

## July Lesson Plan: Fraternity — Simplicity, Poverty, and Detachment

### *Living with Freedom, Gratitude, and Purpose in the Franciscan Way*

July centers on the heart of Franciscan spirituality: **simplicity, poverty, and detachment**, lived with humility and joy. For St. Francis, poverty was not misery but *freedom*; freedom from unnecessary attachments, freedom to love fully, and freedom to depend on God rather than possessions.

This month invites participants to embrace:

- **Interior and exterior simplicity**
- **Stewardship and intentional use of resources**
- **Detachment from excess, consumption, and possession**
- **A lifestyle aligned with service, gratitude, and community**

#### **Key Question:**

**What do I truly need, versus what is merely convenient or desired?**

### **Opening**

#### **Welcome & Centering Prayer**

*Place a simple candle or a stone at the center — a reminder of simplicity.*

#### **Opening prayer:**

*“God of all goodness, teach us to walk simply before You. Free our hearts from attachment, open our hands to generosity, and fill us with gratitude for every good gift. Amen.”*

#### **Scripture & Reflection**

##### **Suggested Gospel:**

- **Matthew 6:19–21, 24** — “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be.”
- **Philippians 4:11–13** — Learning contentment in all circumstances.

##### **Reflection prompts:**

- What treasures occupy my attention or energy?
- How does God invite me to live with deeper trust and less attachment?
- What does “contentment” mean for me right now?

## Teaching Content

### A. Franciscan Simplicity: A Way of Seeing

- Simplicity is not deprivation but *clarity*.
- It allows us to focus on what matters: love, relationship, and mission.
- Francis lived simply to make room for joy and to remove obstacles between himself and God.

### B. Poverty of Spirit : Interior Freedom

- Poverty in the Franciscan sense begins within:
  - Letting go of ego
  - Releasing control
  - Trusting God's providence
- It is a stance of openness, gratitude, and humility.

### C. Stewardship and Detachment

- Francis did not reject material things; he insisted they be used **rightly, modestly, and purposefully**.
- Detachment means:
  - Caring for what we have
  - Letting go of what we do not need
  - Refusing to let objects define worth, status, or identity

### D. Franciscan Use of Material Goods

Guiding principles:

- *Necessity over luxury*
- *Simplicity over convenience*
- *Purpose over possession*
- *Service over self-indulgence*

Everything we own should, in some way, support our vocation, our community, and our capacity to love.

### Discussion (10 minutes)

Use any of these prompts:

- What is one possession or habit I feel attached to? Why?
- Where do I experience freedom when I simplify?

- How do I distinguish between “need” and “desire”?
- What might my fraternity or community look like if we lived simplicity more intentionally?

### **Love in Action: Humility & Hidden Service**

✓ **Invite someone for coffee, a walk, or a simple meal.**

Let hospitality be simple, not stressful.

✓ **Carry small kindness cards or notes to give spontaneously.**

Share encouragement freely.

✓ **Make a point to greet strangers warmly.**

Smile, make eye contact, acknowledge others with dignity.

### **Reflect: Holy Hospitality**

At the end of each week, ask:

- **Who crossed my path this week?**
- **How was I — or was I not — hospitable toward them?**
- **What small actions might create a greater sense of welcome?**

*Prayer:*

*“Lord, open my heart as You open my door.”*

*Pray this each morning as a reminder of openness and generosity.*

Invite participants to choose:

1. **One area of life to simplify** (closet, schedule, digital use, finances).
2. **One item or habit to let go of** — something that no longer serves their spiritual life.
3. **One practice of hospitality** from the Love in Action list.

Encourage them to journal about the effect of letting go and living more simply.

*Pray:*

*“Most High God, give us the grace to live lightly and joyfully in Your presence. Teach us to hold possessions with open hands, to welcome others with open hearts, and to follow Christ with simplicity and freedom. Amen.”*

*Notes:*