

Go,
Rebuild
My Church!



Franciscan
Mission and
the Preaching
of the Word

**Comprehensive
Course on the
Franciscan
Mission
Charism**



Lesson Unit 13

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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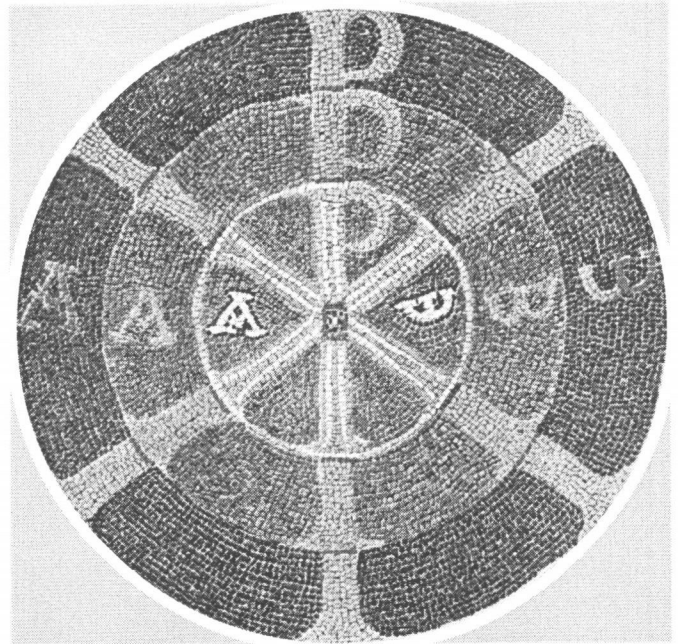


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Go, Rebuild My Church!

*A Comprehensive
Course on the
Franciscan Mission
Charism*



Franciscan Mission and the Preaching of the Word



Lesson Unit 13



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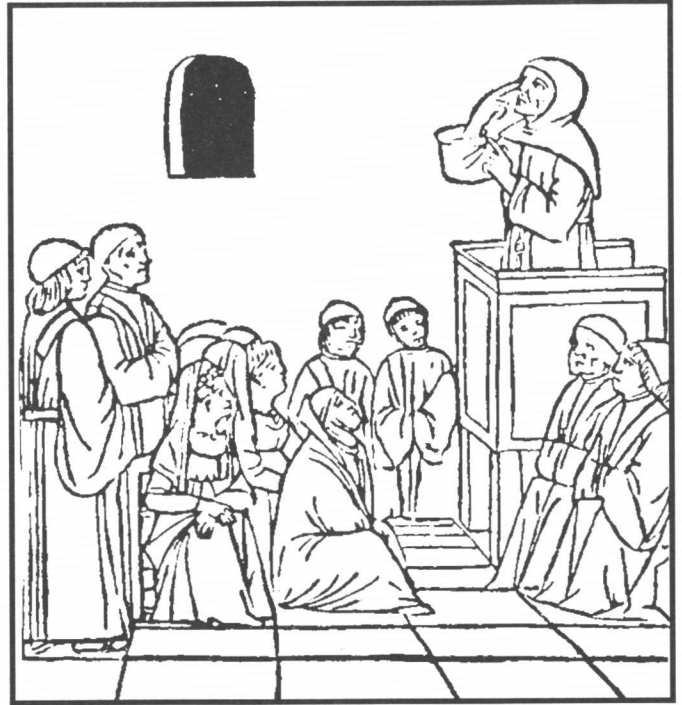
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Brother Giles Preaches

*A brother from England
a professor of sacred theology
once preached before
St. Clare and Br. Giles
in the cloister at San Damiano.
In the middle of the discourse,
Br. Giles cried out passionately,
"Silence, professor!
I want to preach!"
The professor fell silent immediately
and made room for Br. Giles.*



*In the passion of the spirit of God,
Br. Giles then spoke very precious
words. After a while he said to
the professor, "Finish the
talk I have begun." The
professor resumed his
sermon and delivered
it to the end.*



*When St. Clare saw this, she said in
a rejoicing spirit, "Today the wish
of our holy father Francis has
been fulfilled. He once told
me, 'I very much wish that
clerics and my brothers
were so humble that a
theology professor would
interrupt his preaching
when a lay person
wished to speak. That is
a much greater miracle
than if the dead were to
come to life.'"*



*(according to the Life
of Brother Giles)*



Introduction

A



The second Vatican Council defines the Church as the "People of God"

Through baptism and confirmation, all have received the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:9; 1Cor 3: 16, 19). Accordingly, all are competent to preach and bear witness for the Reign of God.

Today in many parts of the world preaching does not take place in a Christian setting. In addition, a small enclosed Christian culture that colours the whole of society no longer exists. We must rather preach the gospel as the *anawim*, the little, poor flock, as a small group of brothers and sisters who gather around the table of the Lord.

As a Church, we are often in the minority. The gospel contains numerous images that express the reality and can encourage us: leaven, salt and light and many other images of a small, but powerful and dynamic community that impacts the world. In the face of this situation, the Franciscan family, vowed to follow the *Poverello*, the Little Poor Man and Clare, the *Poor Sister*, can ask itself if it does not now have a new opportunity to preach the gospel. The preached word, however, must be borne by the witness of life.

Survey

B



Modern Documents of the Order and the Church

The modern documents of the order and the Church always emphasize the significance of the community for preaching. The place and the bearer of the gospel message is the community. Franciscan history gives this statement special meaning: it points out the essential connection between preaching and life-style.

There is a specifically Franciscan distinction

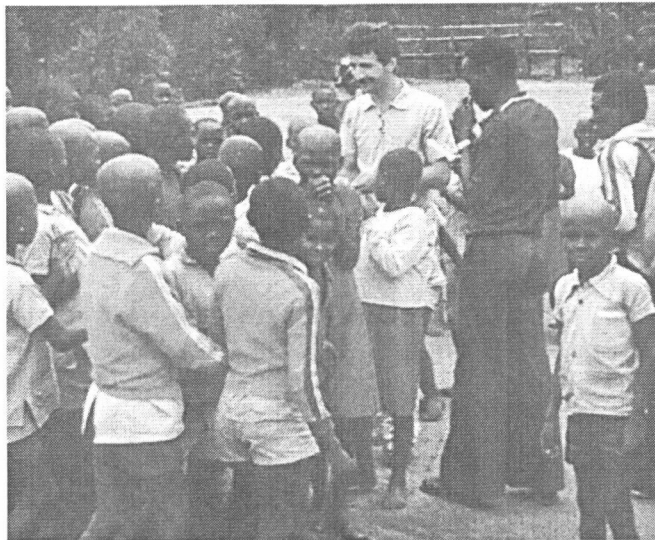
between preaching and a call to penance. Preaching means official Church proclamation of the gospel message. It is the voice of the magisterium, normally the duty of a bishop, who may delegate the task. The call to penance, however, is closely linked to the life-style of the one making the call.

The link between contemplation and preaching



is equally Franciscan. Thus a strengthening of the contemplative elements of communities must bring about the renewal of preaching. Contemplation, however, cannot be understood as a flight from reality. It seeks to make the lived, experienced situation itself into the object of contemplation.

First and foremost, it is a matter of conveying one's own experience of Christ and of proclaiming the Word of the Lord. This task, however, must take place in a new way and with a great deal of creativity. One must understand one's own story and others' stories as the place of God's presence.



*The preached Word, must be borne
by the witness of life.*

Information



*Who is me,
if I do not Preach the Gospel!*



St. Paul brings the Word of God to the Galatians.

St. Paul, from whom this statement comes, knew himself to be called to the office of an apostle and to the preaching of the Word. Without office or official commissioning, the believers in Jerusalem preached the Word. After the first persecution they were scattered and founded the first Christian communities in Samaria (cf. Acts 8:4). The history of the Church informs us over and over again that lay persons, without any special theological training or special, official commissions, not only brought individuals to faith in Christ, but also lead communities during persecutions. The most significant historical example is the foundation of the first Christian communities in Korea. The Franciscan movement resumes the practice of the early



Christians. Lay brothers and lay sisters, as well as women and men of the secular Franciscans perform their ministry in the first proclamation of the gospel message (mission) and in pastoral care. Their living faith has often proven itself more fascinating and therefore more convincing than professional theological training, as the following example indicates:

While Francis was staying at Siena, it happened that a certain friar of the Order of Preachers came there; he was a spiritual man and a doctor of Sacred Theology. Since he had come to visit with blessed Francis, that learned man and the saint enjoyed a long and pleasant conversation about the word of God. The aforesaid master questioned Francis about that saying of Ezechiel: 'If you proclaim not to the wicked their wickedness, I will require their souls at your hand.' For he said, 'Good Father, I know many who, to the best of my knowledge, are in the state of mortal sin, but I do not always proclaim their wickedness. Will the souls

of such people be required at my hand?' Blessed Francis said that he was unlettered and therefore it would be more fitting for him to be taught by that master than for him to interpret the meaning of Scripture. And the humble master said, 'Brother, though I have heard these words interpreted by the learned, I would be glad to hear your understanding of the passage.'

Blessed Francis then said to him: 'If the passage is to be understood in a general meaning, I would take it that servants of God should be so aflame in life and holiness that they would reprove all the wicked by the light of their example and by the words of their conversation. So, I say, the splendour of their life and the renown of their fame will proclaim to all their wickedness.' That man, therefore, went away much edified, and he said to the companions of blessed Francis: 'My brothers, the theology of this man, based upon purity of life and contemplation, is a soaring eagle; but our learning crawls on its belly on the ground' (2C 103).



The Community as the Bearer of the Gospel Message

The extraordinary General Chapter of the Franciscans held at Medellín has clearly stated that the fraternal community is the actual bearer of the gospel message. The same is self-evidently true of communities of sisters.

We the followers of Francis, who live in local fraternities, wish to be at the service of the Basic Christian communities; we desire to support these local congregations in their apostolic mission in their own human world. 'But since the People of God live in communities, especially in dioceses and parishes, and become visible in them in a certain way, it also devolves on these to witness Christ before the nations. The grace of renewal cannot flourish in communities unless each of them extends the range of its charity to the end of the earth.' (Medellín 1971, II, 10).



Small Christian Communities are receivers and bearers of evangelization.



Paul VI declared that the Small Christian Communities are “receivers of evangelization in a special way and, at the same time, the bearers of evangelization” (EN 58).

The small community, therefore, is the place for proclaiming the gospel message. The brothers and sisters oriented to Franciscanism must serve these small local communities. A fundamental principle of the proclamation of the gospel message is thus maintained: we preach by means of our life in brotherliness and sisterliness.

This reality gives special meaning to the fact that the brothers were to move about in pairs to proclaim the gospel by their life and by their exhortation to penance. One might speak of itinerant communities of faith, hope and charity that had no fear of showing that they were brothers. The image of the solitary monk who goes about the world preaching not only contradicts the wishes of St. Francis, but also a basic trend in Franciscan history.



Preaching and Life-style



To understand the particularly Franciscan style of preaching, it is good to recall that preaching the faith itself was reserved to the bishop. The bishops, however, would delegate their right to specially chosen priests and deacons. From the very beginning, St. Dominic and his brothers, for example, took the bishops' task of proclaiming Church doctrine upon themselves. At the time, this form of preaching was called *praedicatio*, or preaching.¹

The preaching of St. Francis and his community was something completely different. At least at the beginning, only a few brothers cultivated the *praedicatio*. In general, the *exhortatio*, a call to penance that resembled a song more than a sermon, was much more typical in the Franciscan fraternity. To deliver an *exhortatio*, no one required special training. Rather, one could, whenever necessary or useful, bear witness to Christ in this manner (cf. RegNB 21). The right and the power to issue a call to penance did not derive from an office in the Church, but from a life-style. Preaching and life belong together. How can anyone call for conversion when he or she has not been converted? Those who vouch for Sacred

Scripture remain untouched by empty words.

To understand the meaning of the demand for congruence between preaching and life-style in the Franciscan movement, one must take a look at the historical context, particularly at the life of the thirteenth-century Church. The man or woman on the street, who did not stand before the episcopal palace in ignorance of the life-style of many prelates and officials, had to wonder about the curious incongruity between their life-style and the gospel message. A sermon on gospel poverty and humility delivered in a comfortable environment, or fueled by extravagant claims on power, could hardly be convincing. Of course, no one can accuse all the authorities of the middle ages with luxury and lust for power. Nonetheless, the apostolic poverty movements of the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Humiliati, Waldensians and other poverty preachers) express the longing of many persons for the simple, poor life-style of Jesus of Nazareth and a sharp criticism of the actual conditions. Broadly based groups demanded a gospel message that could be realized in a simple, humble life-style.

¹ Dominicans = Ordo Praedicatorum = Order of Preachers



It is therefore easier to understand a somewhat odd statement St. Francis made when near death. He spoke to a brother who wanted to read something from scripture to him:

It is good to read the testimonies of Scripture; it is good to seek the Lord our God in them. As for me, however, I have already made so much of Scripture my own that I have more than enough to meditate on and resolve in my mind. I need no more, son; I know Christ, the poor crucified one (2Cel 105).

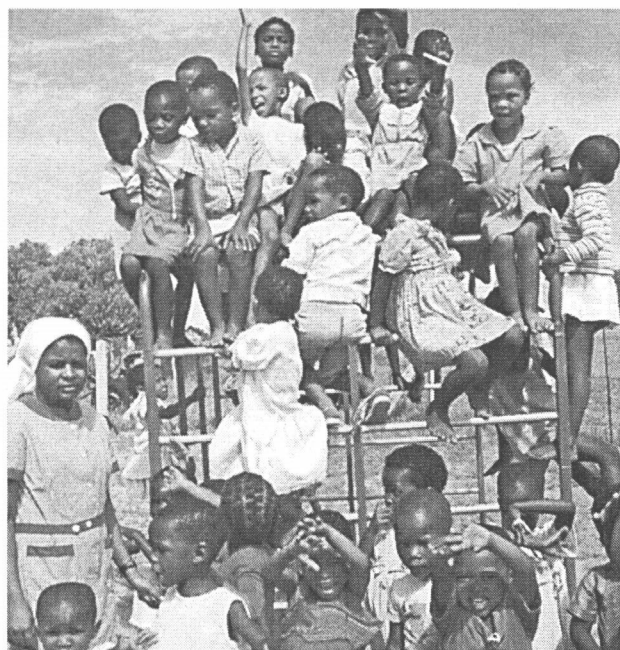


Francis: "Let us hold onto the words, the life, and the teaching and the Holy Gospel of Him who humbled Himself" (RegNB XXII: 41)

Only those who have the Good News in their hearts can preach. But even further: only those who have themselves become the Good News can convince others of it. This reality is true not only of individual brothers and sisters, but also of their communities.

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their community, show their

capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness, these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live (EN 21).



Those who have themselves become the Good News can convince others of it.

This statement makes clear the importance of preaching without words, through witness. Francis speaks of how lived witness and the preaching of the word affect each other:

Go, proclaim peace to men and preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Be patient in trials, watchful in prayer, strenuous in work, moderate in speech, reserved in manner and grateful for favours, because for all this an eternal kingdom is being prepared for you (LM III, 7).

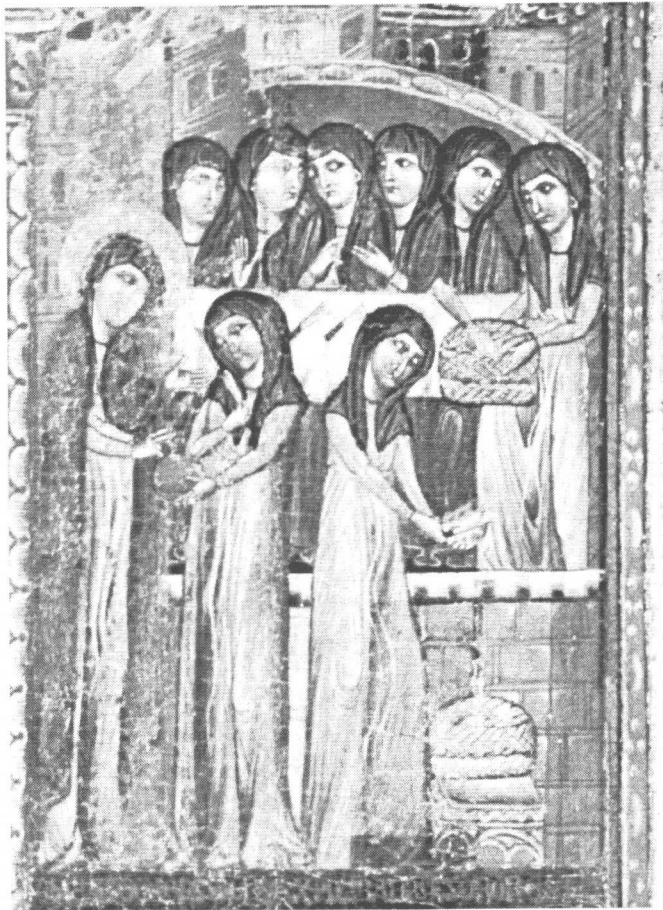
St. Clare speaks of preaching by the example of one's life in her Testament:

For the Lord Himself not only has set us as an example and mirror for others, but also for our [own] sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life, so that they in turn will be a mirror and example



to those living in the world. Since, therefore, the Lord has called us to such great things, that those who are to be models and mirrors for others may behold themselves in us, we are truly bound to bless and praise the Lord and to be strengthened constantly in Him to do good (TestCl 6).

Clare knew that her life and the life of her sisters was an expression of the goodness and grace of God and that they thus became a clear mirror for others.



Clare multiplies the bread in the refectory of San Damiano (cf. Cl 15; Proc 6:16).

What could be seen in this clear mirror?

What message did Clare send up the steep path to the city and through the city walls of the commune when she founded a new community of women at the edge of the city? The message consisted of the radical equality of all members of the community, each grounded in the same baptism and in the vocation to the same evangelical life.... Freed from the social constraints and traditions of secular and

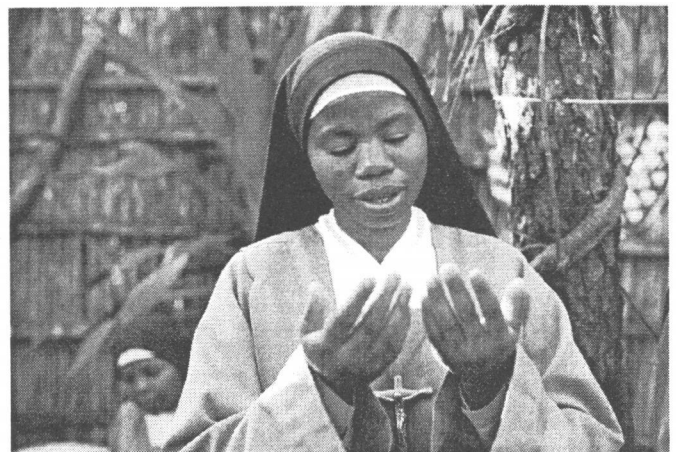
monastic forms of life, these poor sisters identified themselves in a vital and disturbing manner with groups of women who sought their place in a social and ecclesial reality (Margaret Carney, OSF).

Inspired by the words of St. Francis, the Rule of the secular Franciscans shows the contemplative dimension of being in the world.

The sisters and brothers should be kind, peace-loving and unassuming; they should be mild and humble, according to their vocation. Wherever they are, or wherever in the world they might go, they should neither fight with nor judge others. They should much more show themselves to be joyous, courageous and happy in the Lord, as is proper for them. And when they greet others, they should say 'The Lord give you peace' (Art. 20).

And as they proclaim peace with their lips, they should remember to keep it all the more in their hearts. No one should be led to anger or insult because of them. Rather, their kindness should much more move others to peace, good will and mercy. The sisters and brothers are called to heal the injured, bandage the wounded and to lead back the lost (Art. 30).

Contemplation is a total life-style for the Poor Clares. Their way of going about the world wordlessly, preaches a life lived with God – a life that includes the entire world and its concerns.



Poor Clare from Lilongwe/ Malawi.





The Contemplative Background of Preaching

Contemplation plays a special role in proclaiming the gospel.

The future of the missions depends, above all, on contemplation. If the missionary is not a contemplative, he or she cannot credibly preach Christ (RM 91).

The religious community is itself a theological reality, an object of contemplation. As a family united in the Lord's name, it is of its nature the place where the experience of God should be able in a special way to come to fullness and be communicated to others (The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life 15).

Franciscan history clearly expresses the important role of contemplation in the proclamation of the gospel message (cf. Lesson Unit 10).

The *Little Flowers of St. Francis* (16) present Francis' struggle to devote himself to prayer or preaching. He recognized in a conversation with St. Clare and Silvester, however, that preaching and contemplation were not contradictory but that one grew from the other.

Francis, and with him such outstanding preachers as Bernardine of Siena and Leonard of Port Maurice, were convinced that preaching demanded a contemplative life-style. Therefore they founded hermitages and other

places of solitude where preachers might live in an atmosphere of contemplation with their brothers. They thus followed the admonition of St. Francis:

The preacher must first draw from secret prayers what he will later pour out in holy sermons; he must first grow hot within before he speaks words that are in themselves cold (2Cel 163).

Francis of Osuna, a Franciscan mystic of the sixteenth century, who greatly influenced St. Theresa of Avila, asserted with some irony:

Contemplation and prayer strongly attract preachers, but they devote themselves to practicing them less than other devotions because they are so busy composing some novel sermon that, even if it is finished, leaves them disgusted and distraught. When others are celebrating feast days... there he is, his heart more afflicted than ever, his only concern, what he is to preach next? (Third Spiritual Alphabet, 317).

Contemplation and spiritual sharing within a living community are the best preparation for a sermon. To insure that preaching is still convincing today, we should devote our efforts to understanding our communities as contemplative communities.



Preaching from the Lived Situation

Contemplation in communities of brothers or sisters is not a flight from reality. Rather, it is a deeper giving of self into the lived situations. Staretz Silhouan, a Russian Orthodox monk, once said:

"When the soul prays for the world, it knows better without newspapers how the whole world is afflicted and what people's needs are" (The Monk of Mount Athos, 48).



As preachers, we must, of course, be familiar with reports in newspapers and magazines, watch television and study analyses of our society. But we attain a deeper knowledge of contemporary events when we bring the people we serve into our meditation. As the old proverb states, *"the newspaper in one hand, the Bible in the other"*. Justifiably, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America begin their pastoral letter, *"Fulfilled in Your Hearing"*, with the community, rather than with the person of the preacher or the homily itself. The letter then addresses three important points for contemporary preaching:

- *The preacher represents the community by voicing its concerns, by naming its demons, and thus enabling it to gain some understanding of the evil which afflicts it (7);*

- *Their preaching is pastoral, displaying a sensitive and concerned knowledge of the struggles, doubts, worries, and joys of the members of a local community (9);*



- *Attentive listening to the Scriptures and to the people is, in essence, a form of prayer, perhaps the form of prayer most appropriate to the spirituality of the priest and the preacher (10).*

Both in the remote preparation of prayerful listening to God, and to the people, and in the proximate preparation of a sermon, preachers must ask:

- ▶ What are the current, lived situations of those who listen to me?
- ▶ What are their joys, concerns, doubts and struggles?
- ▶ How will the gospel help them deal with these challenges?

Such an approach is consistent with the Franciscan tradition. The success of Bernardine of Siena did not only come from his life as a contemplative friar who lived and traveled in community. It also arose from the reality that he knew his people well: their angels and demons, their joys and struggles, their prayers and curses. He distinguished three types of preachers: *"Some preach life and not doctrine. Other preach doctrine but not life. A few preach both: doctrine and life"* (Opera II, 396).

Being a theologian is not enough for a preacher. Preachers must also study the society in which they live. They must reflect upon and pray for that society. The letters of St. Paul could serve as



Three apostles present the New Testament.



a model for this study, reflection and prayer. Paul, a good theologian and a contemplative, is aware of the needs and desires of his people. He knows their graces and their sins. He has no

fear of addressing them with a strength and a sureness that rests not only upon knowledge of their lived situations, but also upon the wisdom that comes from prayer.

5.



Reaching the Word of the Lord

The greatest service we can render to people is to help them enter into direct, personal relationship with Christ and an authentic love of God in joy. We are ready to preach the Gospel by word and example (Medellín 1971, III, 13).

Followers of St. Francis find their inspiration in his words:

Blessed is that religious who takes no pleasure and joy except in the holy words and deeds of the Lord and with these leads people to the love of God in joy and gladness (Adm 20: 1-2).

Preachers must therefore ask themselves if they really bring their listeners into a relationship with Jesus and if they can communicate their experience of Christ and God to those listeners.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how shall they call on him in whom they

have not believed? And how can they believe unless they have heard of him? And how can they hear unless there is someone to preach? (Rom 10:13).

And how can they preach if they have no experience of God based on reflection on God's word?

Once you realize that your people do not want to hear catechesis nor to study theology, but only to see Jesus, you are forced to find ways to satisfy their thirst. Rome and Rahner are only a foundation... And so, like it or not, you will learn to dream dreams and see visions, retell the parables of Jesus in a modern idiom (Walter Burghardt).

The effectiveness of St. Francis' speech did not rest on "philosophical distinctions." Rather, "Christ, the true Power and Wisdom, gave to his voice the voice of power" (2Cel 107).

6.



Reaching from One's Own Story

Retelling the parables of Jesus in modern form and with the use of personal creativity and imagination does not mean that one must spin fables.

The sermon must flow from the Word of God and must not be disfigured by fables (Anthony of Padua, Opera 8, 33).

Preaching from one's own story means that we touch people with our own and our mutual experiences, conscious that God is present in these experiences and that we are prepared to convey them to others. That approach is truly Franciscan: our heritage is popular rather than scholarly. Our early sources are not scholarly treatises on the Franciscan movement and on the experi-



ence of grace. Instead, they are colourful stories of the loving hand of God.

The *Testament* of St. Francis is a good example. It may be possible to imagine—although with some difficulty—that Francis could have written a philosophical or theological treatise on grace and the presence of God in his life. Instead, as he faced death, he thought about the everyday experiences of his life and discovered that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit had moved him again and again. Rather than an abstract treatise, he offers us an intimate autobiography of grace, telling us over and over again, “*God revealed to me...He showed me...He led me.*”

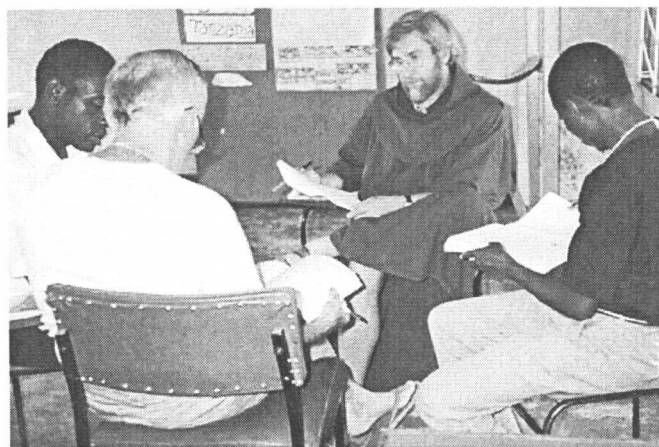


The Revelation of John.



reaching from the Stories of Others

Preachers must so speak of their own stories, and the stories of others, that their listeners can discover the loving presence of God. The lives of the saints, contemporary diaries, newspaper reports and pastoral conversations, all provide material for and belong to a sermon (narrative theology). The use of such stories is not only a technique to capture the attention of listeners, but also rests upon the principle, that stories unite and interpretations divide us. Stories can also challenge us to direct our attention to very real human needs: the desire for justice and peace, for community and solidarity, a hunger for meaning and for God.



*We witness Jesus Christ in word
and deed when we turn towards others.*



Stories from the history of Christianity unite us. We still tell the stories of Bethlehem and Gethsemane, of miracles and healings, of reconciliation and eucharist. When we begin to discuss the meaning of these stories, however, we begin to feel divided because we interpret them differently. Historically, various interpretations have led to various understandings of Christian and Franciscan life; they have led to serious divisions within the Franciscan family. Although such divisions among Christians and Franciscans still exist, we can strive for unity by sharing the Word

of God and spiritual stories. In this manner preaching can be used in the service of peace (cf. Lesson Unit 23).

A Franciscan style of preaching must give the Word of God a human face, flesh and blood:

- ▣▣▣▣ Our life-style points out the way in the midst of the insecurities and lack of direction among many.
- ▣▣▣▣ We witness Jesus Christ in word and deed when we turn towards others.

Church and Franciscan Sources

Scripture	Ez 2: 8-3: 4; Rom 8:9f.; 10: 13-14; 1Cor 3:16. 19; 1Ptr 3:15; 1Joh 1:1-3.
Church Documents	LG 9-12; Evangelii Nuntiandi 21, 58; RM 91.
Franciscan Sources	RegNB 21; 2Cel 103, 105, 107, 163f.; LM III, 7; Adm 7; 20:1; Fior 16; TestCl 6; Bernardine of Siena, Opera II: 396; Anthony of Padua, Opera 8, 33.
Inter – Franciscan Documents	
OFM – OFM Cap – OFM Conv	OFM General Chapter, Medellín 1971: II, 10; III, 13.
Poor Clares	
Third Order Regular	
Secular Franciscans	
Additional Material	

Note: Course participants may provide additional source materials.





Exercise

Compare the following texts:

Text 1:

But Francis said that preachers who often sell what they do for the price of empty praise are to be pitied. The abnormal growth of such men he at times cured with such an antidote as this:

“Why do you glory over men who have been converted when it was my simple brothers who converted them by their prayers?” Finally these words, ‘So that the barren have borne many,’ he explained in the following way. “The barren,” he said, “is my poor little brother who does not have the duty of bringing forth children for the Church. This one will ‘bring forth many’ at the judgment, because those he is now converting by his private prayers the Judge will give to him unto glory. ‘She that had many children is weakened’ suggests that the preacher who rejoices over many as though he had brought them forth by his own power will learn that he had nothing to do with them personally.” But those who want to be praised rather as rhetoricians than as preachers, speaking as they do with elegance rather than with sincerity, Francis did not greatly love. These, he said, divide wickedly who spend all their time at preaching and none at devotion. But he praised the preacher, certainly, but only the one who thinks of himself at the proper time and provides wisely for himself (2Cel 164).

Text 2:

The Apostle says: ‘The letter kills, but the spirit gives life’ (2Cor 3:6). Those are killed by the letter who merely wish to know the words alone, so that they may be esteemed as wiser than others and be able to acquire great riches to give to [their] relatives and friends. In a similar way, those religious are killed by the letter who do not wish to follow the spirit of Sacred Scripture, but only wish to know [what] the words [are] and [how to] interpret them to others. And those are given life by the spirit of Sacred Scripture who do not refer to themselves any text which they know or seek to know, but, by word and example, return everything to the most high Lord God to Whom every good belongs (Adm 7).

Questions and Assignments

1. What basic approach do both texts establish as a precondition for true or real preaching?
2. Use both texts to create a list of Ten Commandments for catechists and preachers.





Exercise

2.



The Franciscan requirement to preach from meditation and contemplation, and the text from Ezechiel, use different images to express the same concern:

1. Francis warns, *"The preacher must first draw from secret prayers what he will later pour out in holy sermons; he must first grow hot within before he speaks words that are in themselves cold"* (2Cel 163).

2. Ezechiel states, *"Open your mouth and eat what I shall give you. It was then I saw a hand stretched out to me, in which was a written scroll which he unrolled before me. It was covered with writing front and back, and written on it was: Lamentation and wailing and woe! He said to me: Son of man, eat what is before you; eat this scroll, then go, speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth and he gave me the*

scroll to eat. Son of man, he then said to me, feed your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll I am giving to you. I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. He said: Son of man, go now to the house of Israel, and speak my words to them" (Ez 2: 8-3: 4).

Questions

1. What do the two texts have in common? How do they differ?
2. What does that mean for your preaching there, where you are?
 - concrete possibilities
 - difficulties



Exercise

3.



Compare the following texts:

1. From the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, of Vatican II, 1965:

Sacred theology relies on the written Word of God, taken together with sacred Tradition, as on a permanent foundation. By this Word it is most firmly strengthened and constantly rejuvenated, as it searches out, under the light of faith, the full truth stored up in the mystery of Christ. Therefore, the "study of the sacred page" should be the very soul of sacred theology. The ministry of the Word, too – pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction, among which the liturgical homily should

hold pride of place – is healthily nourished and thrives in holiness through the Word of Scripture (DV 24).

Therefore, all clerics, particularly priests of Christ and others who, as deacons or catechists, are officially engaged in the ministry of the Word, should immerse themselves in the Scriptures by constant sacred reading and diligent study. For it must not happen that anyone becomes "an empty preacher of the Word of God to others, not being a hearer of the Word in his own heart", when he ought to be sharing the boundless riches of the divine Word with the faithful committed to his care, especially in the sacred liturgy. Likewise, the sacred Synod forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful, especially those who



live the religious life, to learn "the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." Therefore, let them go gladly to the sacred text itself, whether in the sacred liturgy, which is full of the divine words, or in devout reading, or in such suitable exercises and various other helps which, with the approval and guidance of the pastors of the Church, are happily spreading everywhere in our day. Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For, "we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles" (DV25).

2. Words of St. Francis:

Blessed is that religious who takes no pleasure and joy except in the most holy words and deeds of the Lord and with these leads people to the love of God in joy and gladness. Woe to that religious who delights in idle and frivolous words and with these provokes people to laughter (Adm 20).

Assignment

Try to find the commonalities between both texts.



Exercise

Re-read the story that introduces this Unit.

4.

Questions

1. In your environment, what role does the lay preacher play over and against those who preach with official authority?
2. How can scientific theology and Christian faith-experiences be joined in the service of preaching?



Applications



Application

This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched – we speak of the Word of life. This life became visible; we have seen and bear witness to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present to the Father and became visible to us. What we have seen and heard we proclaim in turn to you so that you may share life with us. This fellowship of ours is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1Joh 1:1-3).

In AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) groups, recovering alcoholics typically share their experiences with each other: what it was like, what miserable conditions they brought upon themselves

and their loved ones too; and how their lives have changed.

These shared stories cause the others to ask: if they could change themselves, why can't we change ourselves too?

Questions

1. What does John's text and AA have to do with each other?
2. What conclusions do you draw for the transmission of the faith?



Application

Read the following text:

Francis realized that far more is attained through preaching the Good News than from preaching bad News of human making. In an age of lopsided values and perverse attitudes, the contemporary preacher may be tempted to be a prophet of doom rather than a peacemaker. Perhaps the best scriptural model for today's preacher is the image of Jesus walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, instilling in hopeless hearts the spirit of hope and in anxious spirits the peace that only he can give. Then our listeners, like the Emmaus disciples, will recognize Christ in the

unfolding of the Gospel stories. So, too, they will leave their pews saying to one another: 'Were not our hearts on fire while He spoke to us on the road?' [Lk 24: 32] (Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, USA).

Assignments and Questions

Try to remember the last three sermons you have heard.

1. How did these sermons affect you?
2. Which thought in the sermon led you closer to the mystery of God?



From Europe and North America:

These days an itinerant Franciscan preacher is a rare sight, almost the exception proving the rule. The preaching apostolate has practically disappeared among Franciscans. A call to return to this form of service seems essential for today's world, which hears little enough of the Good News.

Here in the West we are living in the age of the mass media, the age of TV, radio, newspapers, the age of advertising and the hard sell. Western Man has all the expertise and equipment to put his message across, and he does it to his best advantage: he knows what sells and how to sell it. He has learned the art of convincing people and of presenting his wares attractively.

As preachers, we Franciscans are faced with a great deal of competition and we need to be well-trained for this task. The mass media uses imagery and pictures to convey its message. The preacher must also use

imagery in his language. Let him return to the Bible and learn from the Psalmist and the sacred writers! It is not enough for a preacher to deepen the faith of his listeners; he must inspire action as well.

The sharing of personal experiences of faith in prayer seems to be effective today more than in the past. The mass media can provide nothing that could rival the impact of a personal encounter (Lucian Mulhern, OFM, USA; Noel O'Dwyer, OFM, England).

Assignment

Describe the characteristic situation in each continent which has been mentioned here. If possible, add your own experience or understanding.

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P. 3 Monogram of Christ. Mosaic from the baptistery in Albegna, second half of the fifth Century.

P. 5 from Franciskaanse Samenwerking.

P. 7 **Right column:** Photo: Jack Wintz, OFM.

Left column: Miniature from the Bible of Guiart of Moulins, fifteenth Century.

P. 8 from "Franziskanermission" 3/94, Photo: KNA.

P. 10 **Left column:** St. Francis. Königsfelden ca.1330.

Right column: Photo: SMIC – Sisters/ Namibia.

P. 11 **Left column:** Dossal, 13th Century, Basilica of St. Clare, Assisi.

Right column: From Alle Welt 11-12/92, Photo: Wim van der Kallen.

P. 13 **Left column:** Photo: Heinrich Gockel.

Right column: Painting from the 13th Century, Church of Torpo, Hallingdal, Norway.

P. 15 **Top:** Bamberg Apocalypse, ca. 1000.

Bottom: Photo: CCFMC – Africa Office.

P. 23 Drawing: Poor Clares, Bungoma/Kenya.

