

Go,
Rebuild
My Church!

**Comprehensive
Course on the
Franciscan
Mission
Charism**



The Option
for Christ
and
Universality

Lesson Unit 11

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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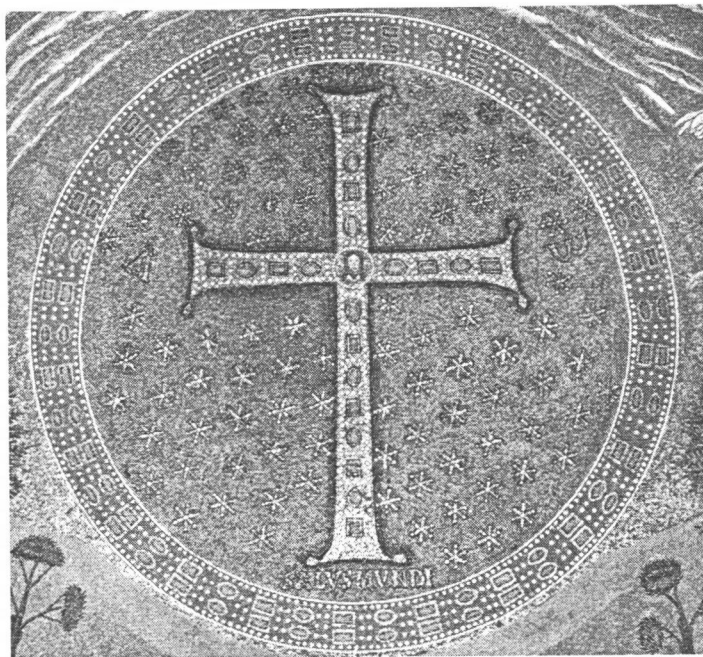
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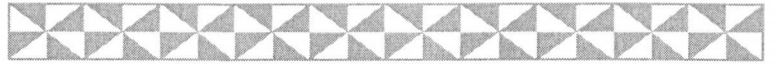
The Option for Christ and Universality



Lesson Unit 11



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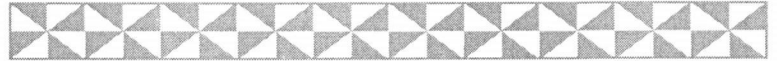


The Option for Christ and Universality

From the Sources Sent into the world

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ent into the World



Francis and his Friars before the Pope.

To Francis' surprise, other men and women also wanted to choose the kind of life that he had discovered through divine inspiration. First came Bernard of Quintavalle, then Peter Catani and the simple Brother Giles. Others followed until finally there were twelve Brothers.

This was a reflection of the twelve tribes of Israel and in imitation of Jesus' twelve apostles who were given the task of bringing life and salvation to the whole world. When Francis realized that, he thought: "We are called for the whole world; therefore let us go to the spiritual centre of the world, to Rome, where the Pope lives. From there we can go out into the whole world to bring the peace and life of God everywhere."

...And so they did: The Pope received them and sent them into the world as witnesses of the Gospel. (cf. L3C. 46ff.)



Introduction

A



He Universal Vision

In his Letter to the Faithful, Francis writes: "Because I am a servant to all, I am committed to serve all and to convey to them the sweet-smelling words of my Lord..." (2LtF 2).

In his Letter to the Rulers of the People, he writes: "To all mayors and consuls, judges and gover-

nors of the whole world whom this letter reaches..." (LtR 1). He also wrote to all the guardians of the Friars Minor and to the entire Order. In the Canticle of Brother Sun, he turns to the entire universe, to the whole of creation! How do we understand this universal view of Francis which is so clearly expressed in his writings?

Survey

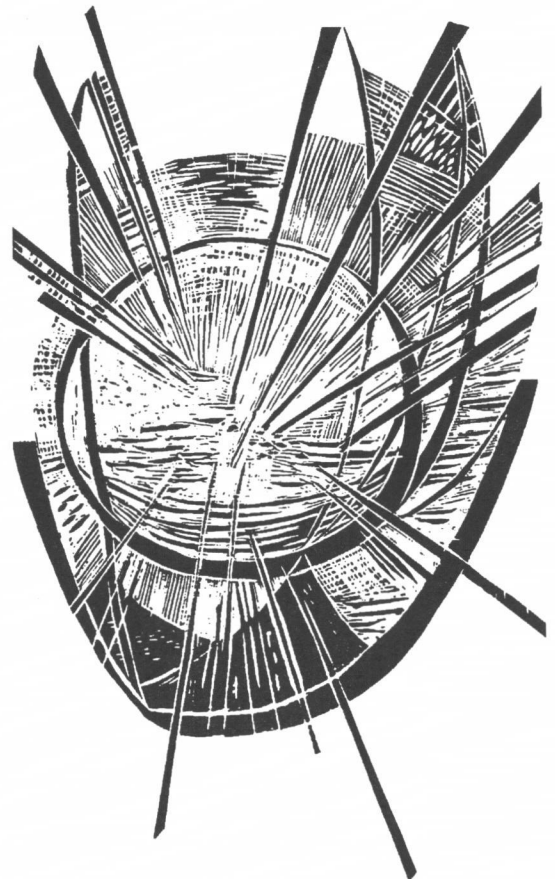
B



Francis can be understood only in the context of his time

He certainly acquired contemporary patterns of thought and behaviour. In some ways he was way beyond his time in sovereign freedom and thus gained insights and attitudes that clearly distinguished him from his contemporaries.

In the first part of this lesson, the prevailing ideas of his time shall be presented as background for a better understanding, not only of Francis, but of certain phrases which are no longer understood today or, if ever, understood the wrong way. One such phrase is probably familiar to everyone: "Outside the Church there is no salvation." Another phrase, "compelle intrare" (force them to enter) consequently leads to forced conversion.



The third phrase, "analogy of the heavenly and earthly hierarchy: the order on earth as a reflection of heaven" has equally devastating consequences, namely, the tendency to a universal theocracy, a political order with the Pope as its head.

In the second part, we will focus on views that are directly found in the writings of St. Francis. They can be summarized as *option for Christ and universal attitude and vision*. This attitude is obvious not only in various expressions but also

in some of the main decisions that he made throughout his life. His exclusive relationship to Jesus Christ as shown in the way he regards the Cross, the Eucharist and the Church, virtually becomes the foundation for his universal vision. From this it follows that mission is essentially conversion to the all-absorbing centre. The Eucharistic letter of Francis cannot be understood in another way. Finally, connections will have to be shown in order to help us understand his vision.

Information



Religious convictions of the 13th Century

During the 13th century, various religious convictions gained popularity and undoubtedly exerted a strong influence. Because these ideas

belong to the background of the life of St. Francis, we must take a closer look at them in order to understand Francis' attitude towards them.

Outside the Church there is no salvation (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*)

The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 solemnly promulgated:

There is only one universal Church of the Faithful. Outside this Church no man can be saved. Within this Church, Jesus Christ is Priest and Sacrifice at the same time. His Body and Blood is the Sacrament of the Altar, truly present in the form of bread and wine. By God's Power the bread is transubstantiated into the Body and the wine into the Blood; in this way we receive from

Him what He accepts from us so that the mysterious union may be made perfect (Denzinger 430).

It has to be emphasized that this statement does not actually speak of the relationships existing between religions. The statement "Outside the Church there is no salvation" is more of a creed meant to distinguish the Church from the Waldensians and the Catharists which were establishing themselves as a Christian alternative to the Church and therefore forming an auto-



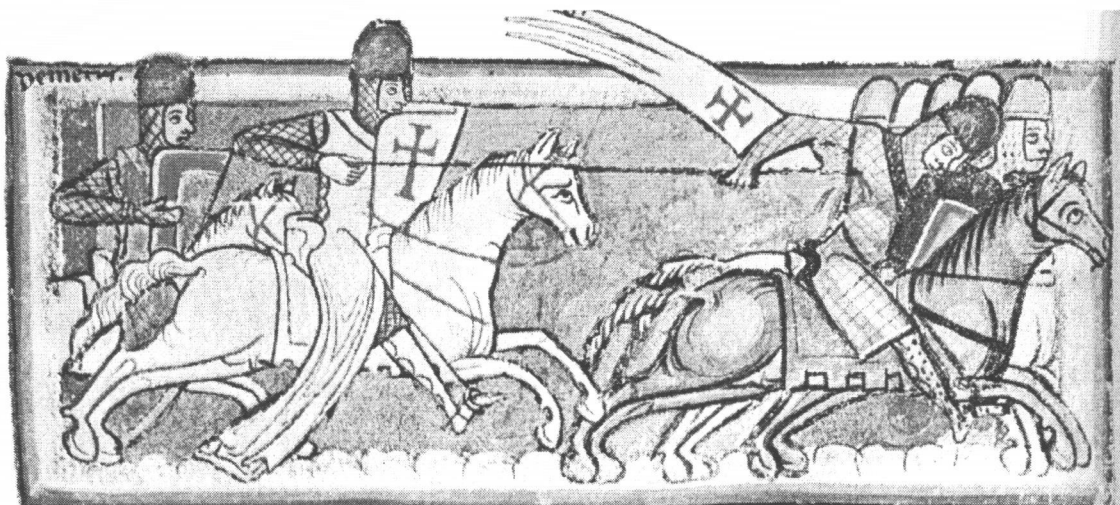
mous institution with its own priests and sacraments. The claim to absolutism expressed in the statement is intended primarily as a domestic policy meant for baptized Christians and is not applied to other religions.

For Francis himself, it is unthinkable to live outside the Church and without its sacraments, but he never turns against the Waldensians and the Catharists in a polemic or abusive way. He constantly stresses the link between universality and the sacramental life. To him the salvation of mankind is closely related to the *"...new signs in heaven and on earth which are great and extraordinary in the sight of God, and yet are considered as of*

little importance by many religious and other people" (1LtCus 1). According to Francis of Assisi, the fate of the world depends, above all, on the Eucharist as well as on Baptism and the Sacrament of Penance. Unfortunately, in the course of time, the interpretation given to the statement made by the Fourth Lateran Council was not only maintained but extended. It was applied to other religions, which were believed to have no positive salvific value at all. Only during the Second Vatican Council were they finally recognized to be paths to salvation in the name of the general Will of God that all humans be saved (cf. LU 15).

Forced Conversion (compelle intrare)

1.2.



The conquest of Jerusalem.

In the course of history, the attempts made by the Church to convert the Slavic people and the Muslims gradually led to a new attitude of impatience. Instead of continuing to preach the Gospel peacefully, the Church resorted to violence. The concept of the *"Just War"* and even of the *"Holy War"* was developed. People became convinced that the end justifies the means. By misusing the Bible (cf. Lk 14, 15-24), people were forced to accept the catholic faith. St. Augustine laid the foundation for this thinking, but the most prominent representative of this view and

a figure that dominated the whole Church is St. Bernard of Clairvaux (+ 1153). So one Crusade after another was unleashed, both against Islam as well as against the contemporary heretical movements in Europe.

Francis and, in his own way, St. Dominic, had freed themselves in this matter from the generally accepted opinion and practice of their time. They treated the 'Unbelievers' and the 'Unorthodox' courteously and without violence (cf. LU 16 & 23).



Trend towards a universal Theocracy

1.3.

The Church reached its apex in political power during the time of Pope Innocent III. This power finally needed an ideological and theological justification. Among the Franciscans, St. Bonaventure (+ 1274) also contributed to this justification. And since there exists only one God and Creator of the whole world, there also exists in the visible area, according to his view, a representative who has to rule the whole world, namely, the Pope.

If we read the writings of St. Francis from this background, we realize that they contain much which is open to such an interpretation. Among

them is his constant emphasis on the special function of the Pope, his uncritical recognition of the actual figure of the Papacy. This is especially seen in his Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples.

And yet the Saint's writings can be understood even without this theocratic tendency. Against the then virtually autonomous bishops, the Friars Minor had to enlist the help of the highest authority. Only papal approval and recognition as well as numerous papal letters (from 1216 onwards) hindered locally the banning or even the persecution of the Order by the bishops.



Francis' universality and breadth of vision based on his option for Christ

2.

Fundamental universality of St. Francis

2.1.

In his writings, the fundamental universality of St. Francis is perhaps his most striking feature. It is revealed in his choice of vocabulary.

- With amazing frequency Francis uses words which, in a positive or negative sense, imply *all* and *every*. Examples are *global, all-embracing, whole, always, whoever, wherever, alone, no one...* From these findings can be concluded that it is legitimate to say "*a universal outlook is typical of St. Francis*" (L. Lehmann).

- *The word all (whole) is used exhaustively by St Francis: it is characteristic of a passionate temperament, but also of a generous heart and an all-embracing and universal mysticism* (Th. Desbonnet & D. Vorreux).

- Similarly we find in the writings of Francis that he often uses enumerations. He likes to list groups, social classes, saints, people and animals (e.g. ER 23:6 ff; ExhP; LtOrd 2,38). His universality is not an abstract idea and does not



lose sight of the individual. He wishes to address each and everyone individually. In his letter to all Christians he writes: "Because I am a servant to all, I am committed to serve everyone." He regrets that, due to illness, he cannot personally visit each one individually (2LtF 2f.).

- Francis often uses the biblical phrase "heaven and earth" in order to unite everything (cf. PrH 7; OfP VII, 4). Or he uses terms from the Greek Philosophy of Nature whose concept of the four elements encompass the whole (Canticle of Brother Sun). He can also remain formal and line up four verses together (four elements, four directions) in order to embrace everything and to understand the whole world as a praying world (cf. PrH).

- Finally, it is interesting to observe how Francis again and again takes "the whole world" into his range of vision (Test 4f.; ER 23:7-11; 2LtF 1f.; LtR; 1LtCus 6ff.).



"Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures!"

The exclusive option for Jesus Christ as the basic reason for Francis' universal view

2.2.

The universal attitude of St. Francis is not merely a theological concept. It is derived directly from his decision to follow Christ and is motivated by his faith. One could even say the exclusive commitment to the One makes him at the same time contemplate everything else with the eyes of faith. This becomes evident in his ejaculatory prayer "My God and All" (Deus meus et omnia): There is only One Being worth living for and that is God. But this One encompasses all, the whole world, all creatures, every single individual be-

ing. It must be pointed out, however, that the usual translations are not accurate. The word *omnia* (all) has no possessive pronoun like the word *Deus* (God). Therefore, one must not translate: "My God and my All." Besides, *omnia* is in the plural form; it means all things, all creation, all that exists, the whole world.

The Christological basis for this universal attitude appears in the writings of St. Francis under various aspects:





Francis and his companions follow Christ on His way of the Cross.

• **The decision for the Cross** (cf. Test 4f.): The salvation of the whole world is anchored in one single moment in history: the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. That is, according to Thomas of Celano, the decisive reason for Francis' missionary attitude. He "*chose not to live for himself alone, but for Him who died for all, knowing that he was sent for this*" (1C 35=2Cor 5:14f). If God gave Himself for the salvation of the world, then the disciple of Jesus, too, must be ready to set his own life at risk. The meditative-mystical gaze at the Crucified One brings the whole world into focus.

The one who follows Jesus is compelled to take up the same options as Jesus in order to share His mission. Francis took this option literally: his decision for the "*poor and humble Christ*" led him to choose for himself and his followers to be *lesser* (minores). This has far-reaching consequences for those who decide to follow the path of the Lord and become His disciples: preaching the Good News to the poor "*to the ends of the earth,*" by dying with Christ and rising with Him. In the present context, this means worldwide, that Franciscans are always on the side of the poor and oppressed, just as Jesus was during His time, and that they contribute to the process of the liberation of the poor (cf. Lk 4:18).

• **The decision for the Eucharist** (cf. Adm 1; Test 10; LtCl 3): St. Francis' thought process must have been the following: it is beyond our power to know God. He dwells in "*light inaccessible*" (1Tim 6:16). There is therefore no bridge by which we can reach God on our own. But God Himself has built such a bridge to us above the abyss: in Jesus Christ. Francis knows of no other way to reach God. But how can all those generations, who are not familiar with the historical Jesus, have access to Him, those who live in later ages? They have access to Him through His Word and through the Sacraments, especially through the Eucharist.

For in this world we have and see nothing corporally of the Most High except His Body and Blood, and the words through which we have been made and have been redeemed from death to life (1Jn 3:14; LtCl 3).



And so it becomes clear why Francis understood his mission as an essentially Eucharistic one.

In almost all of his letters to various groups of people, he stressed the universal and salvific significance of the Eucharist and called for a radical conversion to the "*new signs on heaven and earth*" (1LtCus 1; cf. LtCl; 2LtCus; LR 1-6; LtOrd 5-33).

• **The decision for the Church:** The same references must also be mentioned for this option, since Word and Sacrament have but one frame of reference which has to be accepted. Francis links the spiritual reality of the Eucharist to the institutional reality, the ordained





priesthood, accepting the Roman Church as the only one empowered to ordain certain individuals to celebrate the Eucharist. According to Francis, outside this framework there can be no celebration of the Eucharist (cf. Test 7-13). Consequently, Francis' attitude of universality was not restricted to a *horizontal* and temporal dimension; rather, it has to be understood as *vertically* anchored in God. There must be no narrow piety, just as there must not be a merely world-immanent universality, because everything refers to God (cf. LU 1, C.2.2).

Conversion to the all-absorbing centre

2.3.

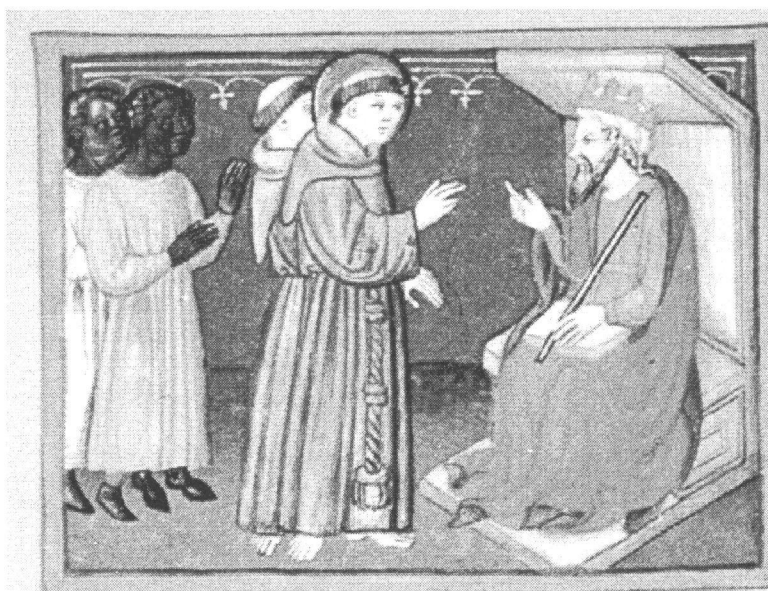
As for Francis the contemplation of Jesus Christ opens us to universality, he also feels called to stress the exact opposite as well: the Universe must converge on the all-absorbing centre, Jesus Christ, the Eucharist, the Church (cf. above 2.2). Francis, however, does not employ violent means to this end, but uses penitential preaching (*exhortatio*), exhorting everyone to repent and to acknowledge God as the Creator, the Redeemer and Saviour and turn to Him who is the only source of Life and Salvation. That is the reason why he writes those many letters to all the faithful, to all the rulers of the peoples, to all the clergy, to all custodians.

For his penitential exhortations there exists a standard model (cf. ER 21) and a concrete example (cf. CtC). He envisages one single worldwide community which is conscious of being united in praising God:

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 town crier, or some other signal, that praise and thanks may be given by all people to the all-powerful Lord God (LtR 6f).

It is important to stress that Francis did not only address peoples already Christianized, but – at least in his intention – all rulers in the whole world (LtR 1). Francis' journey to Egypt and the chapter about the "*Saracens and other unbelievers*" (ER 16) must be understood with this in mind (cf. LU 7).



Francis encounters
Sultan Melek-el-Kamil of Egypt.



This Franciscan concept is undoubtedly impressive in its association of decisiveness and openness. And yet for our modern minds there is a lot in it which is incomprehensible or unrealistic. Therefore, here are some aids to a better understanding.

By associating his option for Jesus Christ and his attitude of universality, Francis did not want to make any theological statements about other religions. Francis would have been taxed beyond his powers, if he were expected to give objective theological evaluations. In this matter we have at least made some headway since the Second Vatican Council (cf. NA; EN 80; RH 11 & 13; RM 28f, 55ff.; Mattli 1978: 27). The other religions have their own specific value; they are positive paths of God with humanity. We shall take up this topic more intensively in another lesson (cf. LU 15).

Certainly Francis could not yet have considered the objective value of other religions. But whoever focuses his whole love and all his attention on Jesus Christ, as Francis did, will experience this attachment to The One as a liberation towards the All. Obviously Francis seems to have been impressed by the world of Islam, and his notion of the transcendence of God must have deepened during his time in Egypt. In this connection, an admonition Francis gave to one of his friars is revealing:

One day, when he was asked by a certain brother why he so diligently picked up writings even of pagans or writings in which there was no mention of the name of the Lord, he replied: "Son, because the letters are there out of which the most glorious name of the Lord God could be put together. Whatever is good there does not pertain to the pagans, nor to any other person, but to God alone, to whom belongs every good." (1C 82). This text is significant in two ways:

- Everything, even all that is not explicitly Christian, even the non-Christian world is

directed towards Christ. In other words, even non-Christian or un-Christian things and people can contribute to the spelling out of the name of Jesus, and contribute to a better understanding of Him.

- Nobody has a monopoly of goodness, not even the Church, but only God alone (cf. LG 8). And He is free to bestow upon all whom He will whatever belongs to Him.

Whoever meditates on the content of the "*Canticle of Brother Sun*" does not get the impression of reading a specifically Christian text. It could just as well have originated in the world of Amerindian, African or Oriental thought. The Christian element of the text is apparent only in its formal structure:

- Frequently, three adjectives are repeated. Whoever is acquainted with medieval stylistic conventions will remember that such a triple scheme was often used to point to the vestiges of the Trinity in Creation. St. Bonaventure, a fervent mystic who meditated deeply on the Holy Trinity, used this scheme in most of his theological works. Therefore, we may assume that Francis also wanted to express that creation is penetrated to its core by the mystery of the Triune God. The Christian, when looking at creation, cannot fall back on a vague religiosity, but will discover God everywhere, the God who has revealed Himself to him as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- In its original text, the *Canticle* consisted of 33 lines. This number, a reminder of the 33 years of Jesus' life, also belongs to the stylistic principles of medieval thought. The Blessed Luitgardis of Wittichen (* 1348), a German Franciscan nun from the Black Forest, did not, for this reason, want to accept more than 33 Sisters into her convent. For her, a prayer unit consisted of 33 days, and so on. It can be assumed, therefore, that the number of lines in the "*Canticle of Brother Sun*" was not accidental, but a

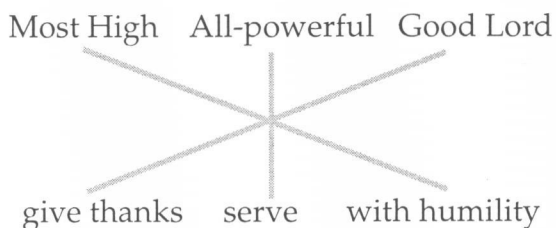




The Holy Trinity
in the Garden of Eden.

deliberate effort to refer to a world that is deeply imbued by the presence of Jesus Christ.

- There exists a unique relationship between the first and the last lines of the *Canticle*. Individual words can be linked in such a way that certain word-pairs appear which are commonly associated with each other in Francis' writings:



These word pairs form the star-shaped monogram of Christ. It was probably intended to be so. It shows the conviction that the whole creation is borne by Christ and that the history of the world has been decided positively by His Cross and Resurrection.

It is as though Francis had wanted to imprint the specifically Christian element upon the whole world, proclaiming Christ as "world-immanent." The Incarnation of God is a visible expression of His closeness, of His presence in the world. The universal vision of Francis is anchored in this fundamental belief; God, in Christ, is his all-absorbing centre. From this centre, Francis can address all creatures as Brother and Sister. It is not the content of dogma that counts most of all, but what is specifically Christian.



Church Documents and Franciscan Sources

Scripture	1Tim 6:16
Documents of the Church	NA; EN 80; RH 11,13; RM 28f.; 55 ff; FD-Introduction.
Franciscan Sources:	2LtF 2f.; LtCl 3; 1LtCus 1; LtR 1; LR 9; 2&4LAg; TestCl 4; 1C 35, 82; L3S 46ff; LFI 8.
Inter-Franciscan Documents	
OFM, OFMConv, OFMConv.	Mattli 1978, 27.
Poor Clares	
Third Order Regular/Secular Supplements	

Please add your own documents!

Exercises



Exercise

Express your comments on the following opinion of Roger Bacon (+ 1292) about “forced conversion”:

All people want to become Christians, if the Church would let them be free and would let them share in peace the goods of this world. But the Christian princes who are aiming at their conversion, above all the brothers of the German tongue, want to lead them into slavery. The Order of Preachers and the Friars Minor in all of Germany and Poland know about this. They take a stand against the pagans, and these resist the force employed, but not because they have a better faith...

Violence can bring success only by chance, as can be seen from all wars here and beyond the seas. Wisdom, on the other hand, is guided by an interior law and leads unerringly to the desired end.

Roger Bacon: “Moralis philosophia”, quoted from: A. Rotzetter.

Question

1. Does Bacon’s opinion coincide with that of St. Francis?
2. What are the differences in their views?





Exercise

The following story, called "Perfect Joy," is one of the most familiar texts on St. Francis. It is re-told later, expanded, in the Fioretti (Ch. 8-9):



The same Brother (Leonardus) has also told that the Blessed Francis called Brother Leo one day near St. Mary's and said: "Write, Brother Leo!"

He answered: "Look, I am ready."

"Write what true joy is! A messenger comes in and says that all the learned men from Paris have joined the Order. Write that that is not true joy. Similarly, that all the prelates beyond the Alps, the archbishops and the bishops, as well as the King of France and the King of England have done so, too. Write down that that is not true joy either. Similarly, that my friars have gone to the pagans and they have all been converted to the Faith; similarly, that I have received from God the great grace of the gift of healing the sick and can work miracles. I tell you that in all this true joy is not to be found."

"What, then, is true joy?"

"I return from Perugia and arrive here very late. It is wintertime and so cold that the wet mud has frozen on the hem of my habit, cutting into my legs so that the blood flows. And so I come to the gatehouse covered in filth and ice and bitterly cold. After I have

been knocking at the gate for a long time and have been shouting, the Brother comes and says, 'Who is that?' I answer, 'Brother Francis.' And he says, 'Go away! It is no decent time to be abroad. You won't be getting in here.'

And after I have pleaded once again, he answers: 'Go away! You are a notorious, ignorant simpleton. We are not having you. There are so many of us and of such quality that we have no need of you.'

So here I am once again standing at the gate and pleading: 'For the love of God, take me in just for this one night.' And he answers, 'Go to the Crutched Friars and beg there!'

I tell you, if I remain patient and do not get excited, then that is true joy, and true virtue, and salvation for the soul" (TPJ).

This text can be read under the heading: "Mission as Visible Success" or "Mission as Decision for Jesus Christ".

Questions

1. How does Francis judge the visible success of missionary work?
2. What is more important in Francis' view?



Exercise

Read the following two texts taken from Papal documents:

- **Introductory words from the Encyclical "Fidei Donum" of Pope Pius XII (1957):**

It is our duty to thank God, the Divine Originator,

for the incomparable gift of Faith which He has placed in our hearts. For it is Faith that leads us into the mysteries of Divine Life, it gives us hope of heavenly bliss; it cements the unity of the Christian communion even in this life according to the words of the Apostle: 'One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism' (Eph 4:5). Through the grace of this Divine Gift, the testi-



mony arises in our hearts: 'How shall I repay the Lord for all that He has done unto me?' (Ps 114:12). What can We offer the Lord for this Divine Gift except faithfulness and obedience? Can We offer anything more acceptable than the proclamation of the light of Truth among us? A missionary spirit, filled with the fire of Christian love is certainly the first answer of human gratitude towards God. Whoever brings the gift of faith to other people thanks God by this means.

As We think of the immeasurable host of Our children, especially in those lands of ancient Christendom which enjoy the favours of Holy Faith, We are reminded at the same time of the far greater host of people who are still awaiting the message of Salvation. Therefore, We would like to request you, Reverend Brothers, most urgently to support zealously the propagation of the Church of God throughout the whole world. May the missionary spirit of the clergy be increased by Our admonition and through it, may the same spirit be awakened in all the faithful.

• **From the Apostolic Letter "Evangelii Nuntiandi" of Pope Paul VI (1975):**

With the zeal of the Saints

Our appeal here is inspired by the fervour of the greatest preachers and evangelizers whose lives were devoted to the apostolate. Among these we are glad to point out those whom we have proposed for the veneration of the faithful during the course of the Holy Year. They have known how to overcome many obstacles to evangelization.

Such obstacles are also present today and we shall limit ourselves to mentioning the lack of fervour. It is all the more serious because it comes from within. It is manifested in fatigue, disenchantment, compromise, lack of interest and, above all, lack of joy and hope. We exhort all those who have the task of evangelizing, by whatever title and at whatever level, always to nourish spiritual fervour.

This fervour demands first of all that we should know how to put aside the excuses which would impede evangelization. The most insidious of these excuses are certainly the ones which people claim to find support for in various teachings of the Council.

Thus, one too frequently hears it said, in various terms, that to impose a truth, be it that of the Gospel, or to impose a way, be it that of salvation, cannot but be a violation of religious liberty. Besides, it is added, why proclaim the Gospel, when the whole world is to be saved by uprightness of heart? We know, likewise, that the world and history are filled with "seeds of the Word"; is it not, therefore, an illusion to claim to bring the Gospel where it already exists in the seeds that the Lord Himself has sown?

Anyone who takes the trouble to study in the Council's documents the questions upon which these excuses draw too superficially will find quite a different view.

It would certainly be an error to impose something on the consciences of our brethren. But to propose to their consciences the truth of the Gospel and salvation in Jesus Christ, with complete clarity and with a total respect for the free options which it presents – "without coercion or dishonorable or unworthy pressure" – far from being an attack on religious liberty, is fully to respect that liberty, which is offered the choice of a way that even non-believers consider noble and uplifting. Is it then a crime against the freedom of others to proclaim with joy the Good News which one has come to know through the Lord's mercy? And why should only falsehood and error, debasement and pornography have the right to be put before people and often unfortunately imposed on them by the destructive propaganda of the mass media, by the tolerance of legislation, the timidity of the good, and the impudence of the wicked? The respectful presentation of Christ and His Kingdom is more than the evangelizer's right; it is his duty. It is likewise the right of his fellowmen to receive from him the proclamation of the Good News of salvation. God can accomplish this salvation in whomsoever He wishes by ways which He alone knows. And yet, if His Son came, it was precisely in order to reveal to us, by His Word and by His life, the ordinary paths of salvation. And He has commanded us to transmit this revelation to others with His own authority. It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negli-



gence or fear or shame, – what St. Paul called “blushing for the Gospel” – or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it? For that would be to betray the call of God, who wishes the seed to bear fruit through the voice of the ministers of the Gospel; and it will depend on us, whether this grows into trees and produces its full fruit.

Let us therefore preserve our fervour of spirit. Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May it mean for us – as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other Apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelizers throughout the Church’s history, – an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench. May it be the great joy of our consecrated lives. And may the world of our time, which is searching sometimes with anguish,

sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the Kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world (No. 80).

Tasks and Questions

Compare the two texts.

How has the missionary idea of the Church changed from 1957 up to the present?

(See ‘Redemptor Hominis’ and ‘Redemptoris Missio’ LU 1: Exercise 4)



Exercise

4.

Read the following text:

1. This is the perfection which will prompt the King Himself to take you to Himself in the heavenly bridal chamber where He is seated in glory on a starry throne, because you have despised the splendours of an earthly kingdom and considered of little value the offers of an imperial marriage. Instead, as someone zealous for the holiest poverty, in the spirit of great humility and the most ardent charity, you have held fast to the footprints (1Pt 2:21) of Him to Whom you have merited to be joined as a Spouse.

But since I know that you are adorned with many virtues, I will spare my words and not weary you with needless speech, even though nothing seems

superfluous to you if you can draw from it some consolation. But because one thing alone is necessary (Lk 10:42) I bear witness to that one thing and encourage you, for love of Him to Whom you have offered yourself as a holy and pleasing sacrifice, (Rm 12:1), that, like another Rachel (cf. Gen 29:16), you always remember your resolution and be conscious of how you began.

What you hold, may you always hold. What you do, may you always do and never abandon. But with swift pace, light step, and unswerving feet, so that even your steps stir up no dust, go forward securely, joyfully, and swiftly, on the path of prudent happiness, believing nothing, agreeing with nothing which



would dissuade you from this resolution or would place a stumbling block for you on the way, so that you may offer your vows to the Most High (cf. Ps 49:14) in the pursuit of that perfection to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you. In all of this, follow the counsel of our venerable Father, our Brother Elias, the Minister General, so that you may walk more securely in the way of the commands of the Lord (Ps 118:32). Prize it beyond the advice of others and cherish it as dearer to you than any gift. If anyone would tell you something else or suggests something which would hinder your perfection or seem contrary to your divine vocation, even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel. But as a poor virgin, embrace the poor Christ. Look upon Him Who became contemptible for you, and follow Him, making yourself contemptible in the world for Him. Your Spouse, though more beautiful than the children of men (cf. Ps 44:3), became, for your salvation, the lowest of men, despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His whole body, and then died amid the sufferings of the Cross. O most noble Queen, gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him. If you suffer with Him, you shall reign with Him; if you weep with Him, you shall rejoice with Him, if you die with Him on the cross of tribulation, you shall possess heavenly mansions in the splendour of the saints, and, in the Book of Life, your name shall be called glorious among men (Rev. 3:5). Because of this, you shall share always and forever the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven in place of earthly and passing things, and everlasting treasures instead

of those that perish, and you shall live forever (2 LAg 5-22).

2. Look at the parameter of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvellous humility! O astonishing poverty! The King of the angels, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, is laid in a manger! Then, at the surface of the mirror, dwell on the holy humility, the blessed poverty, the untold labours and burdens which He endured for the redemption of the human race. Then, in the depths of this same mirror, contemplate the ineffable charity which led Him to suffer on the wood of the Cross and die there the most shameful kind of death. Therefore, that Mirror, suspended on the wood of the Cross, urged those who passed by to consider, saying: "All you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any suffering like My suffering!" (Lam 1:12). Let us answer Him with one voice and spirit, as He said: Remembering this over and over leaves my soul downcast within me (Lam 3:20)! From this moment, then, O Queen of our Heavenly King, let yourself be inflamed more strongly with the fervour of charity (4LAg 19-27).

Questions

1. How was the option for "the poor and humble Christ" of Clare incorporated in the documents of your congregation?
2. What are the concrete ways of expressing minority in your congregation?

Applications



Application

Read once again the text "On Perfect Joy" in Exercise 2.

Questions

1. How do you deal with personal failure and external temptation?
2. Can you write a similar text, using actual experiences, in the form of a story? Then do it!





Application

M.M. Thomas quotes in his book *“The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance”* the following famous saying of **Mahatma Gandhi**:

The message of Jesus, as I understand it, is contained in his Sermon on the Mount. Under the same circumstances, the spirit of the Sermon competes with the Bhagavadgita in ruling my heart. It is this Sermon that has endeared Jesus to me. But it is not only Jesus’ Sermon but also His practice of nonviolence and finally His death: Although I cannot claim to be a Christian in the denominational sense, the example

of Jesus’ suffering is a factor that laid the foundation of my belief in nonviolence which guides all my secular and temporal actions. Jesus would have lived in vain, would have died in vain if He had not taught us to let our lives be guided by the eternal law of love (p.204).

Question

What do you think of this text compared to the introduction of the Fourth Lateran Council: “Outside the Church there is no salvation?”



Application

Take a close look at your situation in the Church and in society.

Question

How can you live out the universal vision of Francis in this Church and society?



Application

Task

Look for passages in the Rules, Constitutions or other writings of your own Order/Congregation, which reflect the universal vision of Francis.



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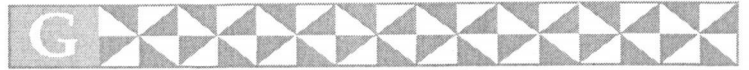
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Some Church Documents

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| AA: Apostolicam Actuositatem: Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity. | LG: Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. |
| AG: Ad Gentes: Decree on Church's Missionary Activity. | NA: Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Church's Relations with non-Christian Religions. |
| DH: Dignitatis Humanae Personae: Declaration on Religious Freedom. | RM: Redemptoris Missio: John Paul II, The Mission of the Redeemer. |
| EN: Evangelii Nuntiandi: Paul VI, Missionary Evangelization Today. | SC: Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. |
| GS: Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. | UR: Unitatis Redintegratio: The Decree on Ecumenism. |



Picture Credits



Picture credits

- Cover** "St. Francis, Patriarch and Law giver." Anonymus, 16th Century.
- P. 3** The Cross of Transfiguration. Mosaic in the apsis of the church St. Appolinaris in Classe, near Ravenna, Italy, 6th Century.
- P. 5** Detail, from 'La Franceschina,' 1929.
- P. 6** From the magazine "Kontinente" 3/95.
- P. 8** Bible illustration, 12th Century. Den Hague, Royal Library. In: "2000 Years of Christianity," page 296.
- P. 11** **left column:** From 'La Franceschina' 1929.
- right column:** Woodcarvings from Malawi.
- P. 12** **left column:** "The Church", Collage by P. Reding.
- right column:** Miniature from the Codex Legenda Major, 15th Century, Franciscan Museum, Rome.
- P. 14** **left column:** Codex 2780, fol. 8, Vienna 1423.
- right column:** Christ's monogram. Mosaic from the Baptisterium in Albenga, 5th Century.

Abbreviations



Writings of Saint Francis

English ¹	Latin ²		English ¹	Latin ²	
Adm	Adm	Admonitions	1LtF	1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful
BIL	BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	2LtF	2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful
CtC	CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	LtL	EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo
LtAnt	EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	LtMin	EpMin	Letter to a Minister
LtCl	EpCler	Letter to the Clergy	LtOrd	EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order
1LtCus	1EpCust	1 st Letter to the Custodians	LtR	EpRect	Letter to the Rulers
2LtCus	2EpCust	2 nd Letter to the Custodians	ExhP	ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praises of God



English ¹	Latin ²	English ¹	Latin ²
CtExh	ExhPD Exhortation to the Poor Ladies	RH	RegEr Rule for Hermitages
PrOF	ExpPat Prayer Inspired by the Our Father	SalBVM	SalBVM Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
FormLife	FormViv Form of Life for St. Clare	SalV	SalVirt Salutation of the Virtues
PrsG	LaudDei Praises of God	Test	Test Testament
PrH	LaudHor Praises to be said at all the Hours	TestS	TestS Testament written in Siena
OfP	OffPass Office of the Passion	LastWill	UltVol Last Will written for St. Clare
PrCr	OrCruc Prayer before the Crucifix	TPJ	VPLaet Dictate on True and Perfect Joy
LR	RegB Later Rule		
ER	RegNB Earlier Rule		

Writings of Saint Clare

ILAg	1 st Letter to St. Agnes of Prague	LEr	Letter to Ermentrude
2LAg	2 nd Letter to St. Agnes of Prague	RCI	Rule of St. Clare
3LAg	3 rd Letter to St. Agnes of Prague	TestCl	Testament of St. Clare
4LAg	4 th Letter to St. Agnes of Prague	BCI	Blessing of St. Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

1C	ICel	1 st Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2C	2Cel	2 nd Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3C	3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	AP	Anonymous of Perugia
LegCl	CL	Legend of Clare
LFI	Fior	The Little Flowers of St. Francis. Fioretti
JdV	JdV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
ChrJG	Jord	Jordan of Giano's Chronicle
LMj	LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LMn	LMin	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	LP	Legend of Perugia
L3C	L3S	Legend of the Three Companions
Proc	Proc	Process of St. Clare's Canonization
ScEx	SC	The Sacred Exchange. Sacrum commercium
MP	SP	Mirror of Perfection

1. In this Lesson Unit the **English Abbreviations** have been used, taken from "Francis of Assisi – Early Documents" (Volume I, edited by: Regis J. Armstrong OFM, Cap, J.A. Wayne Hellmann OFM, Conv, William J. Short OFM, Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY, 1999).

2. **Latin Abbreviations** frequently used in other Lesson Units.

