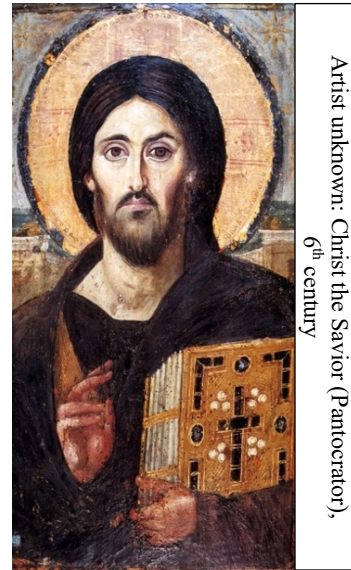


FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

Have on hand: *O.F.S. Rule and General Constitutions*

Our Opening Prayer:

**O God, by whose gift Saint Francis
was conformed to Christ in poverty and humility,
grant that, by walking in Francis' footsteps,
we may follow your Son,
and, through joyful charity,
come to be united with you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.¹**



We are reminded in our *General Constitutions* (Article #9.1): “Rule 5 The spirituality of the Secular Franciscan is a plan of life centered on the person and on the following of Christ, ...” In addition, Article #8.1 states: “Secular Franciscans commit themselves by their profession to live the Gospel according to Franciscan spirituality in their secular condition.”

Referencing the spirituality of St. Francis, Gratien Badin, O.F.M. Cap. stated: “In brief, the ideal of the spiritual life peculiar to St. Francis consisted in a striving to imitate Christ perfectly, the center of all creation; in an imitation of thought, sentiments, and actions carried, as completely as possible, to the point of identification. This ideal, which could be condensed into the most abject poverty and an all-embracing charity, was born of a personal and passionate love for Christ crucified. This love took its rise in the habitual contemplation of the mystery of the Cross.”²

St. Francis’ *Admonition V* begins: “Consider, O human being, in what great excellence the Lord God has placed you, for He created and formed you to the image of His beloved Son according to the body and to His likeness according to the Spirit.”³

St. John’s Gospel (1:1,3,14,16) expresses the setting for St. Francis’ spirituality. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. ... And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, ... From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, ...” (See also Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:20).

Participants take turns reading from the *General Constitutions*, Articles #1, #3, #8, #9, and #10.
If there is time, read from the *Rule*, Articles #1 – #8.

William Short, O.F.M. writes: “Spirituality of Christ as Center – Wherever one turns in Franciscan spirituality, one finds Christ. He functions as the center of devotion, of ministry, of life together, of authority, of charity. It is a truism to say that such a spirituality is Christocentric. The word, so technical in appearance, in fact breathes and moves beneath every authentically Franciscan text and life.

“Christ becomes the answer to the philosophical question, ‘Why is there something and not nothing?’ The answer is, ‘Because of Christ.’ From the atom to the universe, and including every level and phase of life and love within that compass, the radiating life and presence of Christ hold all things together as he vivifies and completes them.

“While Christ must always be central to the faith of any Christian, there is a way in which we can speak of a special insistence on that centrality in the Franciscan tradition. We can speak of a ‘radical Christocentrism’ which willingly sees Christ within human psychology, social life, mathematics and physics, music and drama. Wherever something or someone is, there is Christ. He is the inescapable, though often unrecognized, meaning behind all things.”⁴

And further, Short offers this insight: “Francis’ deep appreciation of the centrality of Christ within the work of creation found its most eloquent theological expression in the works of Bonaventure. Zachary Hayes has explained that, in the growth of Bonaventure’s theology, Christ becomes more and more the central concern. In Hayes’ words, ‘The core of the Christological mystery is the fact that in Jesus the center of all reality has become incarnate and has been made historically visible.’”⁵

Short clarifies that: “The doctrine of Christ as center can already be found in Francis’ own writings and has been developed by outstanding theologians, especially by Alexander of Hales and his student, Bonaventure. Later it takes on even greater importance in the teaching of John Duns Scotus.”⁶



Margaritone d'Arezzo:
St. Francis,
ca. 1240-1245

This is the great vision and spirit behind being an O.F.S. member. Let us not go off on tangents or sidestep the spirit that guides us all. Spiritual reading, as it is called, especially in the Franciscan sources, is key to help us develop such a rich life.

- Q1. How have I developed and nurtured my Franciscan Spirituality?
- Q2. What have I been doing recently to develop my Franciscan Spirituality?
How do I infuse my daily routine with that spirit?
- Q3. How do I make “Gaining inspiration from the example and the writings of Francis” (*General Constitutions, Article #12.1*) a priority?
- Q4. In what ways do I adopt St. Francis’ approach to God, to my neighbor, to myself, to the Church, and to all creation as he did? [See the topics: St. Francis’ Three Loves – the Crib – the Cross – the Eucharist.]
- Q5. How can I modify my personal schedule so that I read at least one Franciscan book yearly?

Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap. points out: “In the Church there are nine ‘third orders’ recognized as such: Benedictine, Franciscan, Norbertine, Dominican, Carmelite, Augustinian, Francesco de Paolo, Servite and Trinitarian. Our Franciscan Third Order is officially called the Secular Franciscan Order.”⁷ [Except for its vowed religious expression, the Third Order Regular.]

Here are some further references for reading: Bach, *Called to Rebuild the Church*; Badin, *I Know Christ*; Hayes, *The Hidden Center*; Rotzetter, et. al., *Gospel Living*; and Short, *The Franciscans*.

¹ *Roman Missal*, Saint Francis of Assisi, October 4

² *I Know Christ: The Personality and Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi*, G. Badin, 1988, p. 58

³ FA:ED, *The Undated Writings, The Admonitions*, Vol. I, p. 131: V: Let No One Be Proud, but Boast in the Cross of the Lord

⁴ *The Franciscans*, W. J. Short, 2012, pp. 128-129

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 131

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 130

⁷ *Called to Rebuild the Church*, L. Bach, 1997, p. 165