

Go,  
Rebuild  
My Church!

**Comprehensive  
Course on the  
Franciscan  
Mission  
Charism**



The Franciscan  
Mission  
according to  
early Sources

Lesson Unit 7

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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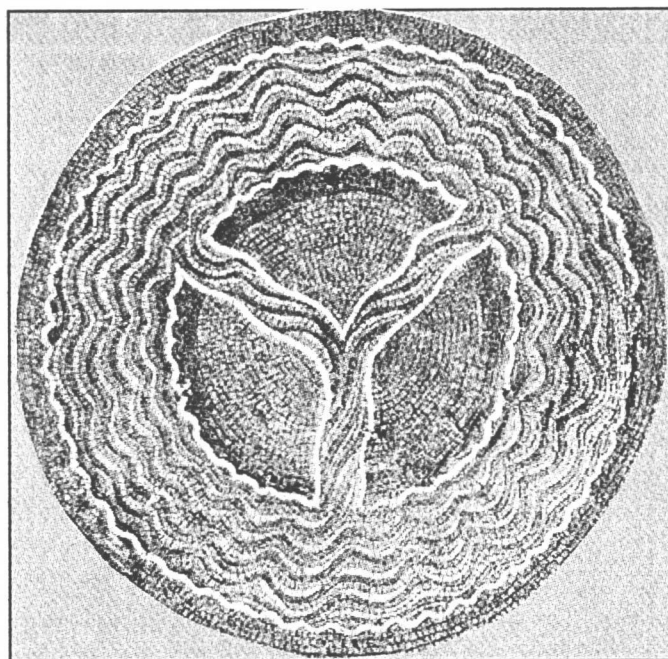


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Lesson Unit 7 The Franciscan Mission according to early Sources

# Go, Rebuild My Church!

*A Comprehensive  
Course on the  
Franciscan Mission  
Charism*



## The Franciscan Mission according to early Sources



### Lesson Unit 7



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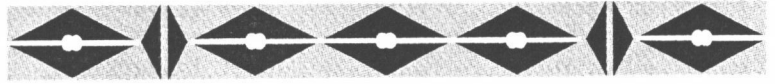
## The Franciscan Mission according to early Sources

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How Francis sent the first Brothers into the world

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## How Francis sent the first Brothers into the world

Poggio Bustone is a wonderful place above the Rieti valley. From there one can see a great distance; you feel as if the whole world lies at your feet.

Francis came to this place one day with the first seven brothers. Seeing the wide plain below them, he knew that they were sent into the world. He therefore called everyone to him and told them of the Kingdom of God and of the mission that they were to fulfil. Then he divided them into four groups, each group consisting of two men, and he told them: "Go, my most beloved brothers, two by two, into the different regions of the world and proclaim to the people the message of peace! Be patient in sorrow and be confident that the Lord will

fulfil His promise! Answer humbly those who ask you questions; bless those who persecute you; give thanks to those who do you injustice and who slander you!"

The Brothers accepted the order of holy obedience. Asking in humility, they threw themselves down on the earth before St. Francis, but he embraced them and, filled with love and kindness, he said to each of them: "Direct your mind to the Lord and He will nourish you!"

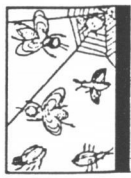
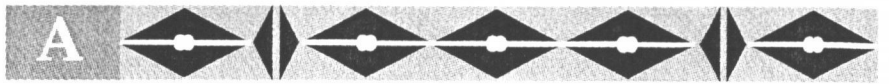
Brothers Bernard and Giles then went on their way to St. James of Compostella. St. Francis and his companion, however, chose another direction. The other brothers went in the other two directions (cf. 1C 29f.).



*Francis sends his first Brothers two by two into the world.*



# Introduction



In many parts of the world, the word 'mission' is a loaded term

- For many people, it is nothing more than a form of Euro-American imperialism. Indeed, more often than not, sufficient distinction has not been made between the Good News of the Gospel and the forms of expression which this message had taken on in Europe. Consequently, the churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America were forced to accept the Gospel together with a civilisation that had grown up in Europe and North America. That 'mission' means something quite different, however, has been shown in Lesson 6.

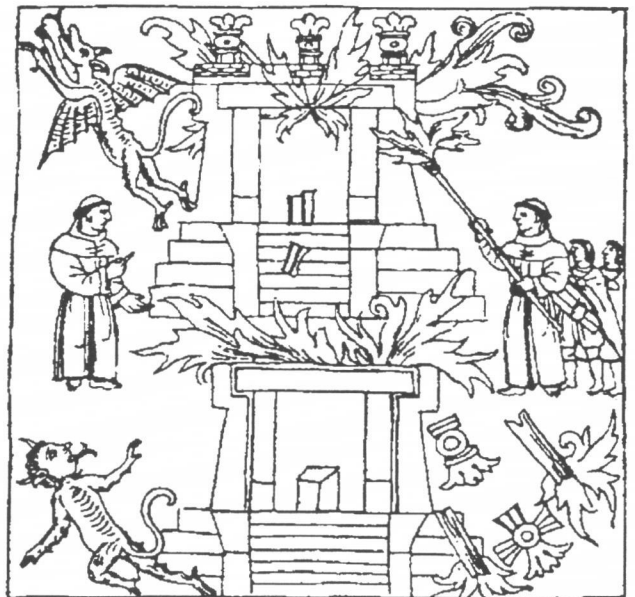
- 'Mission' shows the same face almost everywhere. The individual religious orders are hardly distinguishable from each other. They always focused on founding mission stations, on building churches and schools, on spreading Christianity by means of preaching and the administration of the sacraments. But it is necessary to ask ourselves whether such undifferentiated mission is right in principle. The Council has required the religious orders to recall their origins. That includes the question of how they want to understand and promote their missionary work.

- Even the Franciscan Orders show in most cases the same concept of mission, although Francis presented in his writings and in his life a different understanding of mission, which to a large extent was later forgotten. He was in his own time a new beginning. Going back to the Gospel, he set new standards and laid down the principles for a Franciscan missionary movement. These were expressed in a special chapter of the Rule (cf. ER 16; LR 12).

A consequent imitation of St. Francis, also in his missionary behaviour, would have prevented

inflicting wounds on some peoples from which they still suffer today. Likewise, it would have paved the way for local churches, each with their own cultural expression.

From the sin of the past arises our duty for reparation and for the firm support of the Churches

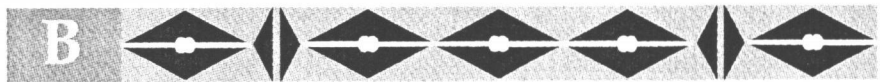


*Burning temples of idols in the Province of Tlaxcala by Friars and Spaniards and the grieving of the Indigenous people.*

of the South, for their spiritual and material independence. Certainly the missionaries have been influenced by the colonial mentality of those times. But that did not give them an excuse for their behaviour, because during those times, there were also those among them who understood the prophetic view of the Gospel. The will for reparation urges us now to a consequent recollection of the original mission charism of St. Francis.



# Survey

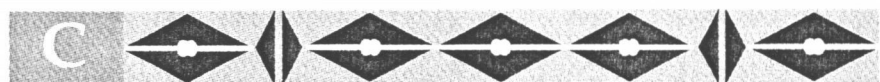


## Francis and his view of mission

Francis' view of mission can be understood only when we see him within the framework of his own time. We shall therefore try to present first the historical background, especially the attitude of the Church towards the Moslems. The personality of St. Francis will then stand out all the more clearly. From the very beginning he thought of himself as a missionary and therefore made different attempts to reach the mission regions of that time, to travel to the Saracens, as the Moslems were called in those days.

In his meeting with the tolerant Sultan of Egypt, Melek-el-Khamil, who was open to dialogue, he had a fundamental experience which inspired him to draw up a guideline for all brothers and sisters who wanted to follow him. He wrote a "Missionary Statute" which has lost nothing of its revolutionary power even today. Since every sentence in it is significant, we shall give the 'Statute' special attention through an exact analysis. Finally, we shall consider the immediate effects that the meeting with Islam had on Francis.

# Information



## Historical background



*Arrival of Pilgrims at Damiette.*

Francis lived in the time of the Crusades. These were triggered through the conquest of the Holy Lands by Islamic peoples. The Christian West under the leadership of the Pope felt it was a duty to recover the Holy Land for the Christians. That is why in 1213 Pope Innocent III had launched the Crusade's battlecry: "Take up your cross and follow me," convinced as he was to act under Divine inspiration. He wanted everyone to join the Crusade or to support it. Pope Innocent then wrote letters to political leaders and leaders in the Church, to kings, rulers, archbishops, abbots, theologians, preachers, clergy and laity.

Even the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 served this objective. Theologians justified the Crusade with biblical and dogmatic statements. Public preachers had to



explain the Crusade to the faithful. Monasteries sold golden and silver chalices to finance a ship or to pay the crusaders' bills. The faithful offered their possessions in order to defeat the enemy and to bring them to their knees. Donations intended to finance the Crusade were to be rewarded with indulgences.

In the letter "Quia maior" of the Pope, Mohamed was called a "deceiver" and the "firstborn of Satan", who spread a tradition of superstitions. The Koran, instead of being a book of God, was said to be in reality a "veil of dark-

ness", and that it should only be translated in order to refute it.

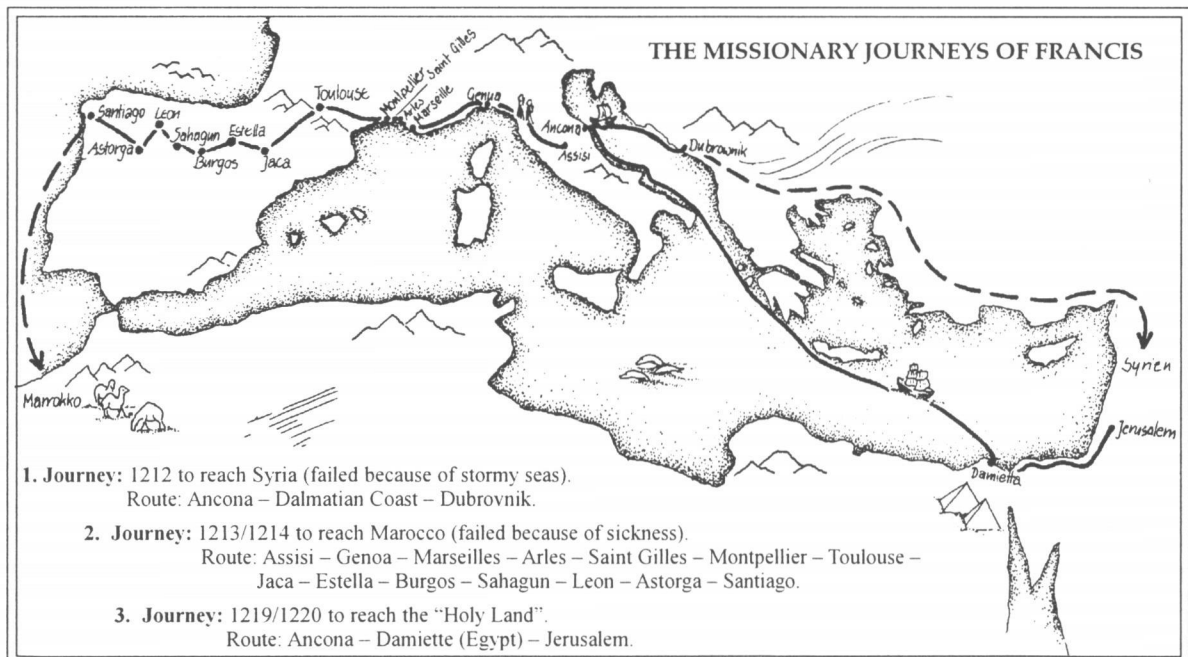
The immense effort yielded different results. Damiette was conquered but around 6,000 Crusaders, mostly Spaniards, lost their lives. Between 30,000 and 60,000 Moslems were killed. The citizens of Damiette, weakened by starvation, were unable to bury the countless bodies lying in the streets of the city. The Crusaders looted to their hearts content: gold, silver, jewellery, cloth, clothes and foodstuff. Gambling and prostitution flourished.



## The Missionary Journeys of Francis

From the beginning Francis of Assisi regarded himself as a missionary. That is not surprising, since the missionary speeches of Jesus (comp. Mt 10) played a significant role in the discovery of new ways of life. He thus travelled around Italy in order to summon people to belief in God and to a life according to the Gospel. This he also wanted to do among people who did not yet believe in Christ.

Six years after his conversion (1212), Francis wanted to go to Syria in order to preach to the Saracens (= the Moslems). His ship, however, was driven ashore on the Dalmatian coast by a storm (cf. 1C 55). Soon after, he set out with Brother Bernard to reach Morocco via France and Spain (cf. 1C 56). But in Spain he went down with a severe bout of malaria and had to go back. And so the second missionary journey was also a failure.

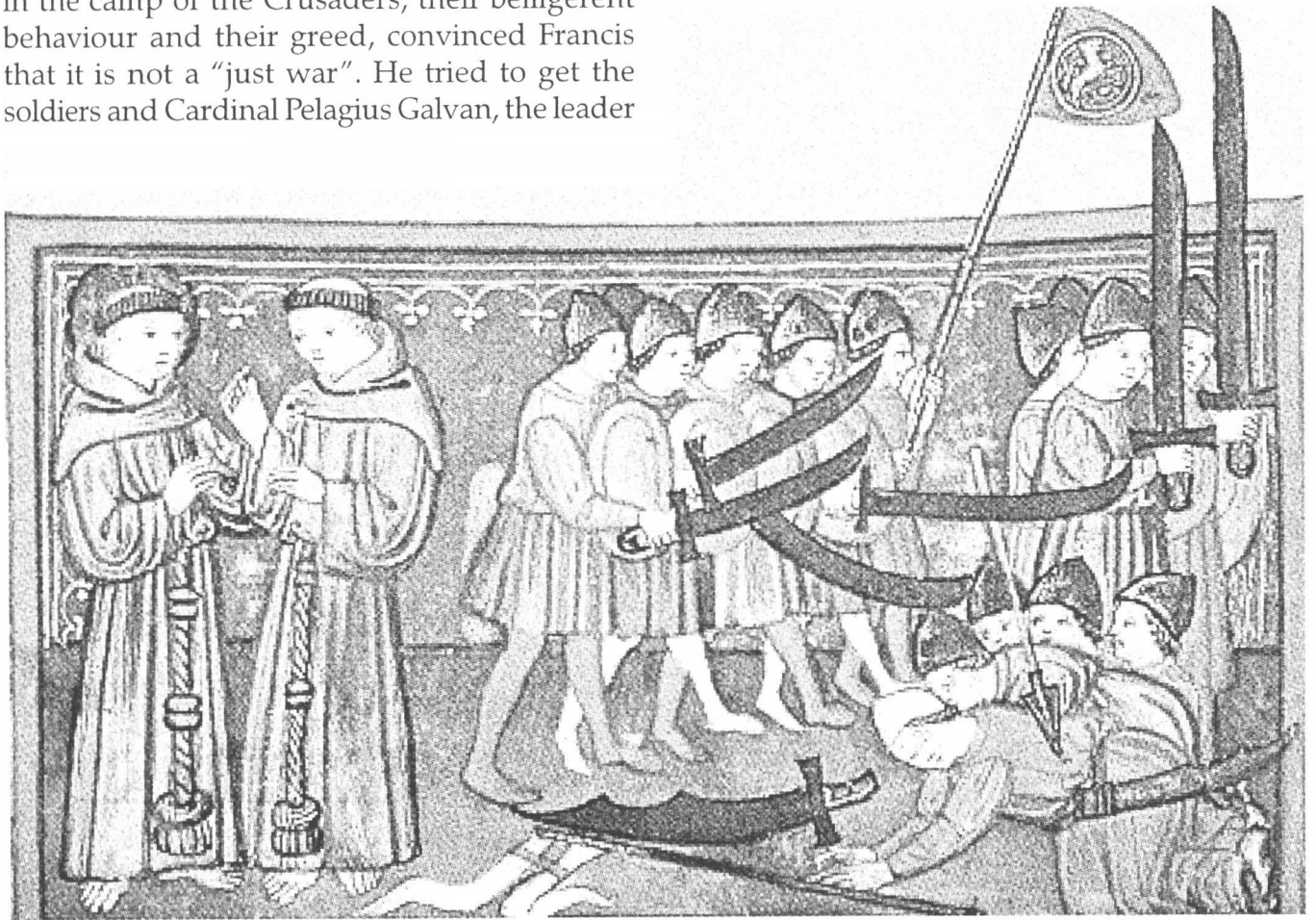




But Francis did not give up the idea of his mission among the Moslems. At the Pentecost Chapter of 1219, he broached the topic to about 3,000 Brothers. It was decided to send Brothers to Tunisia and Morocco. Francis himself wanted to go to Egypt. Together with a few brothers he boarded one of the many ships that were to bring reinforcements to the Crusaders before the walls of the city of Damiette. This time Francis managed to go to Egypt some time during the months of July and August 1219. The excesses in the camp of the Crusaders, their belligerent behaviour and their greed, convinced Francis that it is not a "just war". He tried to get the soldiers and Cardinal Pelagius Galvan, the leader

of the Crusade, to declare a cease-fire and to accept the offer of peace of Sultan Melek-el-Khamil.

But the power politics of the Christians would not relent; total victory had to be achieved. On August 29, the Crusaders were attacked by a Moslem army, resulting in the death of 6,000. It was only after this defeat that the Cardinal allowed the *Poverello* to visit the Sultan, but at his own risk.



*Francis tries to hold back the Christian troops from battle during the Crusade before Damiette.*

Francis, together with Brother Illuminatus, crossed no-man's-land between the military camps and reached the Sultan (cf. LMj 9,8). Jacques de Vitry, a reliable witness, describes it:

*For several days the Sultan listened attentively to Francis preach the Faith of Christ to him and his people. But in the end he was afraid of seeing some of*

*his soldiers, whom the effective words of this man would have converted to the Lord, go over to the army of the Christians. He therefore had Francis led back to our camp with many signs of honour and with safe-conduct, but not without saying to him: 'Pray for me that God may reveal to me the law and faith that is more pleasing to Him' (JdV 32).*



Francis had obviously made an impression. His real objective, however, he had not reached: namely neither martyrdom for which he yearned, nor the conversion of the Sultan, for which he had hoped, nor peace between Christians and Moslems, which he had committed himself to work for. In no way was he able to push through his new idea of a Crusade without weapons. In spite of this, the way in which

Francis approached the Sultan was the beginning of a new development, a prophetic sign of a new attitude. Francis lived the tolerance and openness of the Gospel, while proclaiming its message and demanding conversion. In this respect, he himself became the *"forma minorum,"* the principle according to which the Franciscan missionary must be formed.



### The Franciscan "Missionary Statute"

One fruit of the meeting with the world of Islam is found in Chapter 16 of the Rule of 1221, which we would probably call today the *"Missionary Statute"*. This statute contains St. Francis' original idea of mission, which he first addressed to his own brothers. But today we see it as a message to all the Franciscan communities:

*As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to*

*every human creature for God's sake (1 Pet 2:13) and to acknowledge that they are Christians. Another way is to proclaim the Word of God, when they see that it pleases the Lord, so that they believe in the all-powerful God, – Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit – the Creator of all, in the Son, Who is the Redeemer and Saviour, and that they be baptised and become Christians, because whoever has not been born again of water and the Holy Spirit, cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (ER 16,5 ff.).*

### Going Through the World Without Arguments and Disputes

Whoever follows Francis must *"go into the world"* (ER 14 ff.) as a brother and must not rise above others but remain humble and always make himself available to others. The Brothers must have no other intention but to bring the peace of Christ. They must not boast and not acquire any possessions. Those who live among the Saracens are to have the same attitude. *Minority and brotherhood* are the ways to peace, and there-

fore the method of their missionary activity. Their concern for peace on earth helps them to discover how they should behave among Moslems and among people of other faiths as they proclaim the Gospel. They proclaim the word of God *"not by words but more by example,"* and in any case without quarrelling and polemics. Their lifestyle as itinerant preachers reflects the same apostolic life of wandering that Jesus led.



## To be "Subject to Every Human Creature For God's Sake"

3.2

The heart of Franciscan spirituality is *"being subject to"*. This moves Francis from the Rule of 1221 until his last writing. In his testament he stated: *"and we were simple and subject to everyone"* (Test 19). The Brothers were and are called to relate to people and to the whole of creation in a new way: hierarchical structures based on authority, power and exploitation must count nothing among them. They chose loving kindness, mutual respect and brotherly equality. This influences their choice of tasks, of working methods and of their social contacts. Their decision to *"be subject to"* essentially determines also the Brothers' understanding of mission and their attitude towards the Saracens. Instead of submitting the Saracens to the political power of the West, the Brothers are admonished to be subject to the Saracens. As Christians they should share their life, their work and their food with others. In

doing this, they acted against the laws of the Church during their time, which did not allow Christians to serve pagans.

A final word about *"for God's sake"*: the interpretation most consistent with Francis' personal experience reads in the words *"for God's sake"* another reference to God's humility made visible and concrete on earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Such humility would enable the Brothers to open their hearts to the presence of the Holy Spirit also among the Saracens. The Brothers would be able to admire their religiosity, their holy book, and the holy names of God, and their call to prayer.

This tolerance of others did not mean surrendering their Christian identity. They professed to be Christians.



*Franciscans among people.*

## Preaching: "...when they see that it pleases the Lord"

3.3

Proclamation and baptism come second after the priority of lifestyle and submission, *"being subject to"*. The living example says more than many words: *"more by example than by word"* (L3C 36). The theological tradition about the necessity of

baptism had been very different. In accordance with the understanding of the Church, conversion and baptism decided the salvation or condemnation of a person.



The directive about a simple witness through lifestyle is to be observed by all brothers. Even the brother-preachers must first listen and await a sign from God before they can start preaching. They were not proprietors of the word, but had first to listen and look for God's pleasure. Incidentally, Pope Innocent III also waited for a sign from God, but in his case it was a sign to start the war.

Moslems always expect a sign from God as a very normal thing in life: Whatever they do, they do it always *Inshallah* (God willing).

After discovering God's active presence among the Moslems, it becomes a lawful question for Francis and the Brothers: "*Does it please God that we start preaching to the Saracens?*" God is their "*Creator and Saviour*" (ER 16,7), actively present among them. Thus he himself transcended the

boundaries of Christianity and the cultural limitation of theological concepts. God surely does not exclude the Saracens from His boundless goodness. Was it not therefore logical to await a sign from God and leave it to Him, when and if they were to preach their vision on faith and salvation?

What signs are they to expect? Francis does not go into much detail. God surely does not want quarrels and disputes in their preaching. Any feeling of superiority is excluded as well. More positively, one could say that it surely pleases God to build on a spirit of mutual esteem and respect.

Such an atmosphere can only be achieved, if the Brothers practice their dialogue of life, their first way of going among the Saracens.

## Proclaiming the Word of God

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It is not necessary to proclaim an Almighty God to the Saracens. Christians and Saracens share this faith with each other. Francis goes a step further: he adds the idea of a Triune God. He does so without any criticism or disparaging remark about the Islamic belief or the Prophet Mohammed. For Francis, the belief in the Trinity is not simply a phrase but can be experienced in life: in creation, redemption and sanctification. Who of the Brothers is to preach? To be sure, no Brother can claim the office of preaching as proprietor (cf. ER 17,4) and all have to preach by their example.

What then is the task of the priests who joined the Order in increasing numbers? Since baptism, itself a fruit of preaching, may be administered only by a priest (cf. ER 16,7), Francis entrusted

the second way of mission, proclamation and baptism, to the Brothers who were also priests. Besides, the preaching about the Trinity required a theological training which only priests could receive in those days.



*Francis meets the Sultan of Damiette.*



The outcome of preaching can be twofold: it either leads to the acceptance of the Christian faith in baptism or the preacher experiences opposition and rejection of it, often leading to persecution and martyrdom. Baptism, like preaching, is only done if it pleases God.

The quotation from John 3:5 about the necessity of baptism for salvation does not seem quite logical in view of what has been said. If baptism were an absolute condition for everyone to be saved, there would be no further need for a sign of God's pleasure. This quotation from John has either been added without further thought, or it has been inserted later. (We know that Caesar of Speyer was given the task to supply the Rule of 1221 written by Francis with quotations from the Bible.)

What is more important is that, in this text, Francis concludes the section urging the Brothers not to waver and not to be ashamed of the Son of Man (cf. ER 16,8).

The message of the Gospel can also meet with opposition and rejection. For the Brothers who meet with such adversity, Francis has only one counsel which holds good for the Brothers "*wherever they are*". They were to follow the example of Jesus, who surrendered His body in the service to the people (cf. ER 16,10 ff). This is the core of obedience and of minority.

The "*Missionary Statute*" begins with the word of Jesus: "*See, I send you out like sheep among wolves*" (Mt 10:16). Thus, the whole of Chapter 16 stands under the motto of the missionary vocation and from the very start, the dangers of this missionary vocation are expressly recalled. Mission can cost life and limb. Whoever exposes himself or puts himself at risk as Jesus did, must count on suffering the same fate as He did. The first Brothers had to experience this in their own persons (cf. ChrJG 5 f.).



### Effects of the

### Franciscan Missionary Ideal

We do not know how far the influence of Francis' high ideal had reached. We do know, however, that the first martyrs from the Franciscan Order in Morocco did not let themselves be guided by this spirit. The peaceful co-existence of Christians and Moslems had been a matter of fact there, until the imprudent behaviour of the Brothers destroyed it (cf. ER 16,1). The way they engaged in polemics against Mohammed, reached a point where it became too much even for the Christians residing there and they asked the Brothers to leave and sent them back in a ship. Yet these returned and continued their polemics. Because of this, the Moslems beheaded them.

Recent studies on Clare of Assisi revealed that Clare herself thought of going on mission and to die a martyr. She wanted to leave the seclusion of San Damiano and follow the example of the five martyrs of Morocco. This dramatic moment in the life of Clare is confirmed in the files of her canonisation :

*Lady Clare was so much filled with the fire of the Spirit that, for the sake of her love of God, she wanted to die a martyr. That became evident when she learned that some Brothers in Morocco had been tortured, and she expressed her intention to go there herself (Pro 6,6).*



Another witness gave her testimony:

*She would have wanted to die a martyr for the sake of her love of God, in order to defend her faith and her religious order. Before she fell ill, she wished to go to Morocco, the place where, as one says, the Brothers had died as martyrs (Pro 7,2).*

That the two witnesses, Sr. Cecilia and Sr.

Balbina, can clearly recall this wish of Clare in 1253 (i.e. 33 years after this event), indicates the seriousness and authenticity of her concern. We must point out that the entire history of the Franciscan mission is full of similar positive and negative examples (cf. LU 8). In the following section we wish to describe two direct effects on Francis of Assisi himself.

## Ecumenical Signs

4.1.



*The Muezzin calls the faithful to prayer.*



*The custom of the Angelus bell was introduced by St. Bonaventure.*

*and whenever the bells are rung, praise, glory, and honour are given to the all-powerful God throughout all the earth (1LtCus 8; cf. LtOrd 4).*

What Francis wrote in the letter quoted above to those in responsibility in the Order of Friars Minor, he repeated in another letter addressed to the political leaders of the time, because he was aware that

he was touching on a matter of political concern that can only be endorsed by the "secular arm":

*See to it that God is held in great reverence among your subjects; every evening, at a signal given by a herald or in some other way, praise and thanks should be given to the Lord God Almighty (LTr 7).*

While in the Orient, Francis experienced the call of the Muezzin to prayer (= *salât*), summoning the people to prayer, to prostrate themselves before God. In a letter he referred to this Islamic custom, for he was so taken by this Muslim form of praising God that he wanted to introduce a similar sign to the West. The praise of God should link both Muslims and Christians. Therefore he stressed that "all the earth" should enter into this prayer when he writes:

*And you must announce and preach His praise to all peoples in such a manner that at every hour*

By means of such a sign, the common belief in the Almighty God would find a common expression. Unfortunately, this appeal was not heeded immediately. With the custom of the Angelus bell introduced by Bonaventure later, Francis' wish was to a certain extent fulfilled, but without reference to the *salât* and without the ecumenical significance which Francis wanted it to have.

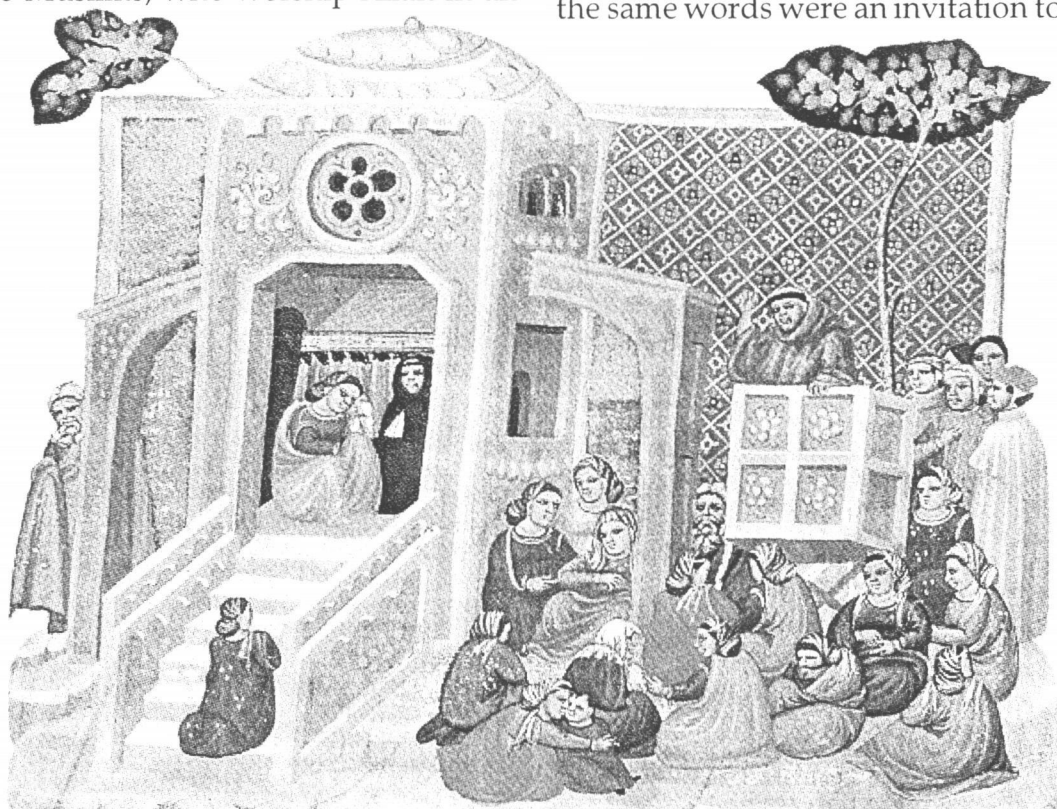
A theology of the loving-kindness of God which includes the Muslims, strengthens the foundation for a dialogue between the Christians and the Muslims.



The meeting between Francis and the Sultan was an important event in Francis' life and spiritual development. His biographers tend to underestimate this. They only look at the political results and the failure to convert the Sultan (cf. 1C 55). The meeting deepened Francis' own insights. He rejoiced in God's active presence among the Muslims, who worship Allah in an

the earthly life of Jesus, helped him to read Holy Scripture in a new way: for example Mt 16:24 – ER 1,3; Mt 19:19 – ER 1,5; Mt 5:39 – ER 14,4.

Francis and the Pope read the same texts in opposite directions: for the church authorities, texts like "Jesus carrying the cross" justified a violent reconquest of the Holy Places, while for Francis, the same words were an invitation to a life with-



*A Friar preaching among the Muslims.*

impressive practice of prayer and whose Name they learn in a Holy Book, as Christians themselves also do. Francis could have dreamed of a world in which the Muslims and the Christians would mutually enrich one another's concept of God.

Francis' missionary model offers us further insight into his inner life. During his missionary journey, he was confirmed in his understanding of God. Against the different image of the powerful God of the Crusaders, the God of his Brothers revealed Himself as humility in Jesus. This God of humility and of service, revealed in

out possessions and without violence. As a consequence, to fulfil his mission of peace, Francis found guidance only in "divine inspiration" (ER 16,3). He could not expect understanding from those who were preparing for war.

The unity of life and mission has yet another application: Francis was close to ordinary people in their own *milieu*: fields, workshops, homes, leper hospices where the brothers served the people and brought about peace. The search for truth follows the same process. Life turns into a journey of discovering God's presence also among other peoples, and listening to what God

has to tell them in an ever new situation. Francis' refusal to engage in quarrels or disputes originates in his conviction that God is humility, and humans are no masters or owners of truth; wherever it shows up in the stories of humans and all creation, they are explorers towards truth.

This closeness to people and the readiness to serve them is more at home in a lay spirituality than it is among clerics. Francis' spirituality is, therefore, in mortal danger from the day the clericalization of the Order sets in. No wonder the spirituality of submission disappeared from the Later Rule. When Francis remarked in his testament, "I used to work with my hands and I still desire to work; and I firmly wish that all my Brothers give themselves to honest manual work" (Test 20); this is a

sad, but final echo of the early days of his dreams.

In accordance with his principle to evangelise more by example than by words, Francis never saw preaching as his first duty. The thinking in the Church of his time was different.

The preaching of truth was the highest priority and necessary for salvation. Again, Francis draws inspiration from a different viewpoint which sees God present also among Muslims, where he works much good among them. Francis is not negative about Islam, nor does he restrict God within the boundaries of Christianity or to a culture-bound theology. Instead, Francis surrenders to the Divine mystery of Salvation, which includes all people, and waits patiently for Divine inspiration before deciding or doing anything at all.



## Conclusion

Francis' vision on mission, in its original purity, has been short-lived. In the very first period when the Brothers slowly grew in their conviction and formulated their vision on peace and their mission model in the Earlier Rule of 1221, they stood alone, outside the mainstream of the Church, where authorities busied themselves with war and submission of the enemy.

Towards the end of Francis' life, a growing opposition within the fraternity chose for a more accommodating, hierarchical and clerical structure of the Order instead of the alternate lay fraternity of the early days of the movement. In the course of history, followers of Francis, from time to time, have reached back to Francis' ideals, but their efforts often suffered a similar fate as that in the time of the foundation of the movement.

In our time of conciliar renewal in missionary evangelization and refounding of religious life, no efforts should be spared to focus on Francis' vision which was far ahead of his time, but may, – *Inshallah* – be an excellent bridge to a missionary period of dialogue and a joint commitment to peace in the world.



*Small Christian Community in Guatemala.*





## Church Documents and Franciscan Sources:

Scripture	Mt 10; 16,24; Lk 9,26; 1 Pet 2,12.
Church Documents	
Franciscan Sources	1LtCus 8; LtR 7; TPJ; ER 1,3,5; 14-17; LR 1,5;12; Test 19f.; 1C 29.55f; L3C 36; LMj 9,8; ChrJG 5; JdV 32; 1LAg 15 ff.; 2LAg 15 ff.; 4LAg 22; Proc 6,6; 7,2.
Inter-Franciscan Documents	
OFM, OFMCap, OFMConv.	General Constitution OFMCap 5, Art. 87; 89; 93; 95; 100; 118.
Poor Clares	
Third Order Regular	Rule No. 9; 29; 30.
Third Order Secular	Rule No. 17,1 ff.; 101.
Supplements	

Note: The sources may be completed by the participants of the course.

## Exercises



### Exercise

In his letter *"Quia maior"* from April 19-29 in the year 1213, Pope Innocent III called *"in the name of God and Jesus Christ"* all provinces of Latin-Christianity of that time to join the Crusade. The participants in the Crusade are promised: *"He (Jesus) calls with his own voice and says: 'If anyone wishes to come to Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me (Mt 16:24)', or, to say it more clearly: 'If anyone wants to follow Me until the crown, he must also follow Me even in the struggle which is being offered as a test to all men.'"*

Those who refuse are threatened: *"The King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ will condemn them for the vice of ingratitude and for the crime of infidelity, if they fail to come to His help, because He, as it is the*

*case, was driven out of His Kingdom which He acquired at the price of His blood. They should know that anyone who refuses His Redeemer the service in this time of need, has committed a grave sin and has to be charged with serious guilt."*

### Tasks and Questions

1. Read and compare the difference in the interpretation of Mt 16:24 of Pope Innocent III and of Francis' Early Rule 1:3.
2. What relationship between PEACE and MISSION can you establish after studying this lesson?





## Exercise

2.

### Read this story of "True and Perfect Joy":

Brother Leonard related, in the same place (the Portiuncula), that one day at St. Mary's the blessed Francis called Brother Leo and said: "Brother Leo, write!" He answered: "I am ready!" "Write," Francis said, "what true joy is: A messenger comes and says that all the masters in Paris have come into the Order; write: this is not true joy. Or that all the prelates beyond the mountains have entered the Order; as well as the archbishops and bishops; or, that the king of France and the king of England have entered the Order; write: this is not true joy. Again, that my brothers have gone to the nonbelievers and converted all of them to the faith; again, that I have so much grace from God that I heal the sick and perform many miracles. I tell you, that true joy does not consist in any of these things."

"What then, is true joy?"

"I return from Perugia and arrive here in the dead of night; and it is winter time, muddy and so cold that

icicles have formed on the edges of my habit and keep striking my legs, and blood flows from such wounds. And all covered with mud and cold, I come to the gate and after I have knocked and called for some time, a brother comes and asks: 'Who are you?' I answer: 'Brother Francis'. And he says, 'Go away! This is not a proper hour for going about; you may not come in'. And when I insist, he answers: 'Go away, you are a simple and a stupid person; we are so many and we have no need of you. You are certainly not coming to us at this hour.' And I stand again at the door and say, 'For the love of God, take me in tonight.' And he answers: 'I will not. Go to the Crosiers' place and ask there.' If I had patience and did not become upset, there would be true joy in this and true virtue and the salvation of the soul."

### Question

What does the story of the "true and perfect joy" have in common with the missionary method of Francis?



## Exercise

3.

### Read the "Letter to the Rulers of the People" and the beginning of the "Second Letter to the Faithful":

#### 1. Letter to the Rulers of the People:

To all mayors and consuls, magistrates and rulers throughout the world, and to everyone who may receive these letters: Brother Francis, your little and despicable servant in the Lord God, sends wishes of health and peace to all of you.

Pause and reflect, for the day of death is approaching (cf. Gen 47:29). I beg you, therefore, with all possible respect, not to forget the Lord or turn away from His commandments, by reason of the cares and preoccupation of this world, for all those who are oblivious of Him and turn away from His commands, are cursed (cf. Ps 118:21) and will be totally forgotten by Him (Ez 33:13). And when the day of death does come,



everything which they think they have will be taken from them (cf. Lk 8:18). And the wiser and more powerful they may have been in this world, so much greater will be the punishments they will endure in hell (cf. Wis 6:7). Therefore, I firmly advise you, my lords, to put aside all care and preoccupation and receive with joy the most holy Body and the most holy Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in holy remembrance of Him.

And you should manifest such honour to the Lord among the people entrusted to you that every evening an announcement be made by a towncrier or some other signal that praise and thanks may be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God". And if you do not do this, know that you must render an account before the Lord your God, Jesus Christ, on the day of judgement (cf. Mt 12:36).

Let those who keep this writing with them and observe it know that they will be blessed by the Lord God.

## 2. Second Letter to the Faithful (1-3):

In the name of the Father and the of Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. To all Christian religious: clergy and laity, men and women, and to all who live in the whole world, Brother Francis, their servant and subject, (offers) homage and reverence, true peace from heaven and sincere love in the Lord.

Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to administer to them the fragrant words of my Lord. Therefore, on reflecting that, since I cannot visit each one of you in person because of the infirmity and weakness of my body, I have proposed to set before you in this present letter and message the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are "spirit and life" (Jn 6:64).

### Question

How does Francis' consciousness of his mission link up with his humility?



### Exercise

Compare Chapter 16 of the Early Rule (1221) with Chapter 12 in the Later Rule (1223):

ER 16: *Those who are going among the Saracens and other nonbelievers.*

1. The Lord says: *Behold, I am sending you as lambs in the midst of wolves.*
2. Therefore, *be prudent as serpents and simple as doves* (Mt 10:16).
3. Therefore, any brother who, by divine inspiration, desires to go among the Saracens and other nonbelievers, should go with the permission of his minister and servant.
4. And the minister should give these brothers permission and not oppose them, if he

shall see that they are fit to be sent; for he shall be bound to give an account to the Lord (cf. Lk 16:2) if he has proceeded without discretion in this or in other matters.

5. As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens and other nonbelievers in two ways.
6. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake (1 Pet 2:13) and to acknowledge that they are Christians.
7. Another way is to proclaim the Word of God when they see that it pleases the Lord, so that they believe in the all-powerful God – Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit – the Cre-



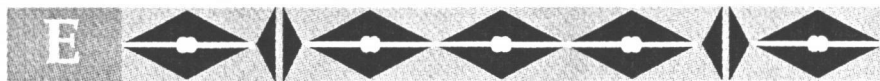
- ator of all, in the Son Who is the Redeemer and Saviour, and that they be baptised and become Christians; because *whoever has not been born again of water and the Holy Spirit, cannot enter into the Kingdom of God* (cf. Jn 3:5).
8. They can say to the Saracens and to others these and other things which will have pleased the Lord, for the Lord says in the Gospel: *Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father Who is in heaven* (Mt 10:32).
  9. And: *Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in His majesty and that of the Father and the angels* (Lk 9:26).
  10. And all the brothers, wherever they may be, should remember that they gave themselves and abandoned their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ.
  11. And for love of Him, they must make themselves vulnerable to their enemies, both visible and invisible, because the Lord says: *Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it* (cf. Lk 9:24) *in eternal life* (Mt. 25:46).
  12. *Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs* (Mt 5:10).
  13. *If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you* (Jn 15:20).
  14. And: *If they persecute you in one city, flee to another* (cf. Mt 10:23).
  15. *Blessed are you when people shall hate you* (Lk 6:22) *and malign* (cf. Mt 5:11) *and persecute you and drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as evil* (Lk 6:22) *and utter any kind of slander against you because of Me* (Mt 5:11).
  16. *Rejoice on that day and be glad* (Lk 6:23), *because your reward is very great in heaven* (cf. Mt 5:12).
  17. *And I say to you, my friends, do not be frightened by these things* (Lk 12:4)
  18. *and do not fear those who kill the body* (Mt 10:28) *and after that can do no more* (Lk 12:4).
  19. *Take care not to be disturbed* (Mt 24:6).
  20. *For through your patience, you will possess your souls* (Lk 21:19).
  21. *and whoever perseveres to the end will be saved* (Mt 10:22; 24:13).
- LR 12: Those who go among the Saracens and other nonbelievers.**
1. Those brothers who, by divine inspiration, desire to go among the Saracens and other nonbelievers should ask permission from their ministers provincial.
  2. But the ministers should not grant permission except to those whom they consider fit to be sent.
  3. In addition, I command the ministers through obedience to petition the Lord Pope for one of the cardinals of the holy Roman Church, who would be the governor, protector, and corrector of this fraternity,
  4. so that, always submissive and prostrate at the feet of the same holy Church, and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may observe the poverty and the humility and the holy Gospel (cf. Col 1:23) of our Lord Jesus Christ which we have firmly promised.
- [No one, therefore, is in any way permitted to tamper with this decree of our confirmation or to oppose it rashly. If anyone, however, should presume to attempt this, let it be known that he shall incur the indignation of Almighty God and of His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul. Given at the Lateran, the twenty-ninth day of November in the eighth year of our Pontificate].

#### Question

Where do these two texts agree with each other and where do they differ? What has been left out in the Later Rule of 1223?



# Applications



## Application

### Question

What are your experiences with Franciscan brothers and sisters engaged in mission work?



## Application

2.

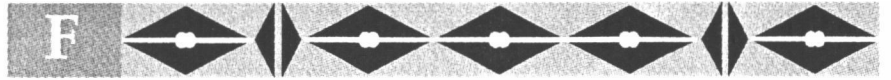
### Questions

How do you see the elements of Francis' mission method applied in your own mission field:

- under divine inspiration?
- being subject to all human creatures for God's sake?
- Inshallah?
- without quarrel and dispute?



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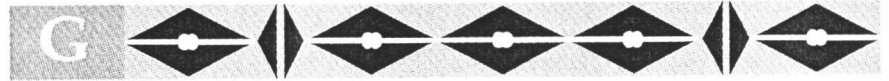
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