vocation, Charism and Mission of Secular Franciscans” - Benedetto Lino, OFS

Vocation

- God calls us. We discern vocation.
- Communion is the aim of God’s call. We are called to enter into relationship with God.
- Discern: must understand Franciscan charism, how it grew into Franciscan spirituality.
- In Francis, we see an understandable representation of Christ, human and historical.
- Franciscan way requires following Jesus in footsteps of St Francis without reservation.
- Spiritual style: Eucharistic, fraternal, simplicity, poverty, humility, littleness, obedience.
- Vocation: we desire to embrace these attitudes and behaviors.

Charism

- Charism = gift from Holy Spirit to benefit Church = call to be person God intends us to be.
- The Rule says that we are to make present the charism of St Francis.
- Charism passed down through the generations, allows unrepeatable to live on.

- Francis' gift was to perceive, as never before, God's own humble essence, the depth of his love, his poverty, his simplicity, then built his life around those.
- Charism → Franciscan spirituality: intense Eucharistic life, poverty, minority-humility, simplicity, obedience, chastity, fraternity, evangelical radicality (follow the total Christ)

Mission

- Mission is to REPAIR THE CHURCH (HOUSE).
- Church = body of Christ, we are members.
- Church is healthy when those looking at it, and those living in it, see the person of Jesus.
- Commit ourselves to become true children of God, to discover the infinite richness of the Father and draw from it the capacity to love, to give, and to forgive.
- We are to answer the call anytime the Church calls, anything to "repair."

The Franciscan Journey – Chapter 6 “Writings and Stories of Francis and Clare” - Questions

1. Acquaintance with the life and spirit of Francis and Clare:
 - a. Source of Franciscan charism and spirituality. "It is our responsibility to embrace their spirit and express it in 21st Century language."
 - b. Model of lives that we commit to follow.
2. How family stories reflect similar influence to stories of Francis and Clare:
 - a. Pass along family values from generation to generation – we learn how we are to live.
 - b. Remember ancestors who have gone before us.
 - c. Understand where we came from.
3. Present image of Francis and Clare:
 - a. Trust in God. Relationship with God.
 - b. The role of penance in Christian life: humility, simplicity, poverty, care for the poor, fasting, prayer.
 - c. Love one another with the love of Christ.
 - d. How to be a peacemaker in the face of conflict.
 - e. Francis took the Gospel and other inspirational messages literally.
 - f. Once Francis got an idea into his head, he became passionate and obsessed with seeing things through.
 - g. Respect for the Eucharist, the Word of God, priests, and holy objects.
 - h. Simplicity.
4. Make sense to me as I compare with my life:
 - a. Simplicity of Francis's answer to God's call for penance and conversion.
 - b. Conversion of heart as I learn more.
5. Franciscan spirituality: See answer to question 3.
6. Motivation to continue searching Franciscan sources:
 - a. I feel a deep need to seek and understand Franciscan spirituality.

- b. I feel a call to formation, which will require that I deepen my understanding and integrate Franciscan ideals into my own life.

7. Scripture reflection: The words of admonition from Paul to the Colossians are mirrored in the words of Francis and Clare to their followers. They speak of prayer and relationship with God and of living a life pleasing to him.

Colossians 1:9-14: And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Ignatius Study Bible: “bearing fruit”: Paul prays often that God will bless the Colossians with spiritual wisdom and deeper desire to grow in faith. He wants them to honor the Father with their lives and allow the Spirit to work unhindered within them. “qualified us”: The Father has qualified him by the grace of divine adoption. For Paul, it is our sonship in Christ that makes us heirs of all that the Father desires and intends to give us. “inheritance of the saints”: Salvation in the heavenly kingdom of God. Even now believers possess a first installment of this inheritance through the in-dwelling of the Spirit.

CCHS: 9-14 Prayer for their spiritual progress— 9. —'Therefore' sums up what he has written of the good they possess. Chrysostom: 'For as in the games we cheer on those most who are near upon gaining the victory, so truly does Paul also most exhort those who have achieved the greater part'. The Apostle is thinking of the false teachers, with their speculations, their claim to know (gnosis). He prays daily that his readers will be equipped intellectually with the perfection of knowledge (epignosis, DV 'the knowledge)—the deepest understanding—of God's will (cf. Lightfoot, 248-54). Further, he prays that this intellectual conviction be accompanied by 'all wisdom' (whereby a man sees all things with reference to God) and 'spiritual understanding' (whereby he clearly discerns between right and wrong).

10. Thus equipped by God the Christians life should show four qualities: (i) Zeal to please God (this being the probable sense of 'in all things pleasing'); (ii) 'fruitfulness', like a tree, 'in every good work', accompanied by a deepening knowledge of God; (iii)

11. Determination to carry out God's will patiently, without wrath (DV 'longsuffering') and joyfully; (iv)
12. A spirit of thanksgiving for the whole favour of salvation through Christ's redemption (cf.Eph_1:6-7; More precisely, this thanksgiving embraces three effects of the Redemption. First, the Father 'hath fitted us for our portion of the inheritance of the saints in light' (WV). All the supernatural benefits and God himself, their source, are described by the figure of light (cf. Act_9:3; Eph_5:7-13, etc.).
13. Second, we have been snatched from being slaves to the power of darkness— 'from an arbitrary tyranny' (Lightfoot)—to the well ordered 'kingdom of his beloved Son' (WV). 14. Third, we have 'redemption', i.e. liberation from a state of guilt, forgiveness of former sins (cf.Eph_1:7).

FUN Manual - "Francis and his approach to Divinity" page 3 of 16

The Franciscan experience will require us first to look at God through the eyes and insights of St Francis and the early Franciscans to gain an understanding of God as Trinity, focusing on the "Primacy of the Father." Next is Francis' image and understanding of Jesus and lastly how we are called into special relationship with our loving God.

Where Francis begins to differ from other saints/founders, is in his approach to Jesus. Where most seek to emulate one or more aspects of Jesus' life, Francis becomes totally immersed in the reality of "all" of Jesus. Ultimately, the spiritual goal of a Franciscan is to struggle to become a total imitator of Jesus, to become "alter Christus" (another Christ) touching all of God's creation as Jesus did. This is no small goal or challenge, but a path that will ask you to look deeply into how you set your life's priorities, and how you live them out day to day.

Bonaventure: *The Major Lesson of Saint Francis*

¹*The grace of God our Savior has appeared
in these last days
in his servant Francis
to all who are truly humble and lovers of holy poverty,^a
who, while venerating in him God's superabundant mercy,
learn by his example
to reject wholeheartedly *ungodliness and worldly passions*,
to live in conformity with Christ
and to thirst after *blessed hope* with unflagging desire.*

*In an outpouring of kindness,
the Most High God looked upon him,
a little, poor, and contrite man,
so that He not only *lifted the needy man*
from the dust of a worldly life;
but also gave him as a light for believers,
a practitioner, a leader, and a herald of Gospel perfection,
that by *bearing witness to the light*
he might *prepare for the Lord a way of light and peace*
to the hearts of his faithful.*

Liturgy of the Hours: October 4, Francis of Assisi, Prayer

Father, you helped our seraphic father Francis
reflect the image of Christ
through a life of poverty and humility.

May we follow your Son
by walking in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi,
and by imitating his joyful love.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.