

Go,  
Rebuild  
My Church!

**Comprehensive  
Course on the  
Franciscan  
Mission  
Charism**

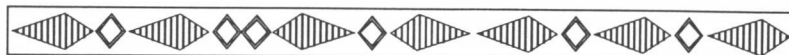


Initial  
and Ongoing  
Formation

Lesson Unit 4

The documents of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* have deeply affected the understanding of mission. Constant efforts are being made to clarify its purpose, and objectives, and to determine the most appropriate methods to carry it out. *Go, Rebuild My Church: A Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism*, provides a particular context to stimulate dialogue about the many dimensions of mission and the inevitable recognition of the equality, dignity and humanity of all persons. The course is unique, since it is genuinely inter-Franciscan and inter-cultural. An ongoing process for exchange among all members of the Franciscan Family from six continents provides for a creative meshing of the best in current theology, Franciscan research and pastoral practice. The vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent our search for a fuller understanding of humanity in the light of the Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ.

As Franciscans, with the world as our "cloister," we welcome this refreshing moment of intercultural dialogue. Francis was the first among founders to situate the missionary dimension of the Gospel call clearly within his rule. This study reawakens us to the challenge and genuineness of Francis' message for our own times.



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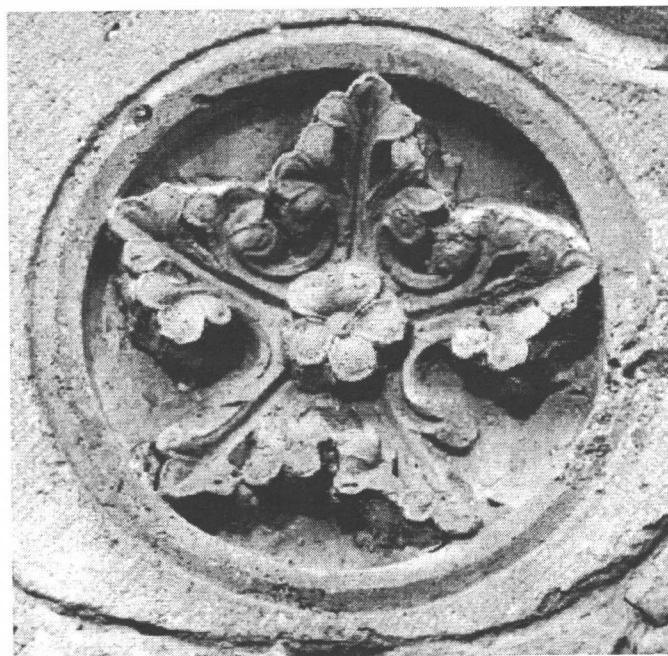


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Lesson Unit 4 • Initial and Ongoing Formation

# Go, Rebuild My Church!

*A Comprehensive  
Course on the  
Franciscan Mission  
Charism*



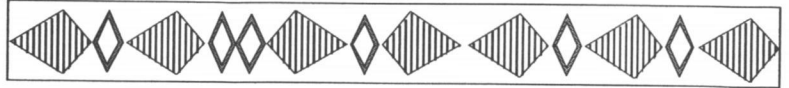
## Initial and Ongoing Formation



### Lesson Unit 4



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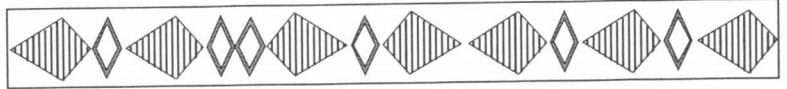


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# From the Sources



## On the dangers of learning

*One day a friar came to Francis and asked permission to have his own psalter. But Francis, seeing that this would be the start of a whole chain reaction, refused his request.*

*The saint gave him the answer: "And when you have a psalter, you will want a breviary. And when you have a breviary, you will install yourself in a chair like a great prelate, and you will order your brother: Bring me my breviary!" As he said this he tore his hair.*

*After a while he continued: "I, too, brother, was tempted to have books; but, that I might know God's*

*will on this point, I took the book of the gospels and asked the Lord to make it known to me on the first page where I opened the book what he wanted of me. Then I opened the book and my eyes fell on the verse: 'The secret of the kingdom of God is given to you, but to those who are outside, everything comes in parables' (Mk 4:11). Many are they who desire to exalt themselves to the heights of knowledge, but blessed are they who prefer to renounce learning for the love of the Lord God (cf. LP 72-73).*





# Introduction

A



## Learning and Formation must serve the people

They should never be used as tools of power or superiority over others. This was of vital importance to Francis and Clare.

It goes without saying that sisters and brothers who aspire to be missionaries need an adequate formation. Today it is the accepted norm for them to learn the language and study the culture in which they will be working; for such familiarity leads to deeper appreciation and more effective service. These obvious prerequisites are not the subject of this lesson unit.

Our subject is rather qualification for mission in the Franciscan sense. And it is well to recall again that Francis made no sharp distinction between a missionary calling lived out within a traditionally Christian environment and a missionary vocation among non-Christians. In both cases the goal is the same: by living the gospel to bear witness to the kingdom of God which has already appeared in our midst with the Incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ.

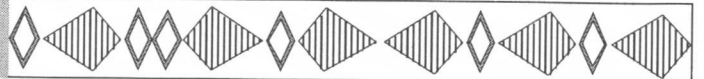
We are called to bear witness to this reality in word and deed, with our whole being. Formation must be approached from this starting point: only those who step themselves in the

primitive Franciscan way of life are true missionaries according to the spirit and mind of Francis.



# Survey

B



## Breaking Free from Traditional Concepts of Formation is of primary importance.

"Mattli 1982" has given clear directives here (cf. Lesson Unit 3). This congress stressed that traditional formation is quite inadequate for coping with today's problems. Formation cannot be restricted to a certain phase in one's life, but has

become an essential part of life itself. We are to be learners as long as we live. Moreover, it is not so much the individual who is the subject of formation, but the community as a whole. It is no longer possible to learn in isolation; know-

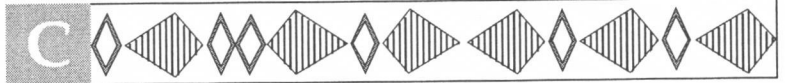


ledge can only be successfully acquired through dynamic interaction with others. Within the Franciscan movement, it should be self-evident that Francis and Clare are our models of formation. It is from them that we learn how to mature as true Franciscans and missionaries.

Only on this foundation is it possible to critique our traditional methods of formation and open up the way to an authentic Franciscan missionary form of life. The goals of formation, giving special attention to its missionary dimension, will now be discussed.



## Information



Whenever we hear the word "Formation,"

we immediately think of school, university and books. But that is a very narrow understanding of the subject. We need to get back to a much

broader understanding of education/formation, one more in keeping with our Franciscan spirituality.



Mattli 1982



The Inter-Franciscan Mission Congress at Mattli, Switzerland, formulated a statement on education/formation which refers specifically to Francis. So we would like to begin our presentation with this important text:

*We observe that Church and world are changing at an ever faster rate. There is danger that traditional ideas and models will be inadequate for a continual process of learning and on-going formation.*

*We remember Francis of Assisi, who was always open to the signs of the times. He did not confront situations with preconceived notions. Up to the very end of his life, he was prepared to learn from the youngest novice. He wished formation to be, not primarily at universities but in leper colonies (LP 9). He*

*was convinced that a friar could not understand what he had not experienced. Even theological education should serve first of all personal conversion, and only then the proclamation of the gospel. Therefore, we wish to learn from one another, as sisters and brothers, above all by sharing experiences, by reading the gospel, by praying together, by breaking the Bread of the Eucharist together, and by evaluating our real life situations.*

*Fraternal correction is an important part of this process.*

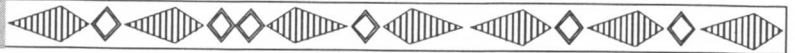
*We Franciscans should take seriously the words of Gregory the Great: "The poor are our teachers, the humble our learned ones" (Mattli N. 10).*

We now take a closer look at the text.

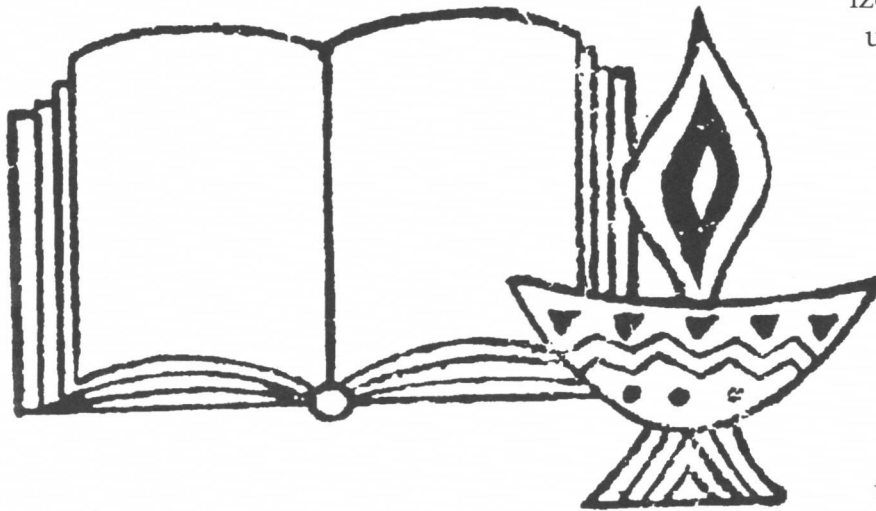


## Inadequacy of traditional formation

1.1.



The document attests unequivocally to the inadequacy of some current methods of formation, based as they are on the assumption that sufficient knowledge for a fruitful life can be acquired



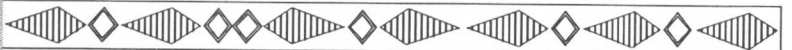
during the years of childhood and youth, without the need for continuing renewal. Even within our Order there was a theory that it was possible in the novitiate and later stages of formation, by means of theological and academic

studies, to collect a package of formulas and teachings containing all that was necessary for one's personal development and apostolic ministry.

More recently, however, we have come to realize that both world and Church are undergoing continual and rapid change. Formation and time are at odds with each other. We often find ourselves unprepared and incapable of meeting the challenges of the situation. Openness, sensitivity, readiness to accept and effect change, with the conviction that to live is to learn, are essential components of modern life. Therefore, the current concept of formation must yield to the conviction that life is one continual learning process, calling for whole-hearted commitment. This is not to say that specific periods of formation are superfluous and therefore dispensable. They remain as valid as ever; but they need to be seen within the framework of a more comprehensive programme of education.

## The community as learners

1.2.



The first requirement is for the community to identify itself as a group of learners. It must not too easily presume to know how life in the Franciscan spirit is to be lived today. Obviously, young people need to be shown our way of life. "Let the tenor of our life be clearly explained to him/her" (RegNB 2:3; RCI 2:3). But this can no longer be done within the traditional school-room setting. Candidates must be involved in their own formation process. The community is also called to remain open and to be continually reforming itself. This is further clarified by specific statements of the Mattli Document:

### • Learning from one another

We need a "horizontal" understanding of formation. This means that there are not some people who know everything and others who know nothing. We are all simultaneously teachers and students.

### • Sharing experiences

Learning also implies entering into the life-experience of others. One proverb states it clearly: "Experience is the most successful teacher." Book knowledge alone will never lead to wisdom. The wider the range of experience within





a given community, the greater is its potential for growth, provided that these experiences are not hoarded as personal possessions but shared with others.

### • Reading the scriptures together

The one indispensable text book, “the book of life” for Franciscans, is the gospel. For Francis wanted nothing else but “to live according to the holy gospel.” However, it should not be used solely for one’s personal benefit; for it is the book of the Church, the community of faith. So it is primarily from the common reading of holy scripture that the good news is heard and the fundamentals of Christian life revealed. Moreover, it is of great importance that our individual human experiences add depth to our common efforts to penetrate the meaning of sacred scripture. The very variety of these faith experiences are a key to understanding the biblical message.



### • Praying together

Prayer is also an essential element of formation. Prayer in common nourishes faith, strengthens values, deepens a spirit of prayer and promotes sensitivity in interpersonal relationships.

### • Breaking bread together

The celebration of eucharist is likewise an essential factor in formation, particularly within a Franciscan context. Francis saw himself as a herald of the eucharist to the world. His letters are filled with reflections on the eucharist. It is up to us to rediscover at an ever deeper level the very heart of our mission: Jesus Christ, who died to save us, whose blood “has been poured out for you and for all.” We also need to re-think our response to the social implications of the eucharist, in order to authenticate our witness as a community of brothers and sisters. To form community implies to be formed oneself.

### • Brotherly-sisterly correction

An important instrument of formation is the gift of mutual brotherly-sisterly correction. The recognition that, as Christians, we must be committed to the process of continuing conversion is making this kind of correction both necessary and possible. Wrong attitudes, false values and judgments, and faulty patterns of behavior can all be found within our communities of sisters and brothers. If these are attended to through mutual correction, they can become irreplaceable factors of formation. But this can only happen in a climate of mutual trust and constructive encouragement.

### • The poor as teachers

At this point the document assumes a truly prophetic character. The poor are our teachers who instruct us in genuine human living. No university professor, no book, no science – no matter how lofty – are able to touch upon the fundamental truths which determine what a human person really is, essentially. However, the poor of this world can and do possess the secret of such insight. This privilege of theirs should be especially dear to all Franciscans, since it was the determining experience of both Francis and Clare. So our Franciscan formation will only be authentic if it takes place in the context of poverty. In other words, brothers and sisters in formation must have the opportunity to enter into personal relationships with the poor.



## • Analyzing situations together

The situations we encounter, the structures within which we live, the context of our daily activities must be understood and re-interpreted ever anew. If such an evaluation is omitted, the signs of the times will pass us by unheeded and we fail to hear the voice of God speaking to us through the realities of our lives. It is in this sense all circumstances of our life have to be considered factors of our education/formation. The closest possible analysis of the situation is the

responsibility of each community, through a three-point programme: Seeing Judging Acting.

Moreover, each continent, each nation and each culture will have to assess its own situation and circumstances in order to bring the gospel to life in its own milieu.

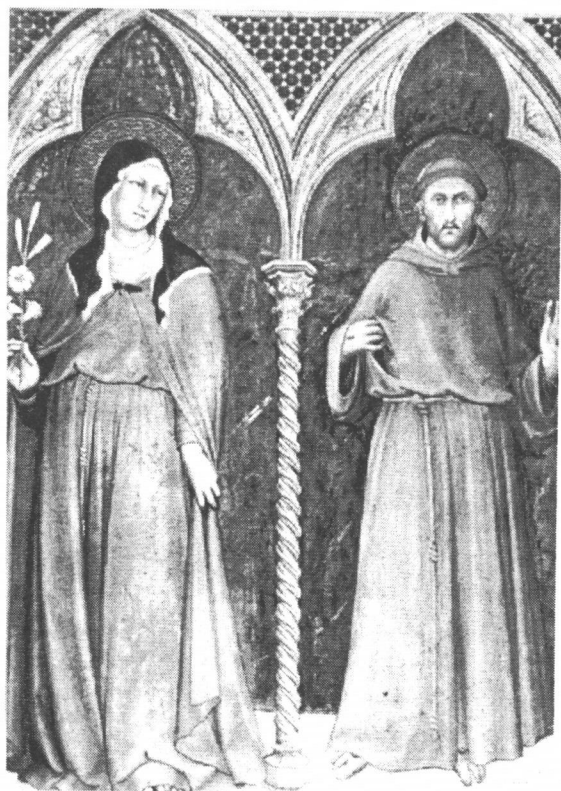
Therefore, a careful analysis of the situation is part of a continual learning process. Flexibility, openness and a capacity for interpersonal relationships are of more value than foregone conclusions which are irrelevant to the real situation.

## Francis and Clare as models of formation

1.3.

The above noted aspects of formation are of general application. However, each of them has its own particular character within the context of Franciscan spirituality. Each aspect could

word and deed. A mere glance at the first friars is enough to show that each of them was unique, and no mere copy. The Franciscan movement can be more accurately defined in terms of people who have found their own true identity through Francis.



*Thanksgiving and voice of praise resounded everywhere so that many put aside worldly cares and gained knowledge of themselves from the life and teaching of the most blessed Francis, and they longed to attain love and reverence for their Creator.*

*Many of the people, both noble and ignoble, cleric and lay, impelled by divine inspiration, began to come to St. Francis, wanting to carry on the battle constantly under his discipline and under his leadership. All of these, the holy man of God, like a plenteous river of heavenly grace, watered with streams of gifts; he enriched the fields of their hearts with flowers of virtue for he was an excellent craftsman; and, according to his plan, rule and teaching, proclaimed before all, the Church is being renewed in both sexes (1Cel 37).*

be amply illustrated by examples from the lives of Francis and Clare. From the very beginning, Thomas of Celano understood the Franciscan movement in the light of Francis. This does not mean that we have to imitate Francis literally in

In other words, those who allow themselves to be formed by Francis are the real Franciscans. Each one retains a unique personality, yet is deeply and permanently influenced by such a model. The almost untranslatable phrase "forma minorum" was coined in the early days of the Order to express this fact: that it is the person of Francis who is the formator, giving form and shape to those who follow him. The same can be said of Clare. Many stories and legends about



both of them have been handed down so precisely that we are able "put on" their character. For Clare, as for Francis, the gospel is the determining form of life. It is the ultimate goal and deepest meaning of all education/formation which is transformation into Christ. By her living example Clare became a model and mirror of this process of transformation for her sisters.

The middle section of the Mattli Document sheds further light on the Franciscan sources of the material presented above. From the beginning, Francis was put forward as "forma minorum," that is as exemplary and formative model for all those who aspire to follow him.

- **Always alert to the signs of the times**

It is completely in character that Francis was receptive to everything that happened to him.



His life story shows that he was formed not so much by his schooling as by life's circumstances, encounters and experiences, both inside and outside the town of Assisi. His *Earlier Rule* (1221) makes it clear how Francis let himself be formed

by specific life experiences, encounters and events, by contemporary movements and the teaching of the Church. If valid insights could be gleaned from these, he would put them into his own words and incorporate them into the text of his Rule, making it more and more lengthy. He designated the Holy Spirit as Minister General of the Order (2Cel 193) so as to ensure that his community would learn not only from differing circumstances of "place, time and cold climate," but also from the demands of every day life (cf RegB 4:2).

- **Learning from the youngest novice**

Another word for "learning" is perhaps "obedience." Francis listened to everything and everyone. He claimed no infallible knowledge of what to do. Rather, this was given to him, revealed to him; and he responded. For the whole of his life he was a learner, listening intently to the voice of the community and to each of his brothers, even the youngest of them (cf. Test; 2Cel 151).

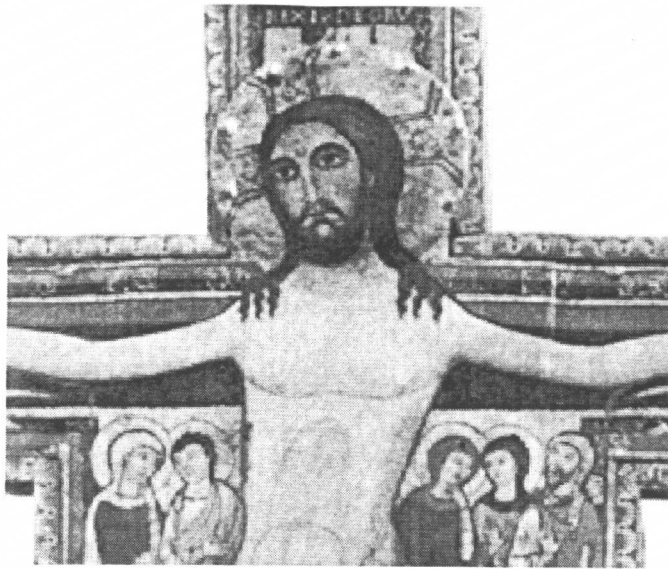
We find the same attitude in Clare who states in her *Rule* that the abbess is to consult with all her sisters about whatever concerns the welfare and good of the monastery, for "the Lord often reveals what is best to the lesser among us" (RC1 4:13). Therefore she, too, must have been a good listener.

- **Formation in the leper colony**

We know that Francis received the necessary training to become a successful businessman. Yet he referred to himself as "uneducated" because he ranked himself amongst the simple people and wanted to be identified with them. The formation so crucial for his mission came from elsewhere. And he himself indicates in his Testament how much of this formation he owes to his contact with the lepers. It was here that he was set free from his fastidiousness and repugnance and from the heartless social attitudes prevalent in Assisi. Shaken and challenged to the innermost core of his being by his experience with the lepers, he embarked on "the road of mercy and compassion" (Test 1-3).

Of equal significance is the fact that Francis now suddenly moves to a new level of understanding. He reads the "articles" of our faith with eyes that have been cleansed by his encounter with the lepers.





- The Christ of San Damiano is for him no longer the Lord who is remote from human misery, but the Lord nailed to the cross looking sorrowfully into the distance because he is identifying with the unspeakable weight of human grief.

- The Church with its often unworthy representatives is no longer a stumbling block for him. He is able to make the distinction between human sinfulness and the Son of God who emptied himself in order to be present and active within it in spite of its sinful state; and in its priests he discerns *"the Lord because of their consecration"* (Test 6-10).

- The currently often disregarded *"little form of bread"* becomes for him rather the presence of our humble God surrendered into human hands (EpOrd 27ff; EpCler 8).

- Words themselves, so often superficially and lightly used, throw-away texts, even those of unbelievers, assume an infinite value for Francis; for it was the Word who really and truly *"became flesh."* The letters of any written text whatsoever can be used to write the gospel or the name of Jesus. Suddenly the gospel for Francis is no longer a dreary or repetitive text; it has become *"spirit and life"* (2EpFid 3). He discovers the Gospel for the poor (Test 12; EpCler 12; EpOrd 36; 1Cel 82).

- From the moment of encounter with the leper, everything takes on a new meaning for Francis. What was formerly contemptible be-

comes the focal point of the presence of God. Francis allows himself to be formed by this encounter. Association with the lepers and the poor becomes for him a way of life. Is it surprising then that the first brothers had to spend their novitiate in a leper colony? (1Cel. 39).



This same spirit must animate Franciscan formation today: care for those with AIDS, the homeless, street children, drug dependents and other marginalized groups in our society.

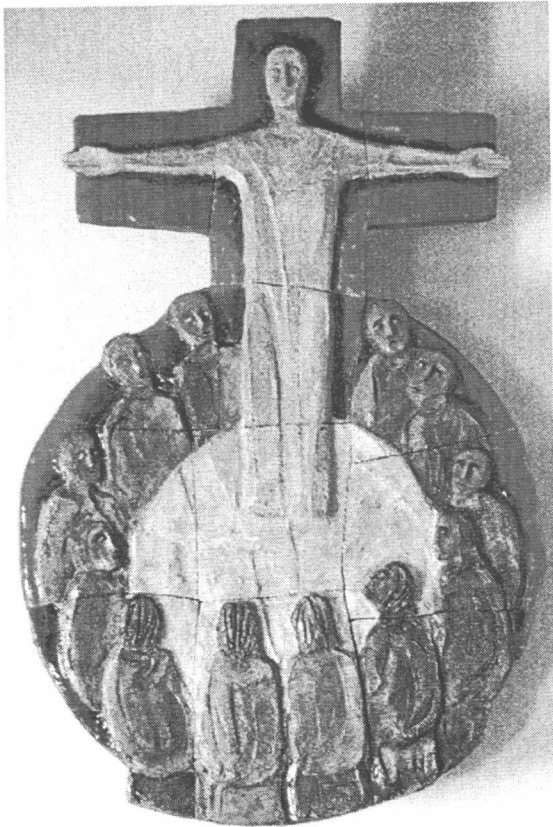
- **We understand only what we have experienced**

There is no doubting the importance of personal and practical experience in the formation of the saint. St. Bonaventure asks: *"What is the use of knowing much and savoring nothing?"* And St. Ignatius of Loyola says much the same: *"It is not much learning that satisfies the soul, but the ability to reflect."* Experiencing, tasting, seeing the inner value of everything, without using it for one's own purposes, is more important than all mere head knowledge. Giles of Assisi, who is close to the spirit and mind of Francis, put it this way: *"A man has as much knowledge as he uses for good, and no more"* and again: *"He is wise who is like Wisdom itself, Jesus Christ."* Giles also makes a connection between learning and the Franciscan way of life, which is rooted in lowliness, in *humilitas*: *"If you seek real learning, keep yourself busy, and keep your head bowed"* (Fior 3:6). This practice is of incomparable value in the formation of Francis as well as in the later Franciscan concept of formation. It is interesting that *"to do"* is the most commonly used verb in the writings of St. Francis.



• **Personal conversion must precede proclamation**

This is about “*finding all one’s delight and happiness in the most holy words and deeds of the Lord*” and “*thereby leading people to the love of God in joy and gladness*” (Adm 20:1ff). For Francis, the primary preaching is not by proclamation of the word, but by the witness of one’s own life.



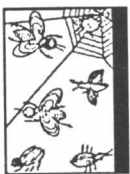
Paraphrasing a little the words of Francis, we could describe it as allowing oneself to be molded, “formed” and stamped by the Good News. There is no necessary sequence between

this kind of formation and preaching. Francis encounters the Lord with no ulterior motive. It is not in order to convert others that he steep himself in the formative image of our Lord. Proclamation is the consequence but not the purpose of formation. This is further corroborated by the famous letter of the saint to Anthony of Padua. Francis has no objection to Anthony’s teaching theology to the friars. But here again, the aim of education/formation is not to learn the art of preaching, but rather to cultivate “*the spirit of prayer and devotion*” (EpAnt 3). Ubertino of Casale makes this statement:

*We have no intention of condemning the holy and formal study of sacred scripture. It was the mind of Francis and of the Rule that the friars should undertake study first for its own intrinsic value and for the sake of its highest goal: to ground themselves in true humility and in the practice of prayer. They studied for the sake of their own formation and sanctification. Before they could be of help to others they needed to put into practice what they were being taught* (Gratien of Paris, *Histoire des freres mineurs*, photocopied reprint, Rome 1982, 394).

Clare expresses the same concern as Francis that the pursuit of learning for its own sake could lead to the abuse of lording it over others. She uses the very words of Francis in her *Rule*:

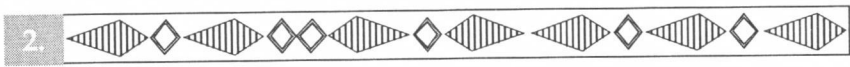
*And those who are ignorant of letters should not be eager to learn. Instead, let them pursue what they must desire above all things: to have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy manner of working* (RCl 10:6-7).



**Initiation into a Franciscan missionary form of life**

Obviously, what has been said above does not exclude the necessity of some formal method of initiation for candidates within the Franciscan movement. But this must not be divorced from

the basic principles of Franciscan formation. It is interesting to note the historical fact that, in the first decade of their new way of life, Francis and his brothers were content with the informal



process of formation described above. Only when their numbers had greatly increased did they feel the need to follow the programme of initiation prescribed for all religious Orders. This was at the demand of and undoubtedly in the interests of the Church. In 1220 the canonical novitiate was introduced in the First Order.

Clare, too, in her *Rule* of 1253 gives specific instructions for the initiation of novices:

*The abbess shall carefully provide a mistress from among the more prudent sisters of the monastery. She shall form them diligently in a holy manner of living and proper behavior according to the form of our profession (RCI 2:14).*

## Step by step (gradual) initiation

2.1.

The formalization of the process of formation makes a community conscious of the need to meet those who aspire to be received into an established form of life with sensitivity and empathy. They need to experience a gradual initiation into the Franciscan missionary life, a process which follows the same sequence in practically all communities:



- **The Pre-Novitiate:** where the candidates can discern whether they are personally suited to this brotherly-sisterly way of life and whether they can identify with the basic ideals of the community. It is up to the community to welcome them and to provide the necessary preconditions to enable newcomers to grow into the life of this community.

- **The Novitiate:** it is here that candidates must be made familiar with everything that is essential for a Franciscan way of life, and that the decision to adopt this way of life as their own must be reached.

- **The Post-Novitiate:** is a time for reaching a more comprehensive integration into the component elements and aspects of the Franciscan way

of life, in practice as well as in theory. During this time the resolve to shape one's life according to these ideals must grow to maturity.

- **Life commitment:** In a public act, as defined in the common law of the Church, the candidates and the community make a mutual life-long commitment. Although this brings to a conclusion the period of initiation, the process of formation will continue for the whole of life.

## Goals of Formation

2.2.

The missionary character of the Franciscan form of life calls for certain qualities which must find a special place in the gradual initiation outlined above. In each of its phases, the following attributes should emerge:

- The ability to identify and express one's thoughts, feelings and ideas to brothers/sisters in the community.

- The ability and the willingness to make time for the community when it comes together for prayer, for meals, for recreation and faith sharing. This participation must not be restricted to obligatory and formal community gatherings, but must also include voluntary and spontaneous availability on an informal basis.



- The creative ability and willingness to take the initiative in:

- ▶▶▶ promoting the development of genuine community life;
- ▶▶▶ engaging others in conversation;
- ▶▶▶ responding to community needs and emergencies;
- ▶▶▶ finding ways of building up mutual trust within the community.



- The ability to make one's life a prayer, to bring one's experiences before God, and to persevere in prayer even through the hard times.

plans; then to allow these to be continually re-assessed as to their validity.

- The ability to relate with the poor, to enter into their world with empathy and, where possible, to live with them.

- The ability to develop a critical conscience, to work through situations of conflict, and to be a prophetic voice in the community.

- The ability "to discern spirits" (cf. 1 Cor 12:10); that is: to assess situations and structures in the light of the gospel, in order to initiate appropriate projects and pastoral

### Church and Franciscan Sources

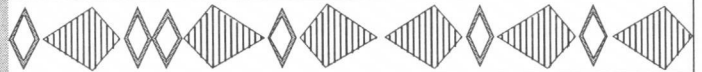
Scripture	1 Cor 12:10; 13:1-10
Church Documents	
Franciscan Sources	2 EpFid 3; EpCler 8:12; EpOrd 27ff; 36; RegB 2:3; 4:2; 10:7; Test 1-4; 6-10; 12ff; 1Cel 3, 37, 39, 82; 2Cel 151, 193; AP 9; LP 72-73
Inter-Franciscan Documents	Mattli 1982
OFM, OFMCap, OFMConv	
Poor Clares	
Third Order Regular	
Secular Franciscans	
Others, Supplements	

*Each community may add further items.*



## Exercises

D



### Exercise

Compare the provisions for formation in your rule and constitutions with the contents of this lesson unit.

#### Questions:

1. What similarities exist?
2. What differences do you observe?
3. What contribution can you make to your own continuing education / formation and that of your community?





## Exercise

2.

### Read the following story and comment on it: *The invisible white rabbit*

One day a seeker after holiness visited the hermitage of a holy old man who was sitting at the door of his cell at the hour of sunset. The old man's dog was lying stretched out on the doorstep when the young seeker put this question to the hermit: "How is it that many people who are searching for God withdraw into the desert and give themselves eagerly to prayer, but abandon their calling after no more than a year, whereas others like you remain true to their search for a whole life time?" The old man answered with a smile, "Let me tell you a story. One day I was sitting quietly with my dog in the sun. Suddenly a big white rabbit ran past. Then my dog jumped up with a loud bark and chased the rabbit energetically across the hills. Soon other dogs joined in, alerted by his barking. What a spectacle it was that pack of dogs barking as they joined in the hunt, across waterways, over stony banks and through thorny hedgerows. But

gradually one by one the dogs gave up the chase, disheartened by the length of the way and the futility of the hunt. My dog was the only one to continue on the trail of the white rabbit. And there, my young man, is the answer to your question." The young man sat there in bewildered silence. Finally he said: "I don't understand. What has the rabbit hunt to do with the pursuit of holiness?" "You don't understand because you have failed to ask the obvious question: Why didn't the other dogs continue the chase? And the answer to that question is: Because they hadn't seen the white rabbit. If you don't see your prize, you easily weary of the chase, because you lack the passion and determination needed to sustain you through all the hard work demanded by the discipline of your spiritual exercises. (From the Tradition of the Desert Fathers)

### Question

Have there been experiences in your life which are similar to the theme of this story?



## Exercise

3.

Read the following texts:

### 1. *Being brothers to one another*

In Rushooka, Uganda, the brothers have come to the conviction that their first mission is that of being brother to every neighbor, whether Christian or not, whether child or adult. Brother Kizito tells of his experiences:

*The people invite us to visit them. When we ask how we can help them they say, "Just to visit our families is enough. Your prayers for us are also a great help."*

*Rushooka is a new area, and I believe that our mission consists primarily in being lesser brothers amongst the people here, especially the poorest of them, namely the orphans, the sick, alcoholics, etc. We endeavor to be with them without judging or condemning them, but relating to them with love and care, ready to listen to them. Alcoholism and lack of schooling are the main causes of poverty here. At present, we are caring for forty orphans, making sure that they receive at least a basic education. Many of them have lost their parents through AIDS. They*





come to our fraternity every Saturday and we all work, play and eat together. That day each brother does his best to be there with them to help them with their school work, with lessons in hygiene and in manual skills. They feel very much at home with us as we become more and more their brothers. We treat them not as poor children who need our help, but as our younger brothers and sisters.

Witnesses to the Kingdom of God or preachers of religion?

To actually become what we profess, that must be the first priority of our lives. As there are not many people in Rushooka who have been to school, it is up to us to bear witness to the God who lives among his people. We give expression to this in our daily prayer, in celebrating Eucharist with the people, through our fraternal companionship, especially with the poor and the sick, and through our visits to the Small Christian Communities and families.

Each month the entire group of catechists comes and spends three days with us. We pray with them, sharing our faith and hope, and helping with their continuing formation. All the brothers accept full responsibility for this programme, investing in it all their gifts of nature and grace.

In Rushooka we need to guard against posing as teachers, masters or fathers, as we feed the poor, treat the sick or build shelters for the needy. We are not masters but servants, not fathers but brothers, and lesser brothers at that. It is the people who teach us what we are called to be and to do.

There is nothing wrong with helping the poorest of the poor, but better by far to be brothers to them.

## 2. Report from Tanzania

Frederick, a postulant, sends this report on his experiences among the lepers in Mwanza:

Francis called the lepers his brothers and sisters. And on the last Saturday of each month, and sometimes during the week, we visit our brothers and sisters with leprosy in the town of Mwanza. In the evening we pray with them and share the Good News. We bring them soap and other things that people have donated for them. As they live a long way away from us, we spend the night there with friends before returning to our community in Butimba early the next

day. These brothers and sisters have really become outcasts of society. They live together in two separate groups: one within the town and the other in the leper colony in Bukumbi. They lead a most difficult and loveless life, knowing that they are despised and ostracized. Those living in the town have no accommodation. They take refuge under cardboard boxes and sheets of plastic fastened to old battered strips of sheet metal in any old backyard. These wretched shelters give them absolutely no protection in bad weather. Part of this group has camped at the bus terminal and thrown in its lot with the blind, the alcoholics and other marginalized and homeless people. Although they are a very disparate collection of people in every respect, they live together and share whatever they have. The lepers share a common purse and eat together. In their midst I have experienced a genuine unity in diversity. When one of them gets sick, they pool their meagre resources in order to get him/her to hospital. One of the women had an accident and fell into the canal. The others rescued her and tried to get her to the hospital. But no taxi would agree to take her there for 1,000 Tanzanian shillings. However, a Muslim offered her free transport in his delivery van. While she was in hospital, the others visited her in spite of the great distance and their own disabilities. I was challenged and encouraged by these people, for in them I felt the tangible presence of Christ who healed the lepers and shared table fellowship with the outcasts of society, who was a friend to the oppressed, and who mediated the love of God to all people.

## 3. The OSCAR Project (Obras Sociales de Caminos de Acceso Rural = Rural road-building project)

This is the name given to a Franciscan project in Bolivia. About 100 young men can spend the first years of their university course working in the jungle at a road-building camp in remote rural areas. The aim is to confront young people from the city with the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, and to draw the attention of these academics to the social conditions existing in their country. The candidates of Franciscan and other religious orders have to submit their vocation to the priesthood to a hard test. A visitor reports on the life and work of this "jungle university":



The reception in the camp was overwhelming. There is enough water, tasty fresh bread, and a small stream for washing; even a water-main, a few tin huts, several palm huts, light-masts, a shed for repairing and maintaining machinery, a clinic, a community room and a chapel. Everyone made us very welcome: three Franciscan priests, two professors of Spanish and philosophy, and a large group of young men. A Canadian priest, professor of sacred scripture was traveling with us in the van, as also was a lay brother who had been loaned out to teach the boys baking and cooking at the beginning of the academic year. Padre Roberto is in charge of the project. He is a professor of ethics, as well as the chief engineer for the camp. And the students? Seven of them came from La Paz, the rest from all over the country: two from Dschungel, eight from the plains near Santa Cruz, a few from San Ignacio and Concepcion, and several from the High Andes. Moving freely and with great assurance amongst the students are young men and women who are continuing their education in public health and agricultural-ecological sciences in the OSCAR camp. Once a month they take part in a three-day programme. Their course takes three years. About forty such agricultural students are given the opportunity to take their matriculation examination in this alternative curriculum, coupled as it is with practical instruction in public health, agriculture-ecology, or forestry.

At the beginning of the semester six young people had already thrown in the towel; others were still considering whether they were prepared to continue this kind of training for the priesthood, for things are tough at the OSCAR-project, difficult, exhausting and austere. But the whole set-up breathes human warmth and a heartening fraternity. The students are divided into two groups who work in turn, either morning or afternoon, on the roadway or in the camp,

while the others are attending lectures in one of the huts. Reveille is at six in the morning. Immediately after breakfast there is either work or lectures. The midday meal is at noon. The next shift lasts from one o'clock until five. In the evening there is celebration of the Eucharist, followed by supper, then three hours of study. Lights go out at about half past ten. Sundays are free except for kitchen duty; and the lads usually visit the small villages and settlements in the neighborhood.

According to a Bolivian weather slogan: "When the monkeys howl there will be rain." And then one has to wade through mud. Nevertheless work and study must still go on. As one of the students said to me: "This shows me that God is asking for the whole person, and I am trying to respond to Him."

OSCAR builds country roads and bridges. But it also aims to be itself a road and a bridge for many "campesinos," to help them achieve a better quality of life by means of a solid education/formation.

### Questions

1. What points mentioned in the lesson unit do you recognize in these texts?
2. In Africa and Latin America the direction of the novitiate and juniorate is to have a formation team rather than an individual director (novice mistress, etc.).
  - What do you think of this approach?
  - What qualities should a formation team possess in order to guarantee a genuine Franciscan formation?

## 1 Applications



### Application

Compare the goals of formation/education as given in the unit with your own time of formation.

E



### Questions

1. What similarities exist?
2. What is different?





## Application

Read 1 Cor 13:1-10. Reflect on your life over the past eight days in the light of this text.

### Questions

1. How do you see yourself today in the light of this text?
2. What changes are called for in your life?

2.



This critical examination of life, *revision de vie*, can be done alone or in a group. It is good to articulate it in the form of a prayer for forgiveness or a prayer of intercession.



## Application

We are told that the sudden onset of a serious illness prevented the young Francis from fulfilling his dream of being a knight and a warrior. This illness becomes a significant turning point in the life of Francis. As Celano says, it was during this time that he "*began to see things differently from the way he had seen them before.*" (1Cel 3) Whatever our reaction to or our assessment of Celano's biography of Francis, we need to realize that he recounts the story of one man's attempt to discover the meaning of God's presence in the events of his life. It not only tells us something of what happened in the life of Francis, it also gives us an idea of the pain, struggle and confusion that are involved in this process. In this way the story of Francis, as told by Celano, provides us with a model for understanding.

1. How it is possible to discover one's true identity in Christ?
2. What does it mean to reform one's life in the light of the gospel?
3. How might one be formed to preach the Good

3.



News and to form others in the gospel as a way of life?

Those who would hope to follow Francis must, in their own way, enter into a similar process. They must confront the demands of the gospel and confront the moments of conflict, lack of charity, and doubt that this involves. They must, like Francis, enter the darkness, be willing to take risks, be prepared for failure, and resist the temptation to abandon the journey to God in faith, no matter where it might lead them.

### Questions

1. At what time(s) in your life did you begin to see things differently than before?
2. In what events of your life were you made aware of God's intervention and presence?
3. In what ways have you found your own identity in Christ?
4. How would you interpret your life in the light of the gospel?
5. What can you do to live the gospel more fully? to help spread the gospel?





## Application

Formative Influences:

4.

1. Recall the name of someone who:
  - had an important impact on your life.
  - guided you at a critical period.
  - through example, showed you the meaning of a true Christian life.
2. Call one such person to mind and describe briefly an incident from that relationship that was specially memorable and important.
3. What are some of the ways in which your life invites others to believe the Good News: in your community, in your areas of work? Be specific.



## Application

Personal Faith:

5.

1. In your life, what do you consider to be:
  - your greatest gift (strength)?
  - your greatest area for growth?
  - your greatest need?
2. How could you change the rhythm or pattern of your life today, so that God might come more fully into your life?



## Application

Personal Gifts and Qualities:

6.

1. What virtue is most operative in your life?
2. What is the significance of this for life in your community?





## Application

The Significance of Others:

1. Name someone with whom you enjoy a creative and life-giving pattern of communication. How do you nurture this relationship?
2. With whom do you need to establish better communication?
3. What can you do about this?

7.

4. Is there someone in your community who has been especially challenging to you?
  - In what ways has this person challenged you?
  - How have you responded to this challenge?
5. How might this challenge bring you to a better understanding of yourself; the other person, the community, and God?
6. Have you challenged others to realize their potential?  
Be specific and give details.

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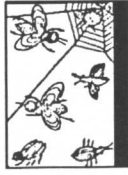
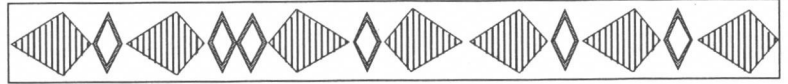


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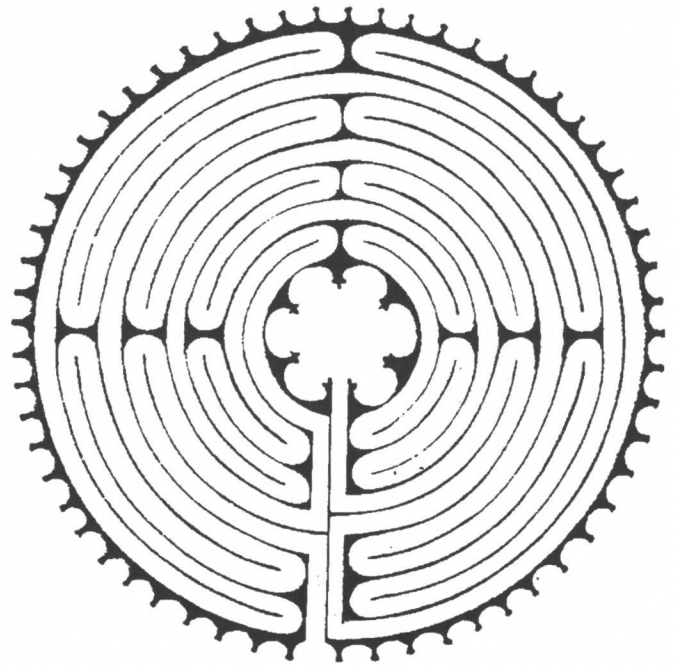
# For Reflection



set out  
to find the center,

the goal of my life.  
If only I could see it,  
the way to it is easy and straight.  
But my feet are led into side-tracks.  
My God,  
how many detours are still ahead of me?  
I often think I've reached the goal,  
only to find myself almost back at the  
beginning.  
Hesitantly I grope my way forward again.  
And I find  
that each new start brings me closer to you.  
Not even the smallest step is ignored by you  
Before I can understand it,  
the new direction for my life  
is there ahead of me.

*From the German Evangelical Church Congress*



In the early Middle Ages people walked the paths of a maze in a spirit of prayer and penance, e.g. in the Cathedral of Chartres in France. With the help of such a maze they experienced with their whole being what it means to keep walking towards the goal, to the centre, in spite of all detours.

