

May Lesson Plan: Franciscan Prayer and Devotion

Deepening Relationship with God: Personally and in Community

May focuses on the heart of Franciscan spirituality: a living, loving relationship with God nurtured through prayer, personal, communal, and Marian. St. Francis prayed with simplicity, affection, and trust, seeking continual union with the God who loved him first.

This month invites participants to explore:

- Prayer as relationship
- The role of community and fraternity in shaping our spiritual lives
- Marian devotion through the lens of **Our Lady of the Angels**
- Humility and hiddenness as expressions of Franciscan love

Key Question:

How does regular prayer shape and deepen my relationship with God, personally and within my community or fraternity?

Opening

Welcome & Centering Prayer

Light a small candle or place an icon of Our Lady of the Angels at the center.

Opening prayer:

“Most High and Glorious God, draw us into deeper friendship with You. Teach us to pray with the simplicity of St. Francis, the tenderness of Our Lady, and the humility of true disciples. Amen.”

Scripture & Reflection

Suggested Gospel:

- **Luke 11:1–4 — “Lord, teach us to pray.”**
- **Psalms 131 — A childlike trust in God.**

Reflection prompts:

- What do these readings reveal about the nature of prayer?
- How does prayer help you experience God as near, attentive, and loving?

Teaching Content

A. Prayer as Relationship: Personal & Communal

- For St. Francis, prayer was not simply words but a *loving gaze* toward God.
- Personal prayer nurtures intimacy and awareness of God's presence.
- Communal prayer strengthens fraternity, unity, and shared mission.

B. Marian Devotion: Our Lady of the Angels

- Francis entrusted his ministry to **Mary under the title "Our Lady of the Angels,"** linked to the Portiuncula.
- Mary embodies simplicity, listening, openness, and humble discipleship.
- Praying with Mary helps us surrender to God's will with trust.

C. Prayer in the Franciscan Tradition

Key features:

- **Simplicity** — coming before God as we are.
- **Affectionate love** — praying with the heart.
- **Contemplation** — quiet resting in God.
- **Praise and gratitude** — recognizing God's goodness in all things.
- **Incarnational awareness** — seeing God's presence in creation and people.

D. The Fruit of Prayer: Humility & Hiddenness

- True prayer leads to humility — recognizing our littleness before God's greatness.
- Hidden acts of service mirror Christ and Francis, who lived in quiet love without seeking recognition.

Discussion

Use any of these prompts:

- When has personal prayer deepened your trust in God?
- How does praying together strengthen your fraternity or community?
- What does humility in prayer look like for you?
- Have you ever felt God inviting you into greater simplicity or hidden service?

Love in Action: Humility & Hidden Service

Introduce the monthly practices and invite participants to choose one or more.

Love of Creation: Weekly Practices

✓ **Do one act of kindness anonymously.**

Experience joy in serving without being seen.

✓ **Choose a household chore you normally avoid and do it cheerfully.**

Let service become prayer.

✓ **Practice “Franciscan silence.”**

Once a day, intentionally listen more than you speak during one conversation.

Reflect: Hiddenness & Humility

At week’s end, reflect:

- What act of hidden service did I offer?
- How did it feel to serve without recognition?
- How might the person I helped have experienced this kindness?

Short blessing example:

“Lord, make me content to be small.”

Repeat this prayer daily as a grounding rhythm of humility.

Practical Application

Invite: **One daily prayer practice** (morning offering, examen, silence, Marian prayer).

1. **One communal practice** (prayer with fraternity, joining liturgy, shared intercessions).
2. **One humility practice** from the *Love in Action* section.

Encourage sharing intentions or accountability partners.

Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

“Most High God, You are always near. Teach us to pray with humble hearts, attentive ears, and joyful spirits. Through the example of Our Lady of the Angels and the witness of St. Francis, may our lives become living prayers of love. Amen.”

Notes: