

Four Pillars of the Secular Franciscan Order

Spirituality

Formation

Fraternity

Apostolate

Mnemonic to remember the Four Pillars:

St Francis oF Assisi

Spirituality

Formation

Fraternity

Apostolate

Charism

A **charism** is a special gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says in paragraph 2684:

In the communion of saints, many and varied spiritualities have been developed throughout the history of the churches. The personal charism of some witnesses to God's love for men has been handed on, like "the spirit" of Elijah to Elisha and John the Baptist, so that their followers may have a share in this spirit. A distinct spirituality can also arise at the point of convergence of liturgical and theological currents, bearing witness to the integration of the faith into a particular human environment and its history. The different schools of Christian spirituality share in the living tradition of prayer and are essential guides for the faithful. In their rich diversity they are refractions of the one pure light of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is truly the dwelling of the saints and the saints are for the Spirit a place where he dwells as in his own home since they offer themselves as a dwelling place for God and are called his temple.

The charism of the founder (in our case St. Francis) is a gift particularly granted by God to a believer which leads to the foundation of an Institute or religious movement and which includes a specific way of being through the specific spiritual experiences that God grants to him.

Franciscans receive the particular grace of vocation to follow this life experience in some way, to be associated with the Founder, St Francis.

The charism of the founder is, therefore, "transmitted to his followers. The charism of St Francis has been transmitted to the members of the Franciscan Family, including us, *directly* from Francis. It is a **continuation** in the followers of a founder's charism by the action of the Holy Spirit through **Profession**.

Some aspects of the charism of St Francis:

- a strong and radical son-like experience manifested in joyful, loving, and trustful attitude of readiness to do the will of the heavenly Father.

- a mirror of the God's humility, emptying and total giving of Self, with the intention to enter into a lover/beloved relationship with mankind.
- deep respect for all creatures animate and inanimate, which are, through God's creation, our brothers and sisters.
- in a sense, Francis became Christ-like to a degree no one else has ever reached.

This is the gift. This is the *Charism*.

From the living charism of St Francis we have come to understand certain practices and behaviors, specific ways of being and of relating to God, i.e., a spirituality, that we call Franciscan. This spirituality is characterized especially by:

- a very intense **Eucharistic life** (contemplation of God's *kenosis*, self-giving)
- **poverty** (a consequence of *kenosis*)
- **minority** – humility (a consequence of *kenosis*)
- **simplicity**
- **obedience** (to conform to the eternal project of the Father)
- **chastity** (in conformity with our state in life)
- **fraternity**, also in its universal and cosmic implications, to be lived with special intensity.
- the Franciscan **evangelical radicality**, from gospel to life and from life to gospel.

All of us, as children of Francis are called to participate in his exceptional gift (charism) and to continue his mission.

F.U.N. Manual, "Vocation, Charism, and Mission," pages 6-10 (unnumbered)

Franciscan Spirituality in Seven Steps

1. God is absolute love, being and creativity. Creation is dependent upon God to exist.
2. God has freely chosen incarnation (taking on human form) before the human choice for sin.
3. Christmas is of primary importance to us.
4. Christ is the perfect image of who God is for creation.
5. Every creature is unique, gifted, and living in relationship.
6. Nothing humans have the ability to do has the capacity to make God do something.
7. Mercy, forgiveness, and justification are God's actions.

F.U.N. Manual, "Franciscan Theology, Tradition and Spirituality," pages 16-17 of 30