



HOLY NAME OF JESUS



JANUARY 2023

ST. CLARE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY, CROWLEY, TEXAS

(STCLAREOFS.COM)

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

~ Carmine Esposito, OFS

Chapter 2 THE WAY OF LIFE Article 4

“The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.”



Brothers and Sisters, as we begin the new year, let us reflect upon all the blessings we had in 2022.

Surely there were also challenges, disappointments, and losses throughout the year, but as we attempt to do on a daily basis through the examen, we acknowledge where we fell short as well as how thankful we are for the many blessings we have received. 2022 is now behind us and we begin anew with a clean slate for 2023. We can begin by continuing to follow Christ as St. Francis did, and make Jesus the center of our lives

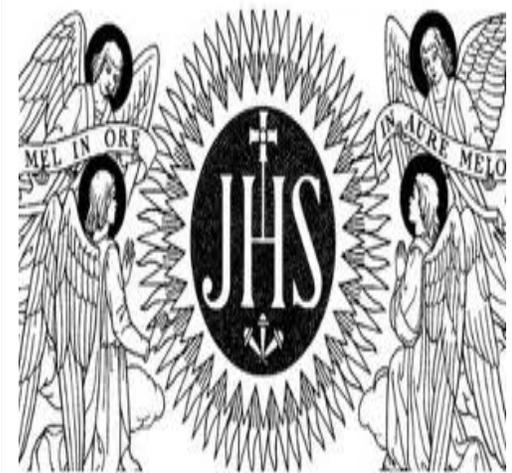
Now is a good time to go back to the “Rule” and to be reminded of what it means to live as a Secular Franciscan. I encourage you to take some time and re-read the entire rule as we begin the new year.

Happy New Year!
Pax et Bonum!
Carmine

Blessed be God.

Blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.



Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.



Letter to the Fraternity January 2023

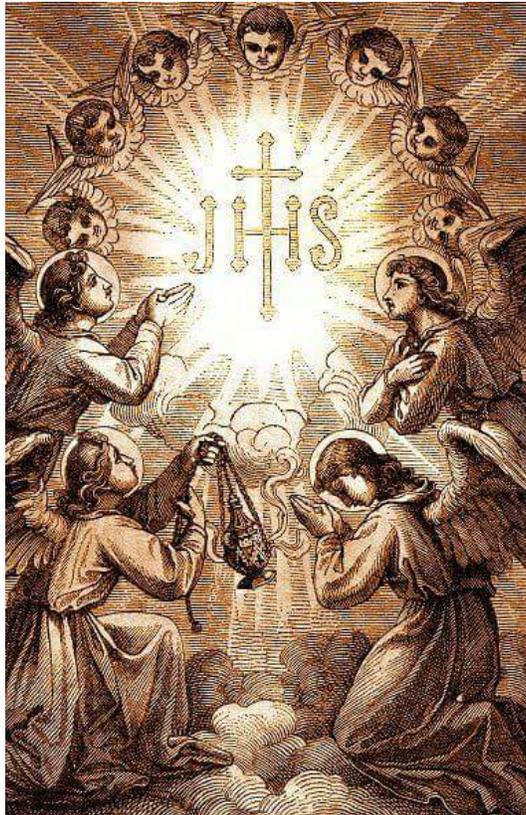
What is in a Name?

The month of January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus, commemorated on January 3. What is in a name? It indicates sacred value of who I am. In knowing your name and using your name, I honor your person. Our names are an incredibly important part of our identity. They carry deep personal, cultural, familial, and historical connections. They also give us a sense of who we are, the communities in which we belong, and our place in the world. Knowing how to call an individual can start a relationship than enables a mutual understanding and a caring for one another.

Recall the encounter of the burning bush (Exodus 3:14) where Yahweh explains to Moses, "I am who I am", adding, "Say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you. his is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

What do you think God was intending to say to the people? I believe that He was establishing His relationship with the people. "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me." All of this must be taken into our understanding to realize there is One God, Who will expect our acceptance of Who He is: Creator, all powerful, all knowing, all present and to trust in our hearts His expectations, His protection and love of us including His wrath for denying this truth.

This sets the stage for the progression from understanding there is One God to the eternal plan of salvation, the coming of Christ, and begs our recognition of the coming of the Messiah. For



centuries, Christians have invoked the Holy Name, and have believed that there is intrinsic power in the name of Jesus. In Luke 1:31, the angel Gabriel tells Mary "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus." In Matthew 1:21 during Joseph's dream, the angel instructs Joseph: "you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins". We should note that cause and effect is described in this verse where "saves his people" appears with "sins". The significance is underscored by the fact that Matthew pays more attention to the name of the child and its theological implications than the actual birth event itself.

Matthew 1:21 provides the beginnings of the Christology of the name Jesus. At once it achieves the two goals of affirming Jesus as the Saviour and emphasizing that the name was not selected at random but based on a Heavenly command.

As we adore the name of Jesus, let us pray:

O Lord Jesus Christ, you have said: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you;" grant we beseech you to us your supplicants, the gift of your most Divine love, that we may love you with our whole heart, in all our words and works, and never ceasing from praising you. O Lord, give us a perpetual fear as well as love of your holy Name, for you never cease to govern those you founded upon the strength of your love, who live and reign world without end. Amen.

Peace and All Good Brothers and Sisters,
Mary, our Mother, Pray for us; St Francis of
Assisi, Pray for us!
Carol Lieser ofs



FOCUS - Franciscan Living - Why After You?

by Francine Gikow, OFS

(This article originally appeared in the TAU-USA Summer Issue 2022 #106)

“Brother Maseo, wanting to test how humble he [Francis] was, went up to him and, as if joking, said, ‘Why after you, why after you, why after you?’ Maseo goes on to say in clarification: ‘I’m saying why does the whole world come after you, and everyone seems to desire to see you and hear you? You aren’t a handsome man in body, you aren’t someone of great learning, you’re not noble; so why does the whole world come after you?’”[1]

Francis’ response to Maseo may not seem to shed much light on this question, however. In fact, Francis states that God has chosen him because of his vileness and insufficiency. Francis expands this thought when he continues, saying: “...so that it may be known that every virtue and every good is from Him, and not from the creature, and no person may boast in his sight. But whoever boasts must boast in the Lord to whom is every honor and glory forever.”

God gave Francis great gifts. He gave Francis, an ordinary person born in the Middle Ages, great gifts of preaching, humility, and courage, not only because Francis made use of them, but also because Francis became a conduit for God’s love for us: The Lord and Creator shone through his creation of Francis. Truly, Francis became an “instrument” for God to work through so He could reach out and touch others through the human face of Francis.

God can work through us as well when he gives us “gifts” to use so that we can attract others to Christ. Thaddée Matura, OFM, warns us, however, “What one must beware of above all is the temptation to appropriate for oneself the good that belongs to God... one must acknowledge the origin of these gifts, rejoice over them, promote them; but once this is done, one must ‘render’ them, restore them to the One to whom they belong in an act of praise and thanksgiving.” [2]

Perhaps one of us has been given the grace to actually “see” God working through us, but detachment from personal ownership of our gifts is needed. We must be fully aware that we have been given everything by our loving God. We cannot appropriate that which is God’s, and we “own” nothing apart from Him.

We can still rejoice over these gifts we have used for God’s benefit, mindful that their Source is our loving God and not ourselves. These gifts are reminders of the intimate care and love of the Father who gives us all good things. He loves us!

Franciscan Connections

NATIONAL FRATERNITY SFO
<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/>

LOS TRES CAMPAÑEROS - REGIONAL
<http://lostrescompaneros.org/>

INTERNATIONAL FRATERNITY
<http://www.ciofs.info/>

FRANCISCAN RULE
<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/the-rule-of-the-secular-franciscan-order/>

KEY DOCUMENTS OF THE ORDER & NATIONAL GUIDELINES
<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/guidelines-forms-other-resources/>

TAU – USA NEWSLETTER
<https://secularfranciscansusa.org/tau-usa-newsletter/>

RITUAL OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
http://secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/Ritual_of_the_Secular_Franciscan_Order.pdf

COMMISSION ON FRANCISCAN INTELLECTUAL-SPIRITUAL TRADITION
<https://www.franciscantradition.org/>

THE FRANCISCAN ARCHIVE
<https://franciscan-archive.org/index2.html>

FRANCIS & CLARE: THE EARLY DOCUMENTS
<https://www.franciscantradition.org/early-sources>

Franciscan Focus



We should also promote and use the gifts God has given and not “hide them under a bushel basket,” because it is by these gifts that people can come to know Christ through us. Like Francis, we can become a conduit to God, since these gifts are really God’s gifts, not our own. We can become the “face” of God to others and evangelize by our actions.

Acknowledging the true Source of any of the gifts we “appear” to own, we should return all praise and thanksgiving to the One who is GIFT Himself and the Source of any gift He has given us to use. Instead of accepting accolades for ourselves, we refer to the true Giver of Gifts in rejoicing and praise! Franciscan joy!

People were attracted to Francis because they were attracted to God’s gifts that they saw in Francis. Francis was well aware that he was not the owner of the gifts, but “He [God] has chosen me to confound the nobility and the greatness and the strength and beauty and wisdom of the world...”[3] Do likewise with joy!

[1] LFI:10 in FA:ED II, p. 583 [2] Thaddée Matura, OFM. *Francis of Assisi: Writer and Spiritual Master*. transl. Paul Lachance, OFM. (Cincinnati OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 49 [3] LFI:10 in FA:ED II, 0.583.

EXCERPT: <https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/2022/10/31/franciscan-living-why-after-you/>

As we start this new year, we find ourselves determining *anew* what God has planned for us this year.

As Carmine mentioned in his message, and as I repeated above that we start this year “*anew*” or “*fresh*” and as he mentioned “*We can begin by continuing to follow Christ as St. Francis did and make Jesus the center of our lives*”.

As Franciscans, we are graced to be part of an order that been around 800 years and to its longevity – it’s ups and downs – the good times – the bad times – the tumultuous times – the order has continued.

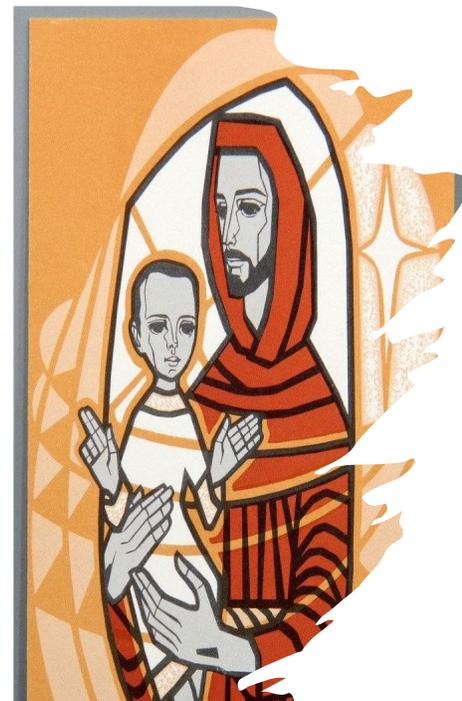
So, as we start this year – let us trust or learn to trust – that God will provide and to learn to recognize and acknowledge the gifts God has given us through the Holy Spirit. For everything we do is in one way or another – a gift from God.

May our Lord bless each of you and as Francis said so well in his blessing (as shown in the right column).

May the Lord give you, His peace.

Also, to start off with the new year, we will be adding an article each month from the Custodians of the Tradition.

- May the Lord bless you.
- May the Lord keep you.
- May He show His face to you and have mercy.
- May He turn to you His countenance and give you peace.
- May almighty God bless you
- Amen





MONTH OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

The month of January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus. "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth" (Phil 2:10). Christ's name is chosen in heaven, and the Angel Gabriel announces it when he informs the Blessed Virgin of the incarnation: "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus". It is a name that has marvelous implications, for it means "savior." The very name bespeaks the magnitude of His mission, His infinite love, a love that will cause Him to offer Himself up for us.

The name of Jesus is the sweetest of all names, and He who bears it is most worthy of all love. He who calls Jesus his friend can be assured that this friend is the most devoted and unselfish of all friends.

Jesus is our all. In His name we may pray to the Father with assurance of being heard. In His name the Church administers all her sacraments. In His name she offers all her prayers and blesses homes, the fields, and the sick. In the name of Jesus she casts out evil spirits, and at the hour of our death bids us, "Go forth, Christian

soul." She assures us that whoever shall call upon this name will be saved. When our soul has departed this life to seek its eternal home, the Church asks in the name of Jesus, "Eternal rest give unto him, O Lord."

— Benedict Baur, O.S.B.



HISTORY OF THE FEAST

This feast originated towards the end of the fifteenth century and was instituted by the private authority of some bishops in Germany, Scotland, England, Spain, and Belgium. The Office and the Mass composed by Bernardine dei Busti (d. 1500) were approved by Sixtus IV. The feast was officially granted to the Franciscans 25 February, 1530, and spread over a great part of the Church.

The Office used at present is nearly identical with the Office of Bernardine dei Busti. The hymns "Jesu dulcis memoria", "Jesu Rex admirabilis", "Jesu decus angelicum", usually ascribed to St. Bernard, are fragments of a very extensive "jubilus" or "cursus de aeterna sapientia" of some unknown author in the thirteenth century. For the beautiful sequence "Dulcis Jesus Nazarenus" (Morel, "Hymnen des Mittelalters", 67) of Bernardine dei Busti the Franciscans substituted a prose sequence of modern origin: "Lauda Sion Salvatoris".

— Excepted from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*

EXCERPTS FROM

https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/overviews/months/01_1.cfm



5 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS INSPIRED BY ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Creating and setting goals for yourself, whether you achieve them or not, is part of personal growth. As the saying goes, 'if you aim at nothing, you hit nothing.' This same truth can be applied to setting New Year's resolutions and keeping them. If you don't create any, your chances of keeping them are nonexistent. Setting the goal is the first step to becoming a more disciplined, steadfast individual.

Creating goals requires honesty, humility and a true willingness to change for the better. We should never try to be someone we are not. Rather, we should take the qualities and traits from someone or something we admire and use that as a baseline for our personal growth.

Catholic saints are deeply admired and respected for their calling to make the world a better place. St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and environment, cared for the poor and sick, he preached sermons to animals and honored all creatures as brothers and sisters under God. St. Francis felt compassion for everyone, from the diseased to birds in the sky. He realized that Christ in heaven loves everything He has made, and it only makes sense that we should too. If we have no compassion, it is a sign that we do not truly possess the love of Christ.

This year, challenge yourself to create resolutions for all facets of life, including your spiritual life. Spiritual goals can improve your faith and deepen your relationship with Christ. Here are five New Year's Resolutions inspired by St. Francis of Assisi:

1. LIVE YOUR FULL PURPOSE IN LIFE WITH PASSION

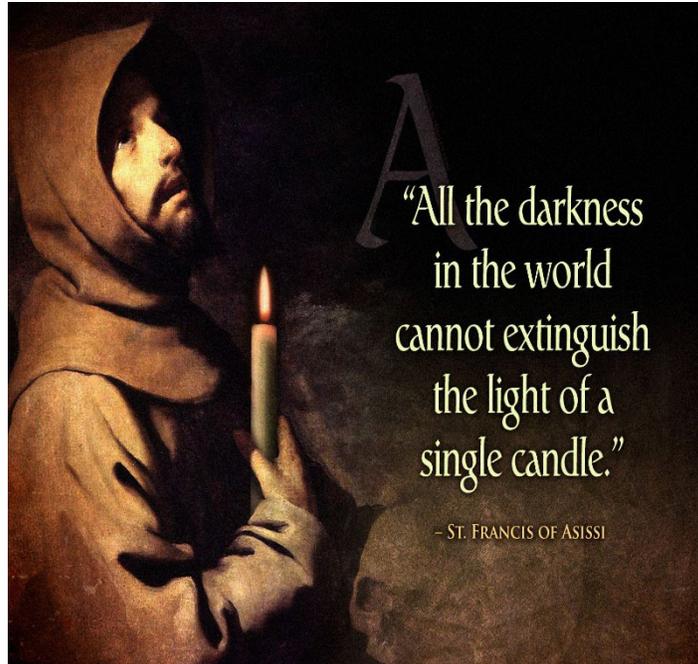
"We should seek not so much to pray, but to become a prayer."

If we choose to pray and live out our prayers, being mindful of those around us and how we interact, the world around us will be changed. May we not act with judgment or condemnation, but with love, joy and gratitude in all circumstances.

2. START BY DOING WHAT IS NECESSARY

"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible." Gain momentum for yourself by acting. Start at the beginning and manage each step along the way to

gain traction. The more forward movement you achieve, the things you once found so difficult start becoming easier and can be found within your reach.



3. BE A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

"All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle."

In times of darkness, be the hope and encouragement to those in need. Let your kindness and compassion be a light to others. Look for new ways to give of yourself to foster light, beauty, peace and goodness.

4. ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST

"The deeds you do may be the only sermon some people will hear today."

Doing our best simply means living each moment to the fullest. It's not about success or failure, it's just about doing the best we can in every situation. See new opportunities in life as an adventure and realize that you can do anything you put your heart and mind to. Your actions may leave a positive lasting impression on someone today.

5. LOVE IS ALWAYS THE ANSWER

"Blessed is the servant who loves his brother as much when he is sick and useless as when he is well and can be of service to him. And blessed is he who loves his brother as well when he is far off as when he is by his side, and who would say nothing behind his back he might not, in love, say before his face."

While loving one another is not always easy or our first response, let this concept be a challenge for you to focus on being more attuned to others. Recognize the value of people and strive to respond with love even in the face of hurt. Redefine your intent to love one another as showing kindness, compassion, healing and forgiveness. If everyone does their part to love one another, this world will become a better place.

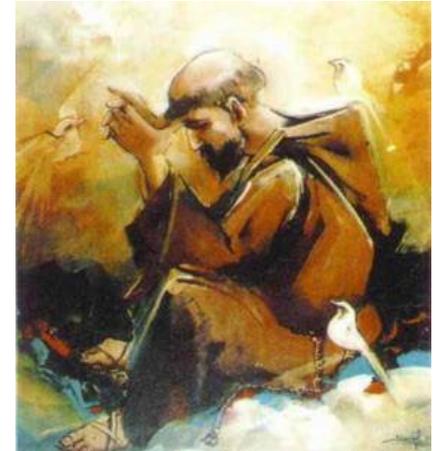
EXCERPT: <https://ffhl.org/5-new-years-resolutions-inspired-by-st-francis-of-assisi/>

Prayers & Praises



- **For prayers for healing, recovery and other graces needed in their lives:**

Carol Lieser, Terry Adams, Gail McAlister, Lucy Esposito, Ray Cook & Gloria, Roxanne Paul, Posy McMillan, OMM Parish, Noah Christian Lara, Stan Wasilewski, Karen Frank, Madeline Cardenas, Stan Waslieski, David Klein, Celia & Bob Wittman, Matt Cate, Judy Dye, Naomi Tighe, Jillian & Harper, Veronica Guerra, Ninfa Guerra & her 2 sons, Roxie Paul, Jack Yarbrough, Elaine Parsons, Perfecto Solis, Dayle Brewer, Tina Samples & family, Vicky Stafford, Jean Kelsey, Rena Roberts, Vickie Stanford, Charlie and Marilyn Chase, Randy and Jan Redus, Nikale & Corinne (both due in 2023), Sr Mary Paul, Candy Dench, Joe's neighbors & their 2 sons, Ana Chico, Nikola Bordovsky & baby, Mary Kay (102) and family and care taker, our priests, deacons & seminarians, all those not mentioned here and St. Clare fraternity family.



- **For healing from cancer:** Br. Ed Arambasich, OFM, Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, Stephen Ward, Monica M., Johnny Allen, Debbie Biles, Angie Colvin, Mary Frances, and all those not mentioned needing prayers.

- **For repose of souls of:** Dolores Burner, James David Barry, Mike Laird, Ryan Rudolph, Nelda Matthews, Ramsie Martin, OFS, Mary (Betty) Haake (mother of Patty Lovell), Leta Sykes, Joseph Ernst (father of our National Minister Jan Parker OFS), Rose Mildred Harvey, Tony Vasquez, David Cate, John Paul Adams, Vince Staszak, OFS, Robert Solomon, Randy Miller, Sarah Solis, Tim Henson, Charles Vasquez, Jerry Cahan, Gary Barksdale, Joe Landis, our deceased Franciscan brothers and sisters, and those not mentioned on our list but in our hearts and for their families.

- For strength to those in our world, especially in the Ukraine undergoing war, crisis or persecution – to maintain through the battle.
- Prayers for the end of abortion respecting all life from conception to natural death in all our states.
- For our sisters and brothers in other fraternities, especially those struggling with life.
- For all families to return to church and hear God's call and have a fuller relationship with God; and for the intentions of all the present and former fraternity members and their families not mentioned.
- For all those Franciscans, fraternity members, friends and family that we have lost over the last year.
- For our veterans – both alive and past.
- Praise for the recognition of life as we have preached and prayers for protection to those who would be harmed over this. Saint Michael and ye heavenly host – guard them and protect them in Jesus' name we ask and pray.
- Praises to the Holy Trinity – Father – Son & Holy Spirit – for the gift of life and the daily graces we always receive.

THE HOLY FATHER'S INTENTIONS FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 2023

For educators:

We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.

Franciscan Calendar



Franciscan Calendar – January

01. Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

02. Saint Basil the Great

Granbury Formation Class

03. Most Holy Name of Jesus

04. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

05. Saints John Neuman and
Charles of Mt Argus

06. Saint André Bessette

07. Saint Raymond of Peñafort

08. Saint Angela of Foligno

Epiphany of the Lord

Council Meeting – SFV TV Room @ 12:30 pm

Fraternity Meeting – SFV Chapel @ 2 pm

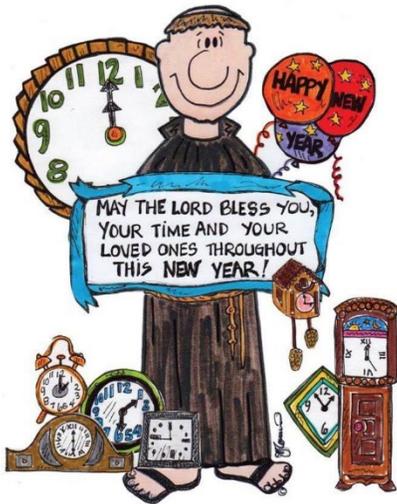
Council Elections

09. Saint Adrian of Canterbury

Baptism of the Lord

10. Saint Gregory of Nyssa

11. Blessed William Carter



12. Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys

13. Saint Hilary of Poitiers

14. Saint Gregory Nazianzen

15. Saint Paul the Hermit

16. Saint Berard & Companions

17. Saint Anthony of Egypt

18. Saint Charles of Sezze

19. Saint Fabian

20. Saint Sebastian

21. Saint Agnes

22. Saint Vincent of Zaragossa

23. Saint Marianne Cope

Granbury Cell Meeting

24. Saint Francis de Sales

25. Conversion of Saint Paul

26. Saints Timothy & Titus

27. Saint Angela Merici

28. Saint Thomas Aquinas

29. Servant of God Brother Juniper

30. Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska

31. Saint John Bosco

BIRTHDAYS:
Bob Evart - Jan. 5

PROFESSIONS:
Jan 11, 2015
Bob Frank
Rex Watkins

Celebrating 15 years Profession
Victoria Stafford - Jan 13, 2008

Celebrating 20 years
of Profession
Jan 12, 2003

Carol Lieser
Deborah Pettie

FORMATION

Granbury's next
formation class will be
Tuesday January 02
Chapter 8 of the Journey.



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Crowley, TX 76036
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st.clare.ofs@gmail.com

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Custodians of the Tradition

*Reclaiming the Franciscan
Intellectual Tradition*



Those like ourselves who are immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis [and Clare] might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Zachary Hayes OFM
Bonaventure Fest, 2003, Aston, PA



Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity:

**The Roots of Franciscan Christocentrism
and Its Implications for Today**

By Zachary Hayes OFM

Overview of St. Francis' Spiritual Vision

There are three crucial insights to be discovered in the spirituality of St. Francis, and these were developed into distinctive theological perspectives by the authors of the Franciscan Order:

- Francis' focus on the figure of Christ;
- Francis' sense of God as a loving Father;
- Francis' sense of creation as a mirror and image of God.

Regardless of the chronological sequence of events in the life of Francis, there is a sort of logic that connects these perspectives. Although Francis was not a professional academic theologian, his spirituality evidenced in these events was such that it led with an inner logic to a style of Christology that became distinctive of the Franciscan tradition. This Christology, in turn, is cast against the background of a distinctive style of Trinitarian theology. And all of this finds expression in a rich theological understanding of creation.

The Humanity of Christ

During his life's journey, the focus of Francis' experience is on the humanity of Christ: from the scene before the crucified Christ in the Church of San Damiano all the way through to his mystical experience on La Verna. These experiences of Incarnation — of cross and crib and Eucharist — both inspire and impel Francis to live his life in imitation of this Christ: the poor and suffering one who, in his human condition, could be recognized as neighbor and brother.

God as a Loving, Generous Father

In the logic that connects these elements, if Christ is seen as brother, then it follows that God, who is Father of the eternal Son, may be seen in an analogous sense as Francis' Father as well. In the early days of his conversion, when Francis renounces his earthly father and claims God as his Father, he seems to express this new-found sense of filial relation to God. The awareness that he is son of this heavenly Father inspires and impels Francis to live in imitation of his brother, Jesus Christ — the one who is pre-eminently Son.

Familial Understanding of the World of Creation

As this logical development proceeds, if it is true that Francis is son to a loving, heavenly Father, then this is equally true of all other people and things: all are related to and come from the same loving God. All should be seen, then, in terms of this familial relationship. The seeds of this sense of family, planted early on in the conversion process of Francis, became more intense as his life progressed. Near the end of his life, it culminated in the most sublime expression of the relationship that ought to exist between humanity and all other creatures: the Canticle of the Creatures. This familial understanding inspires and impels Francis to respect and reverence with a grateful heart all that is created as his sister and his brother.

Development of This Vision in the Doctors of the Order: St. Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus

Although the crucified Christ played a foundational role throughout the life of Francis, the Franciscan theological tradition did not limit the discussion of the meaning of Christ to the reality of the cross. Rather, its authors moved from the story of Jesus and the cross/resurrection to the widest possible horizon of this story's impact and developed what today is called cosmic Christology. In its simplest terms, cosmic Christology captures the Franciscan conviction that a world without Christ is an incomplete world because the values involved in the life of Christ provide — for those who believe — a life-giving, fulfilling way of relating to all of reality.

Scriptural and Traditional Roots for Cosmic Christology

From its inception, the Christian experience intuited that the significance of the person of Jesus was far more than the meaning restricted only to one human being's life. From a post-resurrection perspective, the earliest disciples began to view Jesus' life against a broader landscape, that is, as the paradigm for all authentic human living.

Beyond this perception, the writings of John and Paul, as well as the Letter to the Hebrews, indicate that the meaning of Jesus is embedded even from the very beginning as creation emerges from the mind and will of God. When John speaks of the "Word" in his Gospel Prologue, it is a way of naming a mystery which contains a divine clue as to the structure and meaning of the universe itself. This clue reveals that the mystery of creation and the mystery of incarnation are intrinsically connected. What happens in and through Jesus comes to be seen as the representative piece of a humanity and of the entire cosmic reality that has come home to God. In the incarnation, the divine aim for creation has been realized.

Especially among Western presentations of Christology, the Franciscan tradition has remained uniquely faithful to this understanding. What follows from this is the conviction that Jesus is about more than helping us to get rid of sin. While redemption is about the overcoming of sin, salvation is about more than this. It is about the completion of what God initiates in creating. So, the issue of overcoming sin is a matter of overcoming all obstacles that stand in the way of accomplishing God's creative aim: the fullest possible sharing of life and love between God and creation. Both of these are what we discover in the mystery of Christ.

Christ as the Point of Departure

Primarily, Francis' experience of Christ serves to reveal to him a God who is Father. This role of Christ as revealer of God is developed extensively by Bonaventure. According to Bonaventure, in our meeting with one who is believed to be Son, we discover the meaning of God in a distinctively Christian sense. The function

Principal Themes

Four interrelated ways of viewing reality derive from this theological understanding:

1. **Christ as the point of departure;**
2. **God as triune love is Creator;**
3. **World as a gift of a loving Creator;**
4. **Humans as sisters and brothers in a cosmic family.**



of Christ, then, is to stand at the center of all reality and reveal its meaning even from the very beginning of the divine plan.

Using a spatial metaphor, Bonaventure argues that because this Son who is "Word" dwells at the very center of the Godhead, the same Word is the invisible principle of unity and meaning through which God reaches out to create the world. But this same Word becomes the visible center of the cosmos and its history in the form of the incarnate Word. Thus it is the shape of Jesus' history and ministry that embodies the divine clue as to the structure of all reality. It is essential, then, for us to pattern our own lives on the values of Jesus for, in this way, we are centered in the mystery of the Word that lies at the heart of the Trinity.

God as Triune Love Is Creator

The primal insight of Francis into the mystery of God was his experience of God as a loving Creator. For Franciscan theologians, then, reflection on the mystery of the Trinity would become a matter of seeking deeper insight into the mystery of divine love. For Bonaventure, the creative and sustaining principle of all created reality is a mystery of orderly love, not of arbitrariness or domination or control.

Such an understanding views power as the ability to call forth through love the good in the other. If this is so, we are invited to shape our relationships with all of created reality in a familial way, grounded as we are together in the mystery of God's creative love. For Scotus, however, such familial relationships always reverence and respect the inviolable uniqueness of each individual creature coming as gift from the hand of this loving Creator, a metaphysical notion which he identifies using the Latin term *haecceitas*.

World as a Gift of a Loving Creator

Francis' vision reached from the loving Creator to the richness and beauty of the gift which pours forth in the work of creation. The Franciscan understanding of the meaning of poverty is rooted here. For Bonaventure, in fact, the meaning of poverty lies basically in recognizing that all things in the created universe, myself included, come as a pure gift from the loving, creative power of God. Our first response to such giftedness is awe and gratitude, not a search for possession and control. And our ongoing challenge is to discover how one most appropriately receives and lives with and in such giftedness.

Because for both Bonaventure and Scotus God is the mystery of a self-diffusive kind of overflowing love that is beyond measure, it is not surprising to them that there should be such a rich variety of created "words" through which the eternal mystery of Love finds expression in creation. By analogy, then, creation is like the Creator in terms of divine simplicity and boundless fertility. Although the elements of the created order are few and simple, they come together to produce a staggering richness of both non-living and living forms.

According to Bonaventure, the deepest truth about the created world is that it has within itself the potential to become, through God's grace, something of what has already come to be in the mystery of Christ: like Christ, creation can receive and respond to the self-communication of the mystery of divine love. Moreover, what has happened between God and the world in Christ points to the future of the cosmos, a future that involves the radical transformation of created reality through the unitive power of God's creative love.

Humans as Sisters and Brothers in a Cosmic Family

Such an understanding of the common destiny shared by all that is created grounds Francis' sense of the familial relations that should exist between all creatures since they come from a common Creator. Because all share sisterhood and brotherhood in Christ, we relate to one another shaped by his values. If we live from this Christ-centered approach, Bonaventure assures us of a life that will be ultimately fulfilling because it opens us in a most radical sense to the mystery of the divine.

Such a radical response empowers us to embrace the world in its truest reality, discovering in Christ the bond that unites the mystery of our own origin and end. This is the core of our spiritual journey in and with the world into the mystery of God. Because Christ embodies the whole of creation in his individual human nature, all of the material universe is transformed in the living presence of God. It is significant to realize that, in this vision, the world will not be destroyed but will be brought to the conclusion which God intends for it from the beginning. And that beginning is anticipated in the mystery of the incarnate Word and the glorified Christ.

The Absolute Primacy of Christ: An Explanation of This Doctrine

According to Scotus' doctrine of the absolute primacy of Christ, God creates so that Christ may come into existence. So that Christ may exist, there must be a human race. But a human race needs a place in which to live and this place is the created cosmos. So it is that, for both Bonaventure and Scotus, though for each in a distinctive way, a cosmos without Christ is like an arch without its keystone: its simply does not hold together. But with Christ, all comes together in unity and coherence and is finally brought to its destiny in God.

This understanding does not negate the cross. Rather, it insists that the tragic outcome of the history of Jesus was not the motive for the incarnation. If one can speak at all of a motive for incarnation, it must lie in the pure and uncoerced love of God and not in anything outside of God. This conviction makes it clear that, even if

Adam had not sinned, Christ would have come, possibly in the mode of glory.

However, given the reality of sin, the incarnation serves not only its primary function as the completion of creation, but a secondary function necessitated by the need to overcome any obstacles on the way to that completion. This incarnation in suffering, which culminates on the cross, is redemptive in a way that brings God's creative action in the world to completion and is, therefore, salvific in the most comprehensive sense of that term.

Implications of This Christology

From this style of Christology, we draw out five major implications:

- The understanding of human identity;
- The nature of our world;
- The message of the kingdom of God;
- The theory of redemptive completion;
- The approach to interreligious dialogue.

The Understanding of Human Identity

We are challenged by this Christology to become our own unique expression of the image of Christ in our world by appropriating the values of Christ in the depths of our own life and by allowing these values to shape our self-understanding as well as our relationships with others. Because the mystery of the incarnate Word is so rich, the varieties of gifts with which the Spirit endows individuals become appropriate forms of expressing the wealth of the Christ-mystery. We are not to become carbon-copies of the historical Jesus; rather, we are to embody something of the Word in the "word" of ourselves in a distinctive and personal way.

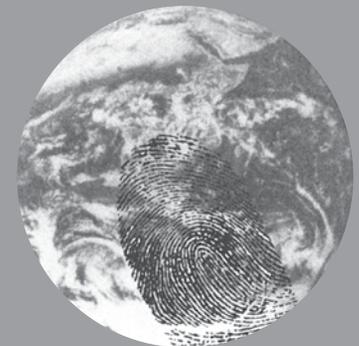
The Nature of Our World

We are challenged by this vision to see the cosmos as the body of the eternal Word. If the Word is the internal self-expression of God, then the cosmos is what comes into being when the divine Word is expressed in something that is external to God. The cosmos, then, is to be read as the primal book of divine self-revelation. And the meaning of the cosmos is concentrated in humanity and radicalized in the person of Jesus Christ.



This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched — We speak of the word of life. This life became visible, we have seen and bear witness to it. And we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present to the Father and became visible to us. What we have seen and heard, we proclaim in turn to you, so that you may share life with us. This kinship of ours is with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:1–3



Such an understanding dispels any sense of cosmic terror because the whole universe created in Christ is in the process of coming home to God. The gifts of the earth, then, are not ours to exploit or to use simply for our own pragmatic ends. Rather, they are to be revered by human beings whose responsibility it is to return them to God as their final destiny.

The Message of the Kingdom

We are challenged by the doctrine of the primacy of Christ to become involved in overcoming the obstacles to the coming of the kingdom by faithfully communicating a message about the eternal significance of creation and of human efforts to create a better world. In light of this truth, we are committed to loving our world and calling to expression its inherent goodness.

The Theory of Redemptive Completion

We are challenged by this understanding to integrate a creational theology and a redemptive theology. Completion refers to the process of bringing creation to its God-intended end which is anticipated in the destiny of Christ. Redemption refers to the necessary process of dealing with all the obstacles that stand in the way of that completion. Such a perspective creates a larger framework for spirituality and theology more resonant with contemporary cultural images.

The Approach to Interreligious Dialogue

Finally, we are challenged by the universalist implications of this Christological

vision to enter into conversation with other religious traditions with a strong sense of Christian identity but without any self-righteous sense of an absolute possession of Absolute Truth. Each tradition may reveal something of significance. Pluralism and conversation do not have to mean total relativism. Such a genuine openness to the truth of the other is critical for those serving in the ministry of evangelization.

Conclusion

The insights foundational to Franciscan spirituality and theology need to be retrieved and brought into conversation with the questions and needs of contemporary people and the problems of a greatly troubled world. This treasure that is our tradition has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

Christ, Word of God and Exemplar of Humanity

Zachary Hayes OFM

"A magisterial synthesis of the Franciscan worldview" — Michael Blastic OFM

Given at Anaheim CA, 1995 and Neumann University, Aston, PA 2003 • Synthesis by Clare D'Auria OSF

Zachary Hayes OFM, Friar of O.F.M. Province of Sacred Heart, St. Louis, MO and professor of historical and systematic theology, was a vital force in the mission of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, IL since its founding in 1968. An internationally acclaimed Bonaventurian scholar, Zachary has a special interest in the critical interaction between science and theology. Publishing over 18 books, Zachary is tireless in elaborating the uniqueness of the Franciscan approach to education.

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