

WHAT IS THE FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality refers to our way of seeing and experiencing the world

Spirituality connects us with deeper realities: the presence of God in our lives, the values which define us and our connection with others and all of creation.



A Prayerful Spirituality

Francis came to regard his whole life as a prayer. God constantly speaks to us in the events of our lives, whether through a voice piercing the silence of a chapel, a synchronous encounter with a person suffering from leprosy, or the flight of a sparrow above our heads. Each moment can be an epiphany, awakening us to new understandings of ourselves and God's vision for us and the world (Epperly, 2021, p.32 & 58).

A Gospel-centred Spirituality

The foundation of the Franciscan way of life is Jesus Christ and no other. To follow Francis' way is to strive with all our bodies, minds and spirits to go from, 'Gospel to life and life to the Gospel'... (Weigel & Foley, 1989).

It is not surprising that there are so many quotations from the Bible, nearly 400 in all, half of them from the Gospels, in the Rules, Testaments and other writings of both Francis and Clare (Julian, 2001, p.31).



A Contemplative Spirituality

An adaptation of Clare's words, Gaze upon Christ, Consider Christ, Contemplate Christ, can be a Franciscan mantra for those wishing to grow closer to God in contemplative prayer. Neimier (2006), suggests that a singular gift of Francis and Clare to the Church was a new vision of contemplation, a departure from the monastic tradition where monks directed their vision upward... for Franciscans, the focus or gaze is not upward, but rather outward towards ordinary life, particularly focused on the Incarnation, where God chose to descend into our world to become one with us through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (p.114).



A Visionary Spirituality

Francis' visionary spirituality challenges us to embody generous and welcoming theological reflection... Every person culture, and ethnic community is touched by divine wisdom and can be a source of revelation for us.



An Incarnational Spirituality

Touched deeply by the compassionate love of God, Francis became the compassion of God in the world. He moved to the margins of Assisi and stayed with the lepers. There he learned to see God in a new way, in the unlovable, the ugly, and the despised. Francis was also very focused on the incarnation of Jesus. It is this focus that led him to create the living crib in Greccio.



A Creation Spirituality

Francis spent long periods of time in the natural world. The scenes of his life are not the scenes of Francis in a monastery or sitting for very long in a Church. But of outdoor spaces, lonely caves, near trees, mountains, or caves, or the woods. He exchanged the cultivated, civilised ways of his childhood with more native ways and places to find and communicate with God (Sweeney, 2021, p.93).

A Spirituality of Poverty

For Francis and Clare, poverty of spirit meant recognising our absolute dependence on God for life itself and every gift and achievement. The Gospel life challenges us to balance our personal security and comfort with our care of the earth and its peoples (Epperly, 2021, 0.83). Francis... learned to travel light without possessions to embrace the life-giving simplicity that joined him with the common people and enabled him to be spiritually open to every encounter...



A Relational Spirituality

Francis knew that compassion begins not with the will to love but with the recognition that one is loved. It is not an act but an attitude, a way of being in relationship, accepting the other in his or her weakness and responding to the needs of the other with mercy (Delio, 2011, p.63).

“In short, when we speak of a Franciscan spirituality, it is the quest to be Christ-like. The core principles of Francis and Clare’s understanding of the Gospel call to love of God and neighbour, especially the poor and vulnerable, to live in peace and to care for creation still inspire and sustain people today.”

Text reproduced from: *Enflamed with God’s Love – Preserving, Nurturing, Reimagining the Franciscan Charism*, A Mercy Partners publication.



FRANCISCAN FRIARS OFM
Province of the Holy Spirit • Australia & New Zealand
www.franciscans.org.au

