Build With Living Stones

A Facilitator’s Guide

Edited by Trevor Thompson

Formation for Franciscan Life and Work

A facilitator's guide for Build With Living Stones a program based on the internationally recognized Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism
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The history and use of Build With Living Stones: Formation for Franciscan Life and Work (BWLS) continues to evolve and grow. From its base at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, New York, since 1996, this resource is rooted in the work of one of the most popular resources among Franciscans world-wide, Comprehensive Course on Franciscan Charism (CCFMC). The CCFMC emerged during the early 1980s when several key members of the Franciscan family recognized a need for a comprehensive course or resource that could act as a formation tool for the entire Franciscan family. They wanted this course to reflect their experiences of life in the missions (life outside of Europe and North America), to reconnect to and deepen the theological understanding of Jesus’ and Francis’s sense of mission, and to make this text intercultural, international and inter-Franciscan. Recognizing that each Franciscan community lives in a unique socio-political and cultural situation but with a commitment to the same forma vitae of Francis of Assisi, the dream of a course (initially conceived as a correspondence course) which would facilitate this educational and transformational journey emerged. With the hard work and dedication of some of the leading theologians and historians, a twenty-five (25) unit course materialized, and within a few years, the text was translated into twenty languages, distributed and used around the world, including the United States of America under the name “Build With Living Stones.” Key among the early leaders of BWLS in the USA were Mel Brady, O.F.M., Alma Dufault, F.M.M., Cyprian Rosen, O.F.M. Cap., Ed Slater, O.F.M., Dianne Short, O.S.C., Bill McConville, O.F.M., Mary Zablocki, S.F.O., and Charles Finnegan, O.F.M.

In the autumn of 1994, ten years after the publication of the resource, one hundred sixty Franciscan sisters and brothers convened in Assisi, Italy. Composed of 120 delegates from the different continents, and forty others from the CCFMC Board of Directors, the team of organizers and the experts and translators of the text, the gathering hoped to offer a forum for sharing CCFMC experiences, reflecting together about what worked in CCFMC and what did not, resulting in recommendations for revision to the text. With this successful gathering, work on restructuring and revising the text began, and in turn, new translations commenced. Currently, English translations of this twenty-five unit course are in use in the English-speaking area of West Africa and in the Philippines. There continues to be much success and vibrancy within the work of CCFMC around the world, particularly in Central and South America, Africa, and Asia.

In the USA, the course underwent a further revision and restructuring in the late 1990s and early 2000s under the leadership of Anthony Carrozzo, O.F.M., and Thomas Blow, O.F.M. They felt, through feedback from BWLS users and advisors, that an American audience might be better served by a more succinct text, one which would contain...
fewer overall units and pages, contain reflections and suggested activities which would appeal and connect with a wider audience (beyond the vowed religious Franciscan communities), and contain images and theological concepts that would resonate with North American sensibilities. With these adaptations, Franciscan Institute Publications published the 14-unit North American edition of *Build With Living Stones: Formation for Franciscan Life and Work* in 2002.

Since its issue, BWLS has been used actively in the USA and Canada in a variety of ways, in particular, in and around institutions of higher education and in parishes. With students in classrooms, with parishioners, faculty, staff, and/or Boards of Trustees, and with vocational and ministries groups, this resource continues to act as a valuable formational tool by providing a glimpse into the mission of Franciscan life and by challenging its users to find a way to live this charism in today’s global world.

Feedback from the users of the 14-unit BWLS resource over the last few years indicates a desire for a manual or guide for facilitation. The following Facilitator’s Guide then is an answer to this request. Based on the longer and more comprehensive CCFMC text and the accompanying English-language facilitator’s manual (from the Philippines), this guide offers a wide range of suggestions on teaching methods, audio-visual aids, tools for evaluation of programs, summaries of units, highlighted main points of units, further suggestions for reflection, and additional bibliographical resources for each unit. It is not necessary that the user of this resource be trained in the latest pedagogical methods. It is our hope that this guide will ease users’ anxiety about facilitating this resource with a group and, consequently, will make possible deeper and richer reflection into Franciscan mission and life today.

Central to each unit’s additional reflections and bibliographical resources in this Facilitator’s Guide is the theological and experiential grounding of the original CCFMC text, our mother-text. While it is important to remain rooted in the original vision, it is also necessary to be aware of the needs of the given audience and the context in which BWLS is used.

As noted above, the CCFMC founders’ original vision arises from two places: their experience in the missions and their reading of the Gospels and the Franciscan documents in light of these experiences. Thirty years ago (and still today), the mission world, broadly speaking, was anywhere that was not Europe or North America. Although, in both Europe and North America one can encounter the face of poverty, marginalized cultures and tradition, systems of oppression and injustice, and people whose voices have never been affirmed or dignified, yet in large regions of Africa, Asia, and Central and South America (particularly in
non-industrialized, non-western areas), there remains and grows an even
greater number, a more dramatic reality, and a more pervasive presence
of these critical issues. Malnutrition, infant mortality, endemic diseases,
unemployment, economic insecurity, lack of health care, social security,
education, and housing – in short, a lack of all the basics which developed
countries consider necessities for life – are the real-life context of a large
slice of the population. In these missions, the friars lived and reflected
with people who experienced these harsh realities. Their gatherings, as
parish churches or as base communities, also experienced many positive
spiritual and ecclesial signs: a warm hospitality, a sense of fellowship, an
immense longing for justice and inclusion, and a taste for fiestas. These
missionaries became deeply intertwined in the people’s joys and sorrows,
their losses and hopes, and their oppression and their celebration.

These missionaries, in the midst of their mission work and world,
opened the Word and listened, discerning how the God of the
Gospels might respond to their sitz im leben. Who spoke was a
God incarnate, Jesus Christ, who came precisely for these marginalized
people, who preached and proclaimed the kingdom of God to the people
of Israel. This phrase – Kingdom of God – which can be found 122 times
in the Gospels and 90 times on the lips of Jesus, speaks of the hope and
realization of a world where the sovereignty of God is manifest, where
sin and all its consequences – hate, division, suffering, oppression,
domination, and death – are destroyed, and where humanity and creation
are liberated and restored to their God-given identity as brothers and
sisters to one another. It is the fundamental utopia of the human heart.
Jesus touched, worked with, healed, ate with, conversed with, sat with,
walked with, and even partied with so many who were called sinners
in his time, continually seeking those little ones to call them into this
kingdom of God. This was Jesus’ mission in the world, to begin this
manifestation, liberation, and restoration, and it was this message and
action that these Franciscans of the missions took to heart.

These missionaries also found themselves turning to the writings
of Francis, looking for further clues for how he and his brothers
responded to the experiences in these mission lands. The key
insight of Francis, especially as expressed in his Testament, in the various
redactions of the Early Rule, and in his Letter to the Faithful, speaks to
a particular social context and a radical response: without exception, all
men and women have immeasurable worth and dignity, all are brothers
and sisters to one another, all come from God as goodness and gift. And
the culminating experience which convinced Francis of the truth of his
insight is the encounter with the leper(s). The lepers, those most avoided,
marginalized, and despised in Assisi, the ones who offered nothing to the
economic and political boom of the commune, the ones whom Francis
himself had been taught to ignore and marginalize while being groomed
to assume his father’s cloth business – they were the means to opening
his eyes to the beauty of God’s goodness and gift. It was by living and working with those most marginalized that Francis began to make his mission the rebuilding of the (broken) Church. It is to this charism that Franciscan missionaries commit themselves.

It is easy, then, to see how these contemporary Franciscan missionaries, the founders of CCFMC, became enflamed with the example of Jesus and of Francis of Assisi, and how, in coming together to share their experiences and theological reflections by writing the CCFMC mother-text, they hoped to offer the rest of the Franciscan family a dynamic and relevant theological vision for showing how Franciscan life might again be effective in building God’s kingdom in today’s globalized world. They envisioned that this text might be a means of gathering the entire Franciscan family together in a common mission, a mission involved with and yet challenging to economic, social, political, and ideological structures, a mission that would listen to and take the side of the poor and oppressed, a mission that would be rooted in the Gospels and the Franciscan documents, a mission that would speak with relevance and intelligence to contemporary issues. They dreamt that through reading and reflecting on key documents, through common exercises and activities, and through prayer and worship, that justice might, in fact, be realized, that the world (or wherever one might be placed) might truly be transformed into the kingdom. This was the original vision for CCFMC.

This vision might strike some North American ears as too political, too much focused on social dynamics, and too friendly to liberation theology. This has been one of the North American critiques of the CCFMC mother-text and a cause for its current revision. Unlike Jesus, Francis, or our missionary brothers and sisters, many North American Christians might not be privy to or seek out face-to-face encounters with the marginalized. Our culture remains rich in ways that simultaneously shield us from these graced encounters and bombard us with images and sound bites, desensitizing us to the real suffering, brokenness, and oppression of God’s creation. It is worth reconsidering how Jesus’ and Francis’s own conversion – conversio – is fundamentally wrapped up with their own work, prayer, and celebration – conversatio – with the voiceless. This is exactly what this resource hopes to do: to reconsider the mission of Jesus and Francis and to challenge and to inspire the reader to join in this forma vitae of liberation and rebuilding. As challenging as this is, it remains the dream of its founders and the underpinnings for this North American text, Build With Living Stones: Formation for Franciscan Life and Work.

This Facilitator’s Guide offers users an opportunity to tap into this mission vision and to drink more deeply of its message of liberation and rebuilding. Many have helped bring this to fruition for whom I offer thanks. First, Margaret Carney, O.S.F., and the Order of Friars Minor...
Province of St. John the Baptist who opened the Franciscan door to the knock of a young layman with the possibility of doing graduate studies at the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure, New York. I was interested in the so-called Franciscan social movement inspired by a poor medieval man, and how this movement might still offer some relevant response to today’s global Church and world. Along the way, Michael Cusato, O.F.M., Michael Blastic, O.F.M., and Jean-François Godet-Calogeras, each in his own way, both in scholarship and in living, grounded me in the history, theology and spirituality of this movement. As director of Build With Living Stones in 2005, I journeyed to Würzburg, Germany to visit the founder of CCFMC, Andreas Müller, O.F.M., and his committed staff, Reginarda Holzer, O.S.F., and Patricia Hoffmann. There, I was able to hear the story and vision of CCFMC and feel the inspired work of the CCFMC family around the world. It is out of those conversations, which were both challenging and celebratory, that much of the vision and content of this Facilitator’s Guide took shape. I am extremely thankful for the opportunity to connect with the German heart of this text, and for their gracious permission to reprint selected background material, suggested activities and projects from the original units of the Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism. I pray that we might move forward together as brothers and sisters in our common Franciscan mission. Michael Cusato, O.F.M., Michael Blastic, O.F.M., and Daria Mitchell, O.S.F., offered suggestions along the way, both in content and format. I wish to dedicate this guide to Paula Scraba, who, during my short tenure with Build With Living Stones, was North America’s greatest believer, cheerleader and facilitator.

Trevor Thompson
St. Bonaventure University
PART ONE: FACILITATION

Facilitation is an exercise of leadership in a given situation. It consists of a set of techniques and guidelines. These techniques cannot be separated from the attitudes of the facilitator. It can be said that the foremost technique is the facilitator.

General Principles for Facilitation

A. Facilitation is a learning process for both facilitator and participants.
B. It must provide a liberating experience for the participants.
C. It maximizes the participation of everyone involved in the process.
D. It starts from the living realities of the participants. This serves as a basic resource.
E. It utilizes new forms, methodologies, and approaches.
F. It gives as much emphasis to process as to content.
G. It promotes the maximum creativity of the participants in the whole process.
H. It provides an atmosphere that is conducive to spontaneous learning and dynamic interaction among the participants.
I. It promotes the structures of dialogue, sharing, interaction, shared leadership, critical feedback and continuing nourishment of the participants in the whole process.
J. It recognizes the dignity of each participant and develops an atmosphere of mutual trust.
K. It directs the group towards the attainment of goals.

Facilitator’s Roles

A. Initiates – gets the ball rolling, finds a way so that awkward silences are avoided.
B. Regulates – sees to it that everyone participates, draws out those who do not speak, gets the group to move towards the desired direction, takes the time factor into consideration and provides order in the discussion.
C. Informs – serves as a resource person, clarifies points while providing needed information, points out important data, underlines the highlights, keeps the group informed as to objectives, schedule, etc.
D. Supports – provides encouragement especially to those who find sharing difficult, supports the opinions of others where necessary as affirmation and refrains from antagonizing anyone.
E. Evaluates – gives an on-going assessment as to where the group is, sums up points where needed, gets everyone to share in the assessment and functions as a process observer.

Facilitator’s Competency:

A. Knowledge Competencies:

1. This is a threshold requirement. The facilitator must have sufficient knowledge of what he/she is up to.
2. The facilitator will benefit by locating resources to read and study so that he/she can lead, direct, and refer others to the latest scholarship and conversations within the given area of competency.

B. Entrepreneurial Competencies:

1. Efficiency Orientation is a continuing interest in doing things better and finding the best combination of resources.
2. Pro-active – the stamina to initiate action.

C. Intellectual Competencies:

1. Logical Thought – ability to place events in a causal sequence.
2. Conceptualization – ability to assemble information and seemingly related ideas and events into a pattern.
3. Diagnostic skills – ability to apply concepts and theories to real-life situations.

D. Socio-emotional Competencies:

1. Self-control – ability to place the group’s needs above personal reactions.
2. Spontaneity – ability to express ideas freely and easily.
3. Perceptual objectivity – ability to understand and/or present contrasting points of view skillfully, especially in conflict situations.
5. Stamina and adaptability – high energy levels and ability to function effectively under pressure.

E. Interpersonal Competencies:

1. Self-confidence or the compelling faith in one’s own ability to attain goals.
2. Developing a conviction about one’s responsibility to help others develop themselves.
3. Concern about impact or the awareness of the way he/she affects the group.
4. Unilateral power – the personal ability to get others to go along with prescribed directions, policies and procedures.
5. Socialized power – the ability to build a network of support.
6. Oral Communication – the ability to speak so that others can understand; the facilitator uses parables, anecdotes, illustrations, etc., that can be grasped quickly.
7. Positive regard – a deeply rooted belief in the ability of others to perform effectively if given a reasonable chance.
8. Managing group process – ability to inspire team work, a way that promotes morale in a work group.
PART TWO: LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Groundwork for Learning

A. Keep the input short.

B. When an idea is new, allow for disorientation. People defend themselves against new ideas, so when you get one to register, do not be surprised if they want to argue or get further clarification. Welcome it and help them so that the idea comes home more quickly.

C. Practice reading the signs (getting feedback). Watch for indicators of what is going on overtly, covertly. Listen to what they say and try to understand what motivates their comments. Make yourself stop and listen. Slow down your tendency to defend your position.

D. When an idea has registered, try to apply it soon. The best test of comprehension is use.

E. When they have what they need, let them struggle. After enough explanation to make the point clear, let them put it into their own words. Allow for some frustration. Do not rush in with another explanation to relieve your own uneasiness. Allow them time to settle down.

F. Do not be afraid to repeat yourself. People are ready to learn at different rates. One person may get the point quickly, another may not hear it until the fourth or fifth repetition. As a courtesy to the quick learners, try to find slightly different ways to make your point each time so the repetition is not apparent.

Laws of Learning

All the laws of learning are not apparent in every situation. These laws manifest themselves either singly or in cluster.

A. Law of Readiness

People learn best when they are ready to learn. They do not learn much if they see no reason for learning. Participants with a strong purpose, clear objectives and valid reasons for learning make more progress than those who lack motivation. Readiness implies a degree of eagerness and enthusiasm.
B. Law of Exercise

Those things most often repeated are best remembered. It is the basis of practice. The mind can rarely retain, evaluate and apply new concepts or practices after a single exposure. They learn by applying what has been told, and every time they practice, their learning continues. Repetition is directed at a goal. Repetition can be of many types, including recall, review, restatement and application.

C. Law of Effect

Learning is strengthened when accompanied by a pleasant or satisfying feeling, and learning is weakened when associated with an unpleasant feeling.

D. Law of Primacy

Primacy, the state of being first, often creates a strong, almost unshakable impression. This means that what is learned must be correct the first time. Correcting erroneous learning is more difficult than teaching it right the first time. In terms of interpersonal skills, where ambiguity and contingencies abound, it is better to go slowly and carefully than to plunge ahead so as to cover more ground. First experiences should be positive and functional so they lay the foundation for all that is to follow.

E. Law of Intensity

A vivid, dramatic, exciting learning experience teaches more than a routine, boring experience. Slides, charts, posters, photographs and other audio-visual aids add vividness to learning.

F. Law of The Recent

Other things being equal, the things most recently learned are the things best remembered.
Rationale for the course Build With Living Stones:

There is from the world itself “a powerful and tragic appeal to be evangelized.” (EN 55). We believe that there is a specific Franciscan response to that appeal – and that is what the Correspondence Course on the Franciscan Missionary Charism (CCFMC) or Build With Living Stones (BWLS) is all about.

For Francis, other visions and inspirations left him uncertain, and it was only upon hearing the mission discourses in the Gospel that what God wanted of him became clear and he could say, “This is what I wish, this is what I seek, this is what I long to do with all my heart.” (IC 22)

We can begin with Francis himself. He was the first founder with a missionary chapter in his Rule (ER 16 and LR 12); he sent missionaries two by two; he himself went on mission.

Faithful to the imprint given by Francis, the Franciscans see themselves today as so essentially missionary that without mission they have no reason to exist. (John Vaughn’s Letter to the Order, 1981). This conviction started with Francis himself.

Obviously, Francis and the friars from the beginning were missionary. The Franciscan movement tried to follow the original inspiration of Francis, but it adapted that inspiration to changing conditions and signs of the times, developed through the centuries and created a deep story which is found in written history: tradition, legend, and, importantly, in the documents. Thus, we look at the signs of the times, at the reality of the contemporary world and church, we arrive at the Franciscan response demanded.

The 14 Lessons/Units of this text will look intently at our deep story, will relate that story to the signs of the times, and will arrive at what our charism is today.

Objectives:

A. To deepen our rootedness in our Franciscan missionary charism; therefore,

B. To better understand, appreciate and live by the biblical, ecclesial, theological, sociological and cultural foundations of that Franciscan missionary charism.
C. To open up new perspectives of the realities of the world, the Church and the human person;

D. To facilitate in ourselves the conversion process, in the realization that we are being evangelized as we evangelize (EN:15);

E. To provide the impetus to build up the reign of God, “working for liberation from evil in all its forms” (Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, n. 15); and therefore,

F. To demonstrate our love for the Church by giving witness to and promoting Gospel values in the concrete situations of our cultures, with inner freedom and conviction;

G. To underscore the principles of contemporary (yet aged-old Franciscan approach to mission: minority, witness of presence, respect for the working of the Holy Spirit among all peoples, dialogue, working with the local church, cooperation, contemplation and celebration of life;

H. To renew and strengthen the sense of being a family for the revitalization of the Franciscan movement.
Instructional Structure

A. Course Content

Unit 1: Francis, Clare and the Franciscan Family
Unit 2: Witnesses of the Incarnation
Unit 3: Traces of the Trinity
Unit 4: Traveling the Gospel Way: Moving toward the Kingdom in the Church
Unit 5: The Franciscan Mission
Unit 6: To be Formed into Christ Jesus
Unit 7: The Franciscan Evangelist: A Prayerful Missionary
Unit 8: Franciscan Presence & Dialogue: Living With Diversity in a Pluralistic Society
Unit 9: Franciscan Peace-Making in a Culture of Violence
Unit 10: Inculturation as a Franciscan Perspective
Unit 11: The Economy and Global Reality from a Franciscan Perspective
Unit 12: Relating as Franciscan Women and Men of Faith
Unit 13: Brother Sun and Sister Moon: A Franciscan View of the Environment
Unit 14: The Continuing Franciscan Task in the Church

B. Suggested Methodologies

1. Deductive Method: Reasoning from the general to the particular. If the general rule is true, and the special case falls under the rule, the conclusion is certain.

2. Inductive Method: Reasoning from the particular to the general. Induction can ordinarily give no more than a probable conclusion, because we can never be sure that we have collated all instances. An induction is of the nature of an inference, but while an inference may be partial and hasty, an induction is careful and aims to be complete.

3. ADIDS: Activity, Discussion, Input, Deepening, Synthesis.

C. Suggested Activities

1. Group Discussion
   a. Purpose: Group discussion is neither to win an argument nor to amuse oneself. It is to explore and discover meaning. It is useful for changing attitudes in a non-threatening environment, consolidating knowledge and allowing knowledge to be tested. It also allows mutual support for articulation of problems, a search for solutions and their application to life.
b. Participants: Small group, not more than 8.
c. Time Frame: 30 minutes to 1 hour
d. Mechanics:
   [1]: Suggested methods in assigning people to groups:
      [a] Random method - people count off, and those with the same number group together.
      [b] Stratified method - This is done when you want to have a good mix (men/women, age groups, areas represented). Separate them according to categories, then count.
      [c] If the group agrees, the Preparatory Committee or the Steering Committee can assign people to the groups with the assurance of a good mix.
   [2] If needed, assign the facilitator and secretary beforehand. It is better to leave the choice to the members of the group if they know each other so that capabilities are tapped. When really good reports are not needed and there is no time constraint, then the members of the group can decide.
   [3] Give the group enough time to share. The limit depends on the topic, time of day and other factors. It is good to give the group a two-minute warning so that the members can wrap up their sharing.
   [4] Guide questions can be useful. These should be clear, concise, easy to grasp, concrete and within clear boundaries. Groups should not be given too many questions which can not be answered in time.
   [5] Provide clear instructions, should they give a written or oral report. If the report is going to be presented in a creative manner, time allotment should be considered.
   [6] The setting of the group discussion is important. Members of the group should be seated comfortably, facing each other. Proper ventilation and lighting should be given consideration.
   [7] The facilitator must monitor the group to find out how they are doing. This way, guidance can be provided immediately.
   [8] The facilitator provides the guidelines for reporting.
   [9] Guidance for Members of Discussion Groups:
      [a] Speak your mind freely. Discussion is based on the exchange of ideas. Nobody else has exactly the same background, experience, and training that you have. Your contribution is special.
do not be satisfied with mere listening.

[b] Listen attentively to others. Try to understand the other point of view. Seek out the experience and reasoning on which it rests. Do not accept unsupported ideas. Remember, on almost every question there are several points of view.

c] Strike while the iron is hot. Do not wait to speak until you are called upon. You may forget the point or miss the best time to present it. What you have to say at the time may clear the way for better discussion or action.

d] Let the other people talk too. Do not speak for more than a minute or so at a time. Try to make your point in a few words. Give others a chance. It makes little difference who carries the ball so long as it is carried.

e] Do not fight over the ownership of ideas. Once you have given an idea to the group, let it become group property. Do not try to defend it because it is yours. Discussion is not debate.

f] Do not let the discussion get away from you. If you do not understand what is being said, say so. Ask questions until you understand. Relate the discussion to your own experience. Your contribution will be helpful only when you understand what is being discussed.

[g] Keep to the point. Wandering off the point hinders progress. Keep your remarks to the point. If a particular subject is being discussed, try to stay on the subject.

[h] Make the discussion pleasant for all. Be positive and try to help others to enjoy the discussion. Act towards the members as you want them to act towards you. Accept criticism.

[i] Share your ideas with the whole group. A private discussion with your neighbor not only cheats the group, but is also a disturbing influence.

2. Theater

a. Purpose: One of the most creative ways of drawing out participants is the use of theater. This process is dialogic, evocative and participative. Seminars are boring if the participants just sit down and listen to a chain of speakers. The process becomes dynamic and enjoyable if the participants put on skits or view a
play. These serve as breaks. Thus, instead of a group giving a verbal report, they put on an improvised play which makes the report more alive and elicits more attention from the participants.
b. Participants: 5 to 10 members in a group
c. Time Frame: 3 to 15 minutes
d. Mechanics:

[1] Different Ways of Using Theater:
[a] Role Play: This is improvised by the participants themselves with minimum guidance from the facilitator. Storyline, casting and other details could be done by the participants. This is usually brief: at the utmost three minutes with a simple story, limited dialogue, minimum props and costumes. This usually serves as point of departure for a topic, or takes the place of a written report.
[b] On-the-Spot Improvisation: The facilitator serves as the Director. This is done spontaneously with minimum involvement of the facilitator. He/she appoints the cast, narrows down the involvement of each actor/actress, draws the dialogue from each one based on experiences, orchestrates the whole scenario, begins and ends the play according to his/her specification. However, raw material is supplied by the actors/actresses whose life experiences are being dramatized without the benefit of a written script.
[c] Play Presentation: A one-act play or a full-length three-act play (using all elements of theater: lights, make-up, props, costumes, sounds, etc.) is incorporated into the seminar, not for entertainment purposes, but as an integral part. This is either live or in video. The play has a script and has been extensively rehearsed. The performance should be good to make the audience captive. The play may serve as a point of departure for a discussion on a topic or could be used to provide illustrations.

[2] Steps to follow:
[a] For Role Playing and On-the-Spot Improvisation:
- Keep the storyline simple, one which can be easily translated into a play, with dialogue easily ad-libbed.
- Have enough participants to be members of
the cast with each one taking on a clear role no matter how small. If the group is too big, the improvisations could become messy and complicated.

- Give the time frame.
- End and begin with clear indications (curtain techniques).
- Give the group enough time to prepare, but not too long since the audience may drift away.
- Encourage spontaneity.
- At the end always get reactions from both audience and the participants.
- Process the feedback systematically and accurately before giving the input.

[b] For Scripted Plays:
- Setting and all equipment needed are prepared well in advance and checked out before performance.
- Give a short introduction to situate everyone regarding the purpose of the activity.
- At the end always get reactions from both the audience and the participants.
- Process the feedbacks systematically and adequately before giving the input.

3. Audio-Visuals

a. Purpose: Audio-visuals are used to make the sessions evocative and participative. These are meant to provoke the involvement of the participants in the process. These are not supposed to be tools to reinforce the banking method where the participants passively sit back and just absorb the information or messages being communicated. It is, therefore, important to introduce the audio-visuals in a manner that will provoke discussion and reflection.

b. Mechanics

[1] Introduce the subject matter.
[2] Explain the process involved and the steps to be followed.
[3] Use the materials (show a slide or video production, play, a song or tape, present a drawing, etc.)
[7] Input/Deepening
You can use the materials again to serve as review/recapitulation.

c. Audio-visual Materials
   [1] Photographs
   [3] Cassette tapes (audio materials)
   [4] Sound slides productions
   [5] Video productions/movies

d. Factors to be Considered
   [1] Availability of electricity or source of power
   [2] Availability of equipment (e.g. cassette recorder, slide projector.)
   [3] Size of audience and lecture/seminar hall
   [4] Length of session

e. Use of Materials and Number of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of AV Materials</th>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>Size of Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Visual materials (hand-outs or PowerPoint)</td>
<td>-Visual illustrations to accompany lectures or inputs</td>
<td>-Small/medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Photographs</td>
<td>-Photo language (imagery)</td>
<td>-Small/medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Audio-visual</td>
<td>-Stimulate discussion for song analysis -Serve as background music to readings and meditative inputs</td>
<td>-Small/medium/big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Sound Slides</td>
<td>-Stimulate/provide focus for small groups -Provide additional facts/information as supplement to the lecture.</td>
<td>-Small/medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Video productions</td>
<td>(Same as above)</td>
<td>-Small/medium/big</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Chalk-talk
   a. Purpose: Chalk-talk is used when there is very little access to audio-visual materials. Blackboards and chalks are most readily available. Chalk-talk is the easiest to do, least complicated and does not need electricity or any other equipment. It is appropriate to any given situation.
   b. Usefulness:
      [1] For making signs during meetings/conventions such as welcome signs.
      [2] While emphasizing a point, the lecturer draws an image or writes a word when giving inputs or lectures. This does not only give the lecturer time to pause and catch his/her breath, but also provides the participants with a break. Instead of the ears, they make use of their eyes. The process involves a break in the monotony of what is often a boring lecture.
   c. Mechanics:
      [1] Present the drawings one at a time. This avoids overwhelming the audience. Use the technique of sequencing.
      [2] Whenever useful and helpful, use colored chalk. They are always attractive to the eyes. But watch out with some colors, e.g. purple. Not all colors project well on green blackboard. Depending on your audience and the topic being presented, make your color combinations wild or tame.
      [3] While doing a chalk talk in the course of giving an input, do not hide the drawings. Show the design as it unfolds by positioning yourself to the side of the board while you are drawing. It is better to stop talking while drawing. If the people laugh at the drawing (and it is almost always better if the drawing evokes laughter) let the laughter subside before talking again.
      [4] Much like cracking a joke, a drawing that evokes laughter is always welcome. So insert humor in your chalk-talk. You only need to exaggerate with your lines and forms.
      [5] A clean board is always easy on the eyes. So when some drawings are no longer needed, erase them before introducing more drawings. Drawings on a clean board are clearer. Keep your board clean.
      [6] Chalk-talk is most useful for small groups. In
assemblies and conventions involving more than 100 participants, it is not as effective especially if the people at the back can hardly see the drawings. But one can be creative with chalk-talk involving big groups. Make the drawing bigger and more pronounced.

[7] Use a simple system of codes, like arrows, but do not draw so many arrows, lest the audience gets a complicated picture. This is most useful for highlighting or connecting points.

[8] In principle, make your chalk-talk drawings as simple as possible, covering the very essence of the object you want to project.

5. Body Language
   a. Purpose: This is the use of non-verbal communication. The body is a high-powered expression of ideas, feelings, attitudes. Participants have to determine their gifts/talents to express themselves. This is a break from routine sessions. It is most useful for non-controversial topics.
   b. Participants: 6 to 12
   c. Time Frame: 1 hour
   d. Mechanics:
      [1] Present the topic.
      [2] Identify the message to be portrayed.
      [3] Express it with the body.
      [4] Provide different expressions to deliver the message.
      [5] Choose the most appropriate expression.
      [8] Ask the audience to react. This can initiate a discussion on the topic.

6. Collage
   a. Purpose: Collage is a composition of flat objects: newspapers, cloth, cardboard, etc., pasted together on a surface and often combined with related lines and colors for artistic effect. This is an art in conveying different perspectives and the possibility of reorganizing it into a whole. It provides a matrix of information.
   b. Participants: 6 to 8
   c. Time Frame: 1 hour
   d. Mechanics:
      [1] Ask the participants to bring magazines, newspapers, brown paper or cartolinas to mount the pictures, scissors, pastes, colored pencils, etc.
Notes

[3] Let them scan their materials and cut the pictures that fit.
[4] Layout the materials on the brown paper/cartolina to get the desired effect. Put the most impressive and meaningful picture at the center.
[5] When the arrangement is set, paste the materials together.
[6] Present the work to the audience and ask them to interpret it.
[7] Based on the given comments, insights, etc., you can create a story/essay on the topic.

5. Talk Show

a. Purpose: Like a television or radio show, a well-known personality (in this case, the facilitator) interviews invited guests before a live audience. This is a syncretic approach to a certain reality. This is to reconcile or unite various systems of thought based on commonalities or points of convergence.
b. Participants: A maximum of 5 plus the facilitator
c. Time Frame: 1 to 1½ hours
d. Mechanics:
   [1] Provide the correct setting (sitting arrangement of guests, facing the audience).
   [3] Present the guests and their particular discipline or sector.
   [4] Ask the questions and direct them to target quest.
   [5] Allow the guest to expound their views not longer than three minutes at a time.
   [6] Facilitator may draw out comments from other guests.
   [7] After listening to different viewpoints, give synthesis of the salient points underscoring the commonalities.
   [8] The audience may be allowed to raise questions and comments after the guests have spoken. Their interventions can be included in the synthesis.
   [9] Facilitator gives out the challenges surfaced by the discussion.
   [10] Facilitator signs off by expressing her/his thanks to both guests and audience for their cooperation
e. Tips for Facilitators
   [1] Lay down the ground rules.
   [2] Direct the discussion to the expressed goal.
   [3] Regulate the discussion and temper the mood of
8. Scripture Study  
   a. Seven Steps to Studying Scripture Texts:  
      [1] Start with a prayer inviting the presence of the 
          Lord.  
      [2] Read the selected text (assign one with a good 
          speaking voice and who is articulate).  
      [3] Each one in the group quotes some words, phrase, 
          or sentence that she/he finds meaningful.  
      [4] Silent reflection on the import of the choice 
          text.  
      [5] Share on the significance of the word, phrase or 
          sentence on the personal level.  
      [7] Discuss how the group can enflesh the values of 
          the significant word, phrase, or sentence.  
   b. The session may be closed by spontaneous prayers or 
      an appropriate song. 

D. Evaluation:  
Evaluation is an indispensable part of an effectively planned activity, 
whether it be a socio-economic project or a training program or a 
formation group. Evaluation is designed to show to what extent the stated 
lesson/project/program objectives have been attained, to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the planning or the 
implementation phases which facilitate or hinder the effective 
accomplishment of concrete lesson/project /program targets; and to generate data on the status of the lesson/project/program to 
serve as an important basis for next-step planning. Evaluation may 
be formative or summative. 

Formative evaluation is conducted at designated critical points/ 
moments during the implementation phases. It shows whether or not implementation is proceeding as planned and on schedule. If negative results are surfaced, then action to revise or change the negative factors can be immediately done. 

Summative evaluation is done at the end of the indicated period of implementation, to ascertain whether or not the expected outcomes (as indicated in the objectives) have been accomplished and to what extent. It shows the efficiency and how effective the project/program was as a whole.
Notes

Instructional and Resource Materials

1. Printed Materials
   a. The CCFMC or BWLS Textbook
   b. Sacred Scriptures
   c. Church Documents/Papal Encyclicals
   d. Sources for the Life of St. Francis
   e. Franciscan Documents
   f. Other References: See Bibliography in Text.
   g. Periodicals/Newspapers, etc.
   h. The CCFMC or BWLS Facilitators’ Manual

2. Audio-Visual Materials

3. Human Resources
   a. The signs of the times, read from actual experiences of life lived with the poor and marginalized.
   b. Shared faith and life experiences.
   c. Resource persons: experts in different fields of studies, e.g., Franciscan Studies, Ecclesiology, Theology, Scriptures.
UNIT I

FRANCIS, CLARE AND THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objectives:

To familiarize participants with the basic context from which the Franciscan movement arose, introducing Francis of Assisi and Clare of Assisi and their stories.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To understand the differing views of penance.
2. To clarify the difference and similarities between Francis and Clare and their response to the context of their times.
3. To see the Franciscan way as a “multi-faceted community” of brothers and sisters living the Gospel way shared by Francis and Clare.
4. To begin to feel how contemporary this Franciscan call is.

II. RESOURCES:


Policy/Mission Statements of Various Congregations of 1st Order, TOR Communities, Poor Clares and the SFO.


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction:

1. If this is the first lesson unit, it is a good time to have each member of the group introduce himself or herself. Good questions to have people share around: Why are you here? What draws you to the Franciscan tradition? What is your story and what is your context? What is your image of Francis?

2. Since this is the first lesson, and unless it has been handled separately, the Introduction should include the historical background of the *Build With Living Stones* text, and some remarks about the meaning of *charism/mission* (the present day Franciscan response to the needs of evangelization based on our “deep story,” tradition, current documents, etc.).

3. With many calling themselves “Franciscan,” is it possible to sort out what this means. Returning to the fundamental stories of the tradition, namely the stories of Francis and Clare of Assisi, we reclaim this way of life for today’s world.

B. Highlights of the Lesson:

1. There are many who call themselves “Franciscans.”

2. Francis did not intend to found a religious order, but he wanted to be faithful to the Gospel in his time and place.

3. His *way of life* attracted followers.

4. This *way of life* did not develop in a vacuum. History is
important, both the spiritual/religious history and the socio-economic history.

5. Francis’s way of life must be seen in light of the penitential movement of the 12th and 13th centuries.

6. Penance: living according to the Gospel, a total commitment.

7. This is not a body-denying, world-denying commitment. It is a positive witness to a God who becomes human and who makes human beings more fully themselves.

8. The socio-economic context is vital to understand Francis’s interpretation of the way of penance.

9. Assisi/central Italy characterized by concentration of poor and marginalized (lepers), an urban self-confidence, and a tension between the nobility and the common people.

10. Francis opted for the poor and marginalized rather than the money, power, and prestige.

11. Francis’s way of penance attracted both men and women.

12. Clare of Assisi, although inspired by Francis, had a clear sense of her own spirituality.

13. Clare struggled her entire lifetime to affirm her own rule of life rooted in Francis’s vision of penance, a life that emphasized absolute poverty.

14. Francis and Clare called all those who wanted to be faithful to the Gospel. They lived their lives witnessing to this, as well as wrote letters to the faithful calling them to their baptismal commitments.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS and EXERCISES:

A. Offer (via mini-lecture) a review of the historical context of the Franciscan tradition (the Facilitator could go deeper than the text and/or emphasize certain aspects of this history).

B. Elicit images and stories (some will be stereotypes or superficial) from the group about Francis, Clare, and the Franciscan tradition coming into this discussion.

C. Share how knowing the historical context to this tradition allows us to see Francis and Clare as real people with real concerns and real dreams.

D. Seek input around the question: “What is the true Franciscan way?”

E. Create a setting for story-telling/drama, where the Facilitator (or someone else) can act as Francis and/or Clare – telling a story, acting out a scene from their life, etc.

F. Read Francis’s Second Letter to All the Faithful (2LtF), especially stressing line 47 as the core of letter and all
Franciscan life. Use questions to initiate a conversation:
What are your favorite lines and why? What surprised you
about this letter? What line(s) are the core of the text and
of the way of life he is writing about?

V. APPLICATIONS (always according to the context of the audience,
always asking what this unit has to do with our lives)

A. What do the stories of Francis and Clare have to do with
us? Are we committed to be in dialogue with Francis,
Clare, and the stories of this tradition as living wisdom
of the Church, to be vulnerable to the ways we might be
challenged to grow and deepen in our living out of the
Gospel?

B. Who are the storytellers in our time? To which story do
we listen to and go to when looking for inspiration and
enlightenment?

C. Do we know or have we known Franciscan men and
women? If so, what characterized their lives and made
them distinct?

D. Does one need to be officially a Franciscan (commit to
an official rule) to be Franciscan (committed to this way
of life)? Who are people we know whom we could call
“Franciscan”?

E. How can we initially see the connection between the socio-
economic context of Francis’s and Clare’s time with our
own global/national/local situation – particularly around
the contemporary issue of “globalization”?
UNIT 2

WITNESSES OF THE INCARNATION

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objective:
   To understand how the Franciscan tradition is rooted in the Incarnation and to appreciate how this affects the tradition's mission in the world today.

B. Specific Objectives:
   1. To see the Incarnation as central to Francis' experience of the human person.
   2. To understand how Franciscan's see the “world” as their cloister
   3. To know how other Franciscans expressed and/or lived this Incarnational spirituality out.

II. RESOURCES:


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction: The way of life espoused by Francis and Clare is about making us more human in the here and now and the world a better place to live. It’s a path of reconciliation and love in brotherhood and sisterhood, especially among the marginalized. It is the witness of the incarnation that calls Franciscan to this mission.

B. Highlights of the Lesson:

1. The Franciscan way of life is secular, properly understood.
2. The Christian does not need to leave the world to meet God.
3. Sanctified Senses: God is found in all places and people.
4. Dualism cannot serve as the orientation of Franciscan life, even though it existed in Francis’s and Clare’s time.
5. Francis experienced God in the world, in the most marginalized of places and persons (lepers) – key concept!
Notes

6. A relationship between *Sacrum Commercium, Canticle of Creatures*, the celebration at Greccio, and other texts of Francis around this incarnational/relational spirituality.

7. John Duns Scotus’s unique understanding of creation (not as an afterthought) and the Incarnation (not the result of sin). It is a theology rooted in the love of the Incarnation.

8. The Incarnation is the basis for the humanization of the person and of society: what was considered small and insignificant is now recognized as large and significant; God is active in history; God and world are inseparable (properly understood); the powerful can be found in the margins, etc.

9. Clare offers another way of imaging the Incarnation and our role in giving birth to Jesus in our world, by being “mothers of God.”


11. For Franciscans, the Incarnation is something that is happening NOW and amongst us in the world.

12. The emphasis on the Incarnation shapes the way Franciscans live and work, as *Jongleurs de Dieu*, not an army.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS and EXERCISES

A. Engage a conversation around images of God found in Scripture, particularly in the Gospels, and more particularly in Jesus. Where do people find God? Where does God find us?

B. Expand and discuss the role dualism has played in the history of Christianity. What are its roots? What are manifestations of this? How has it affected the drama and power of the Incarnation?

C. What is stirred up by Clare’s maternal image of “mother of God”?

D. Francis is known for encouraging the living nativity at Greccio, a bringing to life of the story of the Incarnation. How does this kind of presentation engage the participants and the audience in unique ways? What are other ways the Church engages us similarly?

E. What’s the difference between the spirituality of *Jongleurs de Dieu* and an army? How is this lived out? Historically, what are other religious orders that fit these characterizations? Is there a need for both kinds of charisms in the Church and/or world?
V. APPLICATIONS

A. Lead a discussion around how the Incarnation affects our relationship with our emotions, senses, the body, and the world as ways to come to know God’s presence.

B. Where do we feel God’s presence most? Do we (or can we) see God’s presence in the most marginalized of situations/places/people? How does this present challenges to our notion of who God is? How does Jesus’ own witness (and Francis’s) call us to see anew?

C. In what ways do we continue to hold on to a dualistic spirituality in our lives, in our Church, in Christianity?

C. The Incarnation calls Franciscans to bring the Gospel to life again and again, in the here and now. What are the contemporary implications of this? Does it have personal implications? Social implications? In what ways?

D. Create a new living scene and/or image/metaphor that bring this Incarnational spirituality to life? Paint a picture, create a skit, write a poem, make a collage, etc.
UNIT 3

TRACES OF THE TRINITY

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objective:

To see the Church’s mission, in which Franciscans have a part, as flowing from the inner life of the Holy Trinity.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To understand the trinitarian basis of all Franciscan life and mission.
2. To become more aware of the crucially important role of the Holy Spirit.

II. RESOURCES:


Osborne, Kenan. *The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition: Tracing its Origins and Identifying Its Central Components*. The
III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction:

While St. Francis's spirituality has often been called "Christocentric" for very obvious reasons, it is important to make the clear trinitarian emphasis in Francis’s life and writings. The heart of the good news is trinitarian: human beings are invited to become “in Christ, a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), sharing in the inner life of Father, Son and Spirit.

B. Highlights of the Lesson:

1. Francis does not use the word “mission” in his writings but uses the verb “to send.” Francis understands God as the origin of his mission, that he is a part of a living process/dynamic/relationship – the Triune God.
2. As Jesus was sent to the world, so Francis understands his own mission, to be sent into the world.
3. Chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule (1221) expresses Francis’ Incarnational and Trinitarian approach to life; “the Franciscan Creed.”
4. For Francis, the Trinity is not an empty formula or instruction or dogma; it was a way of life, particularly in his understanding of the relationship/family of God.
5. The mission of the Church is to continue Jesus’ mission. Franciscans are sent into the world, particularly to be a voice to the poor.
7. Franciscans are to behave like Christ (RNB 22).
8. The aim of Franciscan mission: To bring about the realization of God’s Kingdom in the lives of people through a daily life of ordinary activities in the context of a community of brothers and sisters.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS and EXERCISES

1. Go deeper into the Church’s theological history around the topic of the Trinity.
2. Read the following two texts:

From Ad gentes, "Decree about the Missionary Activity of the Church," Vatican Council II, 1965: No. 2: The Church
Notes

on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origins in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This plan flows from “fountain-like love,” the love of God the Father. As the principle without principle from Whom the Son is generated and from Whom the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son, God in His great and merciful kindness freely creates us and moreover, graciously calls us to share in His life and glory. He generously pours out, and never ceases to pour out, His divine goodness, so that He who is Creator of all things might at last become “all in all” (1Cor 15:28), thus simultaneously assuring His own glory and our happiness. It pleased God to call us all to share in His life and not merely as individuals, without any bond between us, but He formed us into a people in which His children who had scattered were gathered together.

From *Redemptoris Missio*, “On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate,” Encyclical of John Paul II, 1990: No. 23: John is the only Evangelist to speak explicitly of a ‘mandate’, a word equivalent to ‘mission.’ He directly links the mission which Jesus entrusts to His disciples with the mission which He Himself has received from the Father: “As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you” (Jn 20:21). Addressing the Father, Jesus says: “As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” (Jn 17:18). The entire missionary meaning of John’s Gospel is expressed in the “priestly prayer”: “This is Eternal Life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ You have sent” (Jn 17:3). The ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion which exists between the Father and the Son. The disciples are to live in unity with one another, remaining in the Father and the Son, so that the world may know and believe (Jn 17:21-23). This is a very important missionary text. It makes us understand that we are missionaries about all because of what we are as a Church whose innermost life in love, even before we become missionaries in word or deed.

What statements correspond to the Franciscan views from this lesson unit? What are the differences?

3. What were the most stirring lines/paragraphs of Chapter 23 of the *Early Rule*? What do they say about Francis’s heart and hopes for his community? How do they express Francis’s relational understanding of God and community?

4. Discuss further the Franciscan emphasis on the descending
movement of God (heights to humiliation, etc.). Does this resonate with you and your image of God?

5. What are the reactions to the Flannery O’Connor line, "Dogma is only the gateway to contemplation"? How is this different from other ways to approach dogma?

6. Discuss further the familial and birthing imagery used to describe the mystery of the Trinity?

V. APPLICATIONS

1. Read the following passage:

*Something of inestimable value is represented by our living in a communion of love. This life, which has its foundation in the communion of life within the Trinity, requires that we reveal this mystery of love more truly and clearly day by day.* Constitutions of the Poor Clares 1989, Art. 90:2.

To what extent can this be said about any Christian community? What would this article look like in more concrete terms in your situation?

2. How “missionary” is the community in which you live? Compare the Trinity with other symbols of the divine from other religious traditions. How do they compare? How do they differ?

3. How would you explain and/or image the Trinity to someone of another religious background?

4. Write a poem and/or paint a picture that reflects a Trinitarian theme in the Franciscan tradition.
UNIT 4

TRAVELING THE GOSPEL WAY: MOVING TOWARD THE KINGDOM IN THE CHURCH

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objective:

To understand Franciscans multidimensional understanding of “Church.”

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To understand how Francis saw himself as a man of the Church.
2. To see how Francis (and the tradition) uses the motif of “herald of the great King” and the “Kingdom of God” to describe the Franciscan presence in the Church and the world.

II. RESOURCES:


Francis lived and worked within the Church, and yet his Gospel way of life was lived dynamically and creatively within the Church.

B. Highlights of the Lesson:

1. Francis’s time and place was immersed in Christendom.
2. Francis’s understanding of the Church fits within the ecclesial models of Avery Dulles’ major work, *Models of the Church*: Church as institution, communion, sacrament, servant, disciple, and herald.
3. Institution: Francis was committed to the Church and her structures, beliefs, and laws. He expresses the longing to “rebuild the Church” (not in condemnations) in his embrace of the poor and powerless.
4. Communion: Francis’s own fraternal love with his brothers and sisters in this Gospel way expresses his commitment to “communion” as a metaphor for Church.
5. Sacrament: Francis stresses the importance of the Church’s sacramental life, especially the Eucharist, as the instruments through which one is led to the invisible from the visible. The 2 Letters to the Faithful express this well.
6. Servant: Francis refers to himself often as “servant,” “the lesser one,” and the “the least among brothers.”
7. Discipleship: Francis demanded discipleship of all, that is, to listen to the Master, Jesus.
8. Herald (the most apparent ecclesial image): Francis presented (by Bonaventure) as the herald in the
Church who announces the Kingdom of God.” Francis is a herald of the Gospel.

9. The Kingdom of God is a rich metaphor used in the Gospels, and it arrives in the person of Jesus.

10. Francis sees himself heralding this Kingdom of God presented by Jesus, not necessarily the one being articulated or imaged by the institutional Church.

11. Francis calls all his brothers and sisters to seek “the Reign of God and His justice.”

12. The *Canticle of Creatures* is the particular good example of Francis’s vision of the Kingdom, the Kingdom that can be found anywhere and everywhere.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A. Read sections of Avery Dulles’s *Models of the Church*, engaging the models mentioned in this chapter more deeply. How do Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, et al. fit or not fit into these models?

B. What are reactions to Francis’ relationship with the institutional Church, that is, “not to condemn its structures but to live the Gospel by being powerless and poor within it”?

C. Why did Francis and the early brothers find it important to be “official” by seeking approval of the Pope of their way of life? What did they gain/lose? Who were other figures and/or movements living before and concurrently with the early Franciscan movement? What was their relationship with the Church (models of the Church)?

D. What does it mean to say that the Church is the “sacrament of encounter with Christ”? Or that the Church is the “instrument through which one is led to the invisible through the visible”?

E. Francis writes that the friars first concern “should be to seek the Reign of God and His justice.” How does Francis live this out? How does this put him in communion and at odds with the institutional church?

V. APPLICATIONS

A. What is your view/vision of “church”? Is there a way to image your vision by painting, drawing, collage, etc? Have you ever experienced church in this way?

B. What is your relationship with the institutional Church? In what ways does the Church help you live your life?
according to the Gospel? In what ways does the Church make it difficult?

C. Where do you encounter Christ? What makes visible the invisible for you? Where do you find the “kingdom of God” most present and alive?

D. What are you a “herald” of? In what concrete ways can you join Francis as “herald of the Great King”?
UNIT 5

THE FRANCISCAN MISSION

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objective:

To understand the Franciscan missionary mandate

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To know how the Triune God is a missionary God.
2. To see how Francis understood himself as missionary.
3. To understand the context of Francis’s own missionary activity, and how his writings offer a unique and courageous model in the Church.

II. RESOURCES:


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction:

Francis, from the beginning of his ministry, saw himself as a missionary, one who is being called to go among the world and preach the Good News.

B. Highlights of the Lesson

1. Francis’s understanding of mission has its roots in the theological model of God as a missionary God: the Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit sends the people.
2. In this model, all people are called to be missionaries.
3. Francis understood himself as a man sent, a man rooted in the Gospel’s call, as seen in Matthew chapter 10.
4. Francis saw his entire life as one of calling people to live the Gospel – through Italy and then abroad.
5. Francis desires to go to share the Good News to the Saracens.
6. The “Missionary Mandate” of Francis can be seen in Chapter 16 of the Early Rule.
7. The text and commentary on the text are offered, plus some quotes from Paul VI’s Evangelii nuntiandi.
8. Francis takes the lead from the Gospel in his understanding of mission, not the dominant culture or the dominant ecclesiastical culture of his day.
9. Francis proposes that his brothers go among the Saracens as lesser brothers and sisters in a spirit of service and spiritual living. This is a revolutionary break from some of the other more dominant perspectives and traditions on how to be among the Saracens.
10. Francis proclaims what he is living. He is primarily advocating that Franciscans bear witness to the Gospel, as it is said, “if necessary use words.”
11. Francis calls his followers not to be ashamed by who they are either. He calls them to be honest and full of integrity about who they say they are.
12. And then Francis proposes a proclamation of the Gospel by patient suffering via persecution and even martyrdom.
13. Francis did not see himself or his brothers as people entering into political or religious polemics but of brothers and sisters witnessing the love of God alive in their hearts.
14. Clare and Bonaventure, too, desire this kind of witness.
15. Francis’s entire life emitted this kind of witness bearing love. His sharing this was his mission.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A. What images/ideas does the word “missionary” evoke?
B. Go line by line through Earlier Rule Chapter 16 and discuss the meaning and implications of this text. Explain the historical context for this rule as well.
C. Read the following quote from Pope Innocent III in his letter Quia maior from April 19-29, 1213 where he calls all Christians “in the name of God and Jesus Christ” of all provinces of the former Latin Christianity to crusade against the Saracens: “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.’” Pope Innocent continues, threatening those who refuse this: “The King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ will condemn them for the sin of ingratitude and infidelity should they fail to respond to this call for help. The Lord was driven out 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 commits a grave sin and must be punished.” How are the spirit and words of Innocent III different than Francis’s? What are the implications of Francis’s way among nonbelievers, and what are the implications of Innocent’s call to crusade?

D. Compare chapter 16 of the Earlier Rule and chapter 7 of the Later Rule. What agreements and what differences (omissions) in these two texts can you establish?

V. APPLICATIONS

A. What are your experiences with Franciscan sisters and brothers in mission endeavors? How would you describe their approach?

B. What is the history of Franciscan missions in the United States of America, particularly in the Southwest and west coast? How would you describe the approach of these early missionaries?

C. Do you employ the original Franciscan mission methods in your area of work/ministry? If so, how? If not, why not?
   - Divine inspiration?
   - By not engaging in disputes and quarrels?
   - By being subject to all human creatures for God’s sake?
   - By proclaiming the word of God and baptizing when ones sees that it pleases the Lord?
   - By rejoicing when being persecuted?

D. Who are the “Saracens” among us today? Where are the contemporary crusades – against various socio/religious/political/ethnic people? What can Franciscans and their wisdom around mission offer as a witness in our world/Church today?
UNIT 6

TO BE FORMED INTO CHRIST JESUS

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objective:

To understand how Franciscans are to be formed for their mission in the world.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To see the role of the lepers in Francis’s life.
2. To understand how Francis’ experience with the lepers shaped (or should shape) Franciscan formation.
3. To be exposed to the diversity of contemporary formation models that might resonate with Franciscans.

II. RESOURCES:


Build Up My Church: Franciscan Inspiration for and from the Third World. Leonardo Boff & Walbert Buhlmann, OFM Cap. Chicago:
Inter-Provincial Secretariat for the Missions of the Order of Friars Minor, 1984.


Carney, Margaret. The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1993.


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction:

The primary formative experience in Francis’s life was the experience with the lepers. Thus, all formational experiences for Franciscans should be rooted in this.

B. Highlights of the Lesson

1. Francis desired above all to be formed into Jesus for the sake of the Kingdom.
2. Francis’s embrace/kiss of the leper is not a single event in his life. He cared for them, bandaged them, and lived among them. They were his teachers.
3. Francis articulates his conversion around this experience, and he calls his brothers to a life grounded in similar human and earthy experiences in his writings.
4. In time, especially because of Bonaventure’s biography *Major Life of St. Francis*, the leper was replaced by Francis as the primary formator. Francis became a mentor to imitate.
5. Franciscan formation, based on Francis’s experience, means that people not programs or universities form the Franciscan person.
6. In order to be formed in this way, the community needs to be open to learning, to be vulnerable to be formed in new ways. This is a commitment to on-going conversions, to listening with the body, heart, and spirit. This makes formation for Franciscans a horizontal, dynamic, and circular process rather than vertical and hierarchical.
7. The primary identity of Franciscans is of brother and sister, an identity that opens the Franciscan to the wisdom of another.
8. The prime place of formation and reflection then is experience.
10. Key among this reflection is the celebration of the Eucharist, which bonds the brothers and sisters together in the fullness of the mystery. It is at the table that Franciscans are reminded of the goodness of God and that all is a gift, especially the poor among us.
11. Four contemporary formation models that might resonate with the Franciscan tradition are mentioned: The Personalist Model, RCIA, the Pilgrim Model, and the Disciple Model. The latter two are identified as being rather good models.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

1. Reread Francis’s Testament, written at the end of his life as he looks back over his life living the Gospel. Discuss further what Francis is trying to say, how he’s saying it, and to whom is he speaking. Why is this text pivotal to Franciscan formation?

2. Read and discuss chapters 1, 7, and 14 of the Earlier Rule, which offer the core of the early life of the Franciscans. Then read the first 3 verses of chapter 9, a later addition to the rule of life which reflects the maturity of reflection on the Franciscan life. What do these texts say about early Franciscan formation? What is primary and foundational to the identity and mission of the early brothers?

3. As the number of Franciscans and thus the number of friars grew exponentially, how did this alter the way men and women were formed to be Franciscans? What were the continuities with the early friars and sisters? What were the differences? How did university life affect Franciscan formation?

4. Bonaventure emphasized Francis himself as the forma minorum. How does this change the focus of Franciscan formation? Why does he do this?

5. What was the role of reading scriptures, praying the hours, and participating in the Eucharist for the early Franciscans? How did this shape their formation?

V. APPLICATIONS

1. Who or what are your primary formators? Recall the name of someone who had an important impact on your life, guided you at a critical period, or through example, showed you the meaning of a true Christian life. Recall and describe an incident from that relationship that was specially memorable and important. What are some of the ways in which your life invites others to believe the Good News?

2. Read the following story from the Desert Father tradition:
One day a seeker after holiness visited the hermitage of a holy man who was sitting at the door of his cell at the hour of sunset. The old man’s dog was lying stretched out on the doorstep when the young seeker put this question to the hermit: "How is it that many people who are searching for God withdraw into the desert and give themselves eagerly to prayer, but abandon their calling after no more than a year, whereas others like you remain true to their search for a whole life time?" The old man answered with a smile, "Let me tell you a story. One day I was sitting quietly with my dog in the sun. Suddenly a big white rabbit ran past. Then my dog jumped up with a loud bark and chased the rabbit energetically across the hills. Soon other dogs joined in, alerted by his barking. What a spectacle it was – that pack of dogs barking as they joined in the hunt, across waterways, over stony banks and through thorny hedgerows. But gradually one by one the dogs gave up the chase, disheartened by the length of the way and the futility of the hunt. My dog was the only one to continue on the trail of the white rabbit. And there, my young man, is the answer to your question." The young man sat there in bewildered silence. Finally he said, "You don’t understand because you have failed to ask the obvious question: Why didn’t the other dogs continue the chase? And the answer to that question is: Because they hadn’t seen the white rabbit. If you don’t see your prize, you easily weary of the chase, because you lack the passion and determination needed to sustain you through all the hard work demanded by the discipline of your spiritual exercises."

How does this story relate to the Franciscan tradition?
What does it say to you and your formation? What is your prize?

3. At what time(s) in your life did you begin to see things differently than before? In what ways have you found your own identity in Christ?

4. Is there someone in your life/community who has especially been challenging to you? In what ways has this person challenged you? How have you responded to this challenge? How might this challenge bring you to a better understanding of yourself, the other person, the community, and God?

5. Do you challenge others to realize their potential? Be specific and give details.

6. What formation model do you most connect with? Are there others?
7. What qualities/virtues in your life are you seeking to develop? How and/or with whom can you develop these?
8. What role do books and/or universities play in your formation? How does this connect with the Franciscan tradition?
UNIT 7

THE FRANCISCAN EVANGELIST: A PRAYERFUL MISSIONARY

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objective:

To be familiar with a Franciscan understanding of prayer and its role in the Gospel way of life.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To understand how Francis and Clare possessed a contemplative consciousness.
2. To see the role of beauty, affectivity, gratitude, desire, love, and community in Franciscan prayer.
3. To appreciate Bonaventure’s and Clare’s unique understanding of prayer in the tradition.

II. RESOURCES:


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction:

Francis spent much of his day in prayer, and much of his year in retreat, however, prayer was never an escape from contact with others but a way of communion, a way of seeing, and a way of loving.

B. Highlights of the Lesson

1. For Franciscans, prayer is not so much saying prayers as it is becoming a prayer.
2. Francis and Clare both exemplified a kind of contemplative consciousness, the ability to linger over an experience and discover the presence of God in that experience. This kind of seeing/reflecting made them mystics rooted in the world, people who found union instead of dichotomies and/or divisions.
3. Francis’s attitude of prayer was one of thanksgiving, approaching God not as a problem-solver but a gift-giver.
4. Many of Francis’s writings are prayers, litanies, chants, and hymns, using expressive and poetic language. These all show the Word of God alive in Francis’s heart, a heart who saw no dichotomies between praying and preaching.
5. Bonaventure recasts Francis’s prayer life as a holy forgetfulness, a longing to be alone with the Beloved, a steadfast relationship with the Beloved, a love that is expressed through the body without being a show, and a way of being that affects others.
6. Clare’s prayer, too, was a love relationship. It was when the heart becomes the dwelling place of God. Beauty, intimate love, experiential relationship with Christ, the mysticism of the bride, and the indwelling of God are all phrases that describe Clare’s prayer life.
7. The contemplative consciousness/prayer of Francis and Clare is integral to the invitation to mission.
IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

1. Unpack further how “beauty” is an essential aspect of Franciscan contemplation. From which intellectual tradition does this emphasis have its roots?
2. Describe more in depth what a Franciscan contemplative consciousness is? How is this different from other religious traditions? Why is the Franciscan tradition not known for its tradition of prayer, like the Benedictines or Carmelites or Jesuits?
3. Compare a tradition or two with the Franciscans, highlighting the similarities and differences between traditions.
4. Look through Francis’s writings, especially his prayers, litanies, and praises. What characteristics surface in them around his view of God, his method of prayer, and his understanding of the purpose of prayer?
5. From Francis’s writings, what can we see about his approach and spirituality of the liturgy?
6. Explore Francis’s “Rule for Hermitages.” What does this text suggest about Francis’s uniqueness regarding solitude?
7. What works and what does not work in Bonaventure’s description of prayer in Francis’s life?
8. Dig deeper into Clare’s writings. Which images resonate with Francis’s view of prayer? Which images move the tradition in a new way?
9. Explore how Clare’s life in the cloister significantly colors her method of prayer and the images she uses to articulate her relationship with God.

V. APPLICATIONS

1. Help create and/or facilitate a “Franciscan” prayer experience.
2. Find a Franciscan “retreat center” and visit/stay overnight. Compare this experience to a visit/experience of another religious tradition. How would you describe the difference?
3. What is the role of prayer in your life? How would you describe your method, your vision of God, and your understanding of the purpose of prayer?
4. Would you describe your consciousness as “contemplative” and "Franciscan”?
5. What kind of metaphors and/or images would you use to express your relationship with God? Draw/paint/write a poem that would help image this.
6. What role does the liturgy play in your life? How might liturgy be more connected to your life? To the poor and marginalized? To contemporary issues of justice and peace?

7. Read the following text from Thomas Merton’s reflection on contemplation and action and the Franciscan tradition:

Francis of Assisi did not regard himself as a monk. If he had wanted to become a monk, he could have found a whole crowd of monasteries to enter. Quite obviously he did not go around conscious of being contemplative. And comparisons between active and contemplative life did not worry him in the least. Yet he led both at the same time, in full perfection. No charitable work was foreign to him; no work of mercy, either spiritual or temporal, that could not have found a place in his magnificent life. His freedom encompassed everything.

Francis could have had himself ordained. He refused this out of humility (for that also would have been a vocation and he had gone beyond vocations). Yet he possessed the perfection and the essence of the apostolic spirit of sacrifice and of love which belong to the life of a priest. One needs a moment to reflect that Francis never said a Mass – a fact that is scarcely credible with a person of his spirit.

If there is some recognized vocation of his time that Francis brought into relationship with his life, it was that of a hermit. The hermits were the only members of a definite class of religious which he imitated. He often retired into the mountains in order to pray and live alone. However, he never thought that he could have a ‘vocation’ to do anything else. He remained alone as long as the Spirit held him in this solitude, and then he let himself be led by the same Spirit into the towns and villages.

If he had thought about it, he would have perhaps recognized that his vocation was a prophetic one according to its nature. He was like a second Elijah or Elisha, instructed in solitude but led by God into the towns to announce a message.

All the different sides of the vocation of St. Francis show us that we are beyond the level of the usual
states of life. But just for that reason it would be well for us as soon as we speak about the ‘mixed life,’ or of an ‘apostolic vocation,’ to imagine it in the form of a Francis or an Elijah.

What are your reactions to this text? What does it say to you about your own calling?

8. Read the following text from the Inter-Franciscan Message of “Mattli 1982”:

We observe with joy that in the Third World God is a reality who is experienced; in Asia we learn that meditation and silent presence before God are interwoven in the life of the people; in Africa the presence and experience of the living God is exteriorized and celebrated in song, rhythm and dance; in Latin America popular religion and the veneration of the saints are meaningful realities which also generate life in spite of all the exploitation.

We remember Francis of Assisi who wanted to adore God everywhere, at every moment, and wanted to love Him in all his creatures. He sought the silence of caves, forests, and churches. He translated his own experience of God into pictures, gestures, and drama. He played-out the mysteries of Jesus (Christmas, Easter, Eucharist). He identified himself with the needs of the people, seeing with their eyes and touching with their hands. In the world, in all his actions, he was totally one with God: before God, he was filled with the concerns of the world.

For that reason we want to give back to prayer, liturgy and silence the play they deserve. Without fear we want to encounter the outburst of the peoples’ faith, and we want to participate creatively in it. When we stand before God with our people, all of our conflicts and sufferings, our expectations and hopes take on a dimension which transcends all, and at the same time fulfills.

Develop the various aspects of contemplation from this text. To what extent is the evaluation expressed in this text still valid today? How would you insert North America and our context into this text? How might “prayer, liturgy, and silence” be born anew in your life?
UNIT 8

FRANCISCAN PRESENCE & DIALOGUE: LIVING WITH DIVERSITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

I. OBJECTIVES:

A. General Objective:

To know how Franciscans dialogue with difference in a pluralistic world.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To understand Francis’s view of salvation
2. To be familiar with the basic attitudes that help cultivate dialogue with diversity
3. To be acquainted with and accept the value of a pluralistic world.
4. To be able to distinguish between various ways of dialoging, particularly one Franciscans resonate with.

II. RESOURCES:


*Build up My Church: Franciscan Inspirations for and from the Third World*. Leonard Boff and Walbert Buhlmann, eds. Interprovincial Secretariat, 1983.


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction:

Francis lived and preached the Good News of salvation. He wanted all people to know and love the good (bonum) that comes from living in the Kingdom of God. Francis’s missionary way was not through fire and brimstone and damning people to hell but through sharing and dialogue of the meaning in his life. This has many contemporary implications that reverberate with contemporary issues of pluralism and diversity.

B. Highlights of the Lesson

1. There are many understandings within Christianity of the meaning of salvation.
2. Franciscans, rooted again in the experience of Francis – especially his way of being among the Saracens – speak of salvation as a bettering the human condition so that the kingdom of God might come, a kingdom of love, justice, unity, and peace.
3. It is not a polemical game but an invitation for dialogue, the dialogue exemplified by the Triune God.
4. There a basic attitudes that prepare one for this kind of dialogue: faith in life, relating as brothers and sisters, respect for cultures, respect for religions, and a recognition of a common search for meaning.
Notes

5. There a basic attitudes that prepare one for this kind of dialogue: faith in life, relating as brothers and sisters, respect for cultures, respect for religions, and a recognition of a common search for meaning.

6. Faith in life: Franciscans remain optimistic toward life. All is gift; all has the potential for goodness.

7. Relating as brothers and sisters: This is the basic Franciscan identity.

8. Respect for culture: Franciscans respect and value other cultures.

9. Respect for religions: Noting Nostra aetate, Franciscans stand with the Church at large, rejecting nothing that is true and holy in these religions.

10. Common search for meaning: People seek out meaning in beliefs, practices, and narratives.

11. Narrative holds a prime place in dialogue. Stories bring bridges rather than divisions (which a focus on beliefs and practices often do).

12. The art of dialogue can happen right where ever we are. Diversity is among us constantly.

13. We must be convinced of the value of pluralism which recognizes the rich manifestation of an inexhaustible and boundless reality.

14. God enters the dialogue we have with others.

15. There have been several documents that help Christians dialogue with a pluralistic world, some that distinguish between different kinds of dialogues.

16. Ultimately, dialogue implies mutual acceptance of differences/contradictions and respect for the other’s choice.

17. A list of A Decalogue of Rules for Franciscan Dialogue is listed as a helpful to approach this dialogue in a pluralistic culture.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A. Discuss further the theology of salvation before the Second Vatican Council and after. Can we find in Jesus a theology of salvation? In Paul? In the early Fathers? In Francis? In the medieval Church?

B. Read Francis’s text “True and Perfect Joy” in his writings or in the Fioretti. What does this text say about Francis’s understanding of salvation?

C. Read the following two texts:

From the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215:
There is only one universal Church of the Faithful. Outside this Church no man can be saved (extra ecclesiam nulla salus). 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.


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 that 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.

How do these two texts compare?

D. Read *Nostra aetate* in its entirety, and the following excerpted texts from Church documents:

From the Secretariat for non-Christians, *The Attitude of the Catholic Church to the Followers of other Religions – Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*, 1984, No. 17:

Among the numerous examples from the history of Christian mission, the guidelines which St. Francis gives his brothers are significant. In his Rule of 1221, he tells the brothers who 'by divine inspiration, want to go among the Saracens: They can live spiritually among them 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 (1Pt 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.’ The last century has experienced, how, in the world of Islam, Charles de Foucauld lived his mission in an attitude of humility and silence, united with God, in solidarity with the poor and in a spirit of universal brotherhood.
From *Redemptoris missio*, John Paul II, 1990, No. 29:

Thus the Spirit ‘who blows where he wills,’ *(Jn 3:8)* who ‘was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified’ *(AG4)*, who ‘has filled the world... holds all things together and knows what is said’ *(Wis 1:7)*, leads us to broaden our vision so as to ponder his activity in every age and in every place. I have often called this fact to mind and it has guided me in my meetings with a wide variety of peoples. The Church’s relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: “Respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man.” Excluding any mistaken interpretation, the interreligious meeting held in Assisi was meant to confirm my conviction that “every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart.”

Discuss what these texts says about the Church’s relationship with non-Christian religions. What connection do you see between dialogue and mission? Are there passages in the New Testament that describe such an attitude of dialogue? How would you explain that after 800 years the Church adopts Francis’s attitude towards other religions and make it her own?

E. Discuss issues around relativism and “objective truth.” Is there another way of thinking about this conversation?

V. APPLICATIONS


B. Do you value difference? Are you threatened by difference? Do you believe that you must choose “either/or” or are you comfortable in the pluralism of the world? How do you navigate through the polemics of relativism vs. objective truth?
C. How do you listen to others? How do you dialogue with others? Evaluate the last time you had a difficult conversation with someone. What happened? Were you clear? Did you listen to his or her heart? Did you respect him or her? Did you emphasize your differences or your common ground? What prevented you from offering your acceptance? Do you have fears or suspicion or prejudices about this person?

D. The prayer attributed to Francis says: “seek to understand rather than be understood.” How do you exude this in your ability to listen and be with others, especially those with different spiritual/religious perspectives?

E. As in the story “True and Perfect Joy,” Francis, in his fidelity to the Gospel, is not recognized by his brothers, in his home. How do you deal with rejection? With being misunderstood? With living the Gospel surrounded by temptations to be unfaithful?

F. Write a story like “True and Perfect Joy,” using an actual experience from your life that offers themes from this lesson unit.
UNIT 9

FRANCISCAN PEACE-MAKING IN A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

I. OBJECTIVES

A. General Objective:

To understand that peace-making is at the heart of the Franciscan tradition

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To see Francis as peace-maker, especially in light of his historical context.
2. To see the relationship between inner and outer peace, the personal and the social dimensions to peace-making.

II. RESOURCES


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction

Peace-making and reconciliation with all things/beings is a fundamental dimension to Franciscan life. To be brother and sister to all is to make peace with what is the “other.”

B. Highlights of the Lesson

1. From the beginning, Francis and the brothers preached peace. Francis speaks of it in his writings, and both Celano and Bonaventure make this a primary message spoken by Francis.
2. Francis’s vision must be seen in light of other spiritualities like Bernard of Clairvaux.
3. The prohibition to bear arms is quite explicit in the Rule for Secular Franciscans – also a radical stance to the culture then and now.
4. The story of the wolf of Gubbio is a beautiful tale of Francis’s way of being an instrument of peace, reconciling two warring parties.
5. Peace-making begins with oneself and one’s attitude in dealing with violence, but it is also expressed in social/civil/political issues.
6. Martin Luther King Jr. offers three principles to peace-making that are in accord with Francis’s way of peace – cultivating the capacity to forgive, recognizing that the person act of evil never fully expresses all that he/she is, and seeking to win the his/her friendship and understanding.
7. We must love our enemies; love is the only transforming force.
8. This is not irrelevant, unless we think that the Gospel is.

Notes


IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A. Assisi signed “peace treaties” in 1203 and 1210. Explore further the intricacies of these documents which provide a context out of which Francis begins to long for “true peace.”

B. What has been the history of the Church’s relationship with the State, particularly around the issue of violence/war? Unpack the Augustinian tradition of the “earthly city” and the “heavenly city.” How does this distinction affect one’s relationship with the city/state/nation and its violence/wars? How does the Church justify the “holy wars,” crusades, and violent inquisitions? How does this history sit with you?

C. Read the following selections from Francis’s writings:

Admonition 15:
'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God’ (Mt 5:9). Those are truly peacemakers, who concerning all, which they suffer in this age, preserve peace in soul and body for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 8:39).

Canticle of Creation:
Praised be You, my Lord, through those
Who give pardon for Your love,
And bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
For by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

Earlier Rule 9:5:
He was poor and a stranger and lived on alms – He, the Blessed Virgin, and His disciples.

Earlier Rule 9:6-9:
And should people shame them and refuse to give them alms, let them give thanks to God for this, since from such insults they will receive great honor before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ. And let them know that shame is credited not to those who suffer it, but to those who caused it. And alms are a legacy and a just right due to the poor, which our Lord Jesus Christ acquired for us. And the brothers who labor to acquire them, will receive a great reward, and at the same time enable those who give such alms to gain and acquire that reward in return; for everything that people leave behind in the world will perish, but for the charity and almsgiving which they have done, they will receive a reward from the Lord.
From these texts, formulate commandments of a Franciscan peace culture. Comment on how this culture of peace differs from the world's culture of peace.

D. Explore in Francis's writings how Francis deals with conflict between individuals (in his community, in civic affairs, in inter-religious dialogue). How does Francis bring resolution? Look to his writings and to the hagiography.

E. What's the relationship between Franciscan poverty and a commitment to non-violence? This passage from the Legend of the Three Companions gets at the heart of this relationship:

*If we had any possessions, we would be forced to bear arms to protect them since possessions are a cause of dispute and strife, and in many ways hinder us from loving God and our neighbor. Therefore, in this life, we wish to have temporal possessions* (L3C 35).

F. Read the following preface of St. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*:

*At the beginning I call to the primal abyss from where all enlightenment descends: to the ‘Father of Light’ from whom every good grace and perfect gift proceeds, namely to the Eternal Father, through his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the intercession of the most Holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of the same God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Blessed Francis, our Master and Father, may he give our spirit ‘enlightened eyes’ so that ‘we can guide our steps on the way to that peace’ ‘that surpasses all understanding.’ It was our Lord Jesus Christ who brought and announced this peace and our Father Francis repeated His message: He invoked peace at the beginning and the end of every sermon; he wished peace at every greeting; he yearned for the peace of ecstasy in every contemplation. Francis resembled the citizen of that Jerusalem of who the friend of the peace has said: ‘Pray for that which brings peace unto Jerusalem.’ For he knew that the throne of Solomon could only survive in peace, for it stands written: ‘He dwelt in peace and his house is upon Mount Zion.’*

Compare Bonaventure’s notion of peace with Francis’s? Comment on any change of emphasis?

G. At the 1982 Congress in Mattli/Switzerland, Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, the Archbishop of Sao Paulo/Brazil, gave a list of the Human Rights as they had been worked out at Latin American Bishops’ Conference of Puebla in 1979:
INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS:
To life;
To physical and mental integrity;
To personal protection under the law;
To religious freedom;
To freedom of opinion;
To a fair share in material goods and services;
To the freedom to determine one’s own fate;
To obtain property;
To a certain degree of free disposal of material goods.

SOCIAL RIGHTS:
To education;
To freedom of association;
To work;
To housing;
To health and recreation;
To development;
To a just government;
To social liberty and justice;
To have a share in the decision-making process that affects the people and the nation.

SUBSIDIARY RIGHTS:
To freedom of expression;
To a good reputation;
To one’s private life;
To objective information;
To the chance to express oneself;
To the freedom to raise objections;
To a personal creed and/or ideology according to the dictates of one’s conscience.

INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS:
To just international co-existence of all nations which respects their mutual commercial, political, social and cultural self determination;
To the right of each and every nation;
To foster its own interests, and to protect them against trans-national or multinational interference;
To the freedom of international co-operation;
To a new international order based on human values of solidarity and justice.

Examine each of these Human Rights. What is the position of your country, your state/province, your community concerning these rights? What are the obligations which correspond
to these rights? What duties/obligations in the struggle for peace and justice result from this? Which of these rights are considered important in a North American culture? Not important? Are there rights you would add to this list?

V. APPLICATIONS

A. Draw a “sociogram” of your relationships. Draw a circle in the middle of your paper. This circle symbolizes you. Draw other circles representing people with whom you live or work. Put them nearer or farther away from you, according to the importance or the impact you think they have on your life. Try to be conscious of the relationship you have with each of these persons. What do you find – relationships for which you are grateful, relationships which need to be improved, relationships which need to be ended, conflicts which need to be named and resolved?

B. Name the sources of violence in your community and country. What is your stance towards them? How do you bear witness to non-violence in a culture of violence? How does peace-making begin with you?

C. Do you believe that Jesus’s commandment to “love your enemies” has social/political implications? How is Jesus’s commandment alive in your life? How do you practically live this out?

D. Who today embodies the spirit and commitment of non-violence of Jesus, Francis, and Martin Luther King Jr. in our world? In our Church?

E. Read the widely circulated “Prayer for Peace” ascribed to Francis of Assisi, “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace…” Meditating on this text, what implications does it have for you? Converse with others.

F. Think of a conflict in your life. Develop strategies for better relationships and better communication that might follow from Francis’s culture of peace-making.
UNIT 10

INCULTURATION AS A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE

I. OBJECTIVES

A. General Objective:

To understand inculturation from a Franciscan perspective – defining it, describing its process, and applying it to our call to mission

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To be familiar with the difference between inculturation and assimilation

2. To see inculturation as essential to making the Gospel alive and well in our world

3. To know the ways the Church failed to inculturate the Gospel, opting, instead, to transplant the “Church” into different cultural contexts.

II. RESOURCES


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction

Although the term “inculturation” was not known to Francis and his brothers, there are hints Francis and the early movement adapting the Good News to various cultural situations. It is necessary that the Franciscan tradition today learn to inculturate the Gospel well so they do not commit mistakes that many have made to share the Good News.

B. Highlights of the Lesson

1. Inculturation can be described as the interaction between the Gospel and culture, between a living people and the living Gospel.
2. This process brings about new images, new ways of living, new ways of seeing, revealing the Gospel as alive and well.
3. Augustine, Francis, Pope VI, and many others echo the need to do this well.
4. The Second Vatican Council rediscovered the experience of inculturation and re-emphasized it in the local churches.
5. Key question: is the Church to be transplanted or planted?

6. Past missiology: transplanting the Church into native lands, not taking into account the culture of the people receiving the Good News.

7. Inculturation is not assimilation. It is not blindly accepting every aspect of a culture, especially the sinful aspects. Thus, it makes this process very tricky and needing much prudence.

8. It is necessary to create an expression that is both indigenous and Catholic. Doing so will make the Gospel real and alive.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Read the following selections from Church Pontiffs:

Encyclical *Princeps pastorum*, 1959, Pope John XXIII:

Adaptation to the native world of values. With respect for the circumstances that are important not only for the proper intellectual and spiritual formation of the candidates to the priesthood but also for the total needs of the individual peoples and their mentality, the Apostolic See has urged the foreign and the native clerics to study missiology...religion...

As you know, the Church does not link itself to one single culture as if that culture were the only one compatible with her and any other were to be despised. The Church does not even throw herself into the arms of the culture of Europe and the western peoples, although she has, according to the witness of history, especially close links with it.

For the task that has been entrusted to the Church is about the religion and the eternal salvation of human beings. The Church, which remains always young and is continually being renewed by the breath of the Holy Spirit, is always full of respect and readiness of acceptance, indeed an actively stimulating force for everything that is spiritually and psychologically doing credit to mankind, even if it has its origin in other parts of the world than in Mediterranean which was the cradle of its childhood according to God’s providence.

Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 1975, Pope Paul VI:

20. What matters is to evangelize man’s culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to the very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in “Gaudium et Spes,” always taking the person as one’s starting-point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.
The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, is certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the Kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.

Redemptoris missio, 1990, Pope John Paul II: 37b. New worlds and new social phenomena: The rapid and far-reaching transformations of today, especially in the Southern hemisphere, are having a powerfully effect on the modern picture of the mission world. Where before there were stable human and social conditions everything is now in a state of flux.

Take, for example, the excessive urbanization and the massive growth of cities, particularly in densely populated countries. In many countries, half the population already live in a few great cities, where ordinary human problems are often aggravated by the sense of anonymity in which an ever-increasing population is lost.

Up to now, missionary activity has been carried out particularly in isolated areas, which are far from civilization and which are hard to penetrate because difficulties of communication, language or climate. Nowadays, the image of mission to the nations is perhaps changing. Our main targets have to be the big cities, where new lifestyles are coming into existence alongside new forms of culture and communication, which then influence the wider population.

It is true that the 'option for the neediest' means that we should not overlook the most abandoned and isolated human groups. But it is also true that individuals or small groups cannot be evangelized if we neglect the centers where a new humanity is emerging, so to speak, and where new models of development are taking shape. Speaking of the future, we cannot forget the young. In many countries, they make up over half the population. How do we bring the Gospel to the non-Christian youth who are the future generations of entire continents? The ordinary means of pastoral work are obviously not adequate. We need special associations and centers, cultural and social initiatives for young people. Here is a field where modern movement within the Church have ample scope for close involvement with this work.
Among the sweeping changes of the modern world, migration has produced a new phenomenon – the rapid growth of non-Christian populations in traditionally Christian countries. These new populations create new opportunities for contact and cultural exchanges, calling the Church to hospitality, dialogue, help, and, in a word, fraternity. Refugees hold a special place among these migrants and deserve the greatest attention. There are many millions of refugees in the world today. Their number is constantly increasing. They have fled from political and inhuman misery, from catastrophic famine and drought. The Church must welcome them into her apostolic care.

Last of all, we can mention the often intolerable degree of poverty now existing in many countries and causing mass migration. These inhuman conditions are a challenge to the family of believers in Christ.

The proclamation of Christ and the Kingdom of God must become a means of restoring human dignity to these people.

37c. Cultural sectors: the modern Areopagus. After Paul had preached the Gospel in many places he came to Athens and entered the Areopagus. Here he preached the Gospel in words suitable to the capacity of his audience. The Areopagus was then the cultural center of learned Athenians. Today, it can be taken as the symbol of the new fields in which the Gospel must be proclaimed.

The first Areopagus of our age is the world of the media, unifying humanity and turning it into famous ‘global village.’ The media have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education. They look to the media for guidance and inspiration in their way of life as individuals, as families, or as society in general. The younger generation, in particular, is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media. To some extent, perhaps, we have neglected this Areopagus. For the most part, we have preferred other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education. Meanwhile the use of the media is left to the enterprise of individuals or small groups. The result is that our pastoral planning leaves only a secondary role for the use of the media.

But the use of the mass-media goes deeper than a strengthening of the Gospel message.

The very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media. It is not enough,
therefore, to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the authentic teaching of the Church. We must also integrate the Christian message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications.

52. Incarnating the Gospel in Peoples’ cultures.

As she carries out her missionary task among the nations, the Church meets different cultures and is herself in turn caught up in the process of inculturation. The need for such involvement has marked the Church’s pilgrimage through the ages, but today it is particularly pressing...By means of inculturation the Church enfleshes the Gospel in different cultures. At the same time, she brings people and their cultures into her own community. She transmits her own values to these different cultures and takes from these same cultures whatever is good in them so as to renew them from within. The Church, in turn, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is and a more efficacious instrument of mission.

Thanks to this action on the part of the local Churches, the universal Church herself is enriched with ways of expressing herself and with values touching the various spheres of Christian life – evangelization, worship, theology, and charitable works. She comes to know the mystery of Christ better and to express it better and she has a lasting motive for continual renewal.

53. Missionaries coming from foreign Churches and countries must immerse themselves in the cultural milieu of those to whom they are sent. They must move beyond their own cultural boundaries and learn the language spoken where they work, familiarizing themselves with the most important manifestations of the local culture and uncovering its values through firsthand experience. Only if they are equipped with this kind of insight can they bring people to the knowledge of the hidden mystery in a credible and fruitful manner. Missionaries do not have to renounce their own cultural identity. But they do have to understand and appreciate the culture of the place where they are at work, fostering and evangelizing it. In this way they enable themselves to communicate effectively with the local culture while they adopt a style of living which is a sign of Gospel witness and of brotherhood with the people.

Developing ecclesial communities, inspired by the Gospel, will be gradually able to express their Christian experience in ways and forms compatible with their own cultural traditions. But these traditions must be in harmony with the unalterable requirements of the Faith itself. To achieve this,
local Churches of the same region should cooperate with one another, particularly where the most delicate areas of inculturation are concerned. They must also work in harmony with the whole Church, knowing that only through keeping in touch both with the universal Church and with local Churches can they translate the treasure of the Faith in different legitimate ways.

Groups which have already received the Gospel will thus provide the elements for the ‘translation’ of the Gospel message...

A. Reading these ecclesial documents, what can be gleaned from them about inculturation? Do they show development? What is gained by inculturation of the Gospel? Is something(s) lost?

B. Research in greater depth the origins of the Church’s missionary philosophy before the Second Vatican Council. What was gained by this “assimilation” missiology? What was lost?

C. Offer a real example of an indigenous culture living with the tension of the Gospel being planted and/or transplanted. A guest speaker/first-hand witness could be quite effective. A presentation with pictures, music, and food could also be very effective.

V. APPLICATIONS

A. Do you know philosophies or theologies other than western ones? Which ones do you know? How has this knowledge changed, shaped, or deepened your own faith?

B. How do you and your community see the development of the “new humanity” with its models of development? What are the concrete responses to these “new areopages” in your community? Are there other emerging needs? Which can you now tackle together with others?

C. Discuss within the group what are the “sinful” elements of western culture, that is, what needs to be rejected in the process of inculturation? What from western culture can be used, adapted, “Christianized” for further evangelization?

D. Read the following two stories and answer the questions that follow regarding inculturation of the Gospel:

Karl and Maria had got to know each other during a party of their faculty in the university. Both were studying social pedagogy and came from Catholic families with several children. Responsibility and consideration for their younger brothers and sisters, this early exercise in social behavior, was probably the decisive factor for their choice of career.
Both came to love each other and soon they moved together into a somewhat bigger apartment for students. Soon their parents came to know about it and they reproached their children vehemently. They did not want to accept that their children were living together “in sin.” Since the two young people would not listen, their parents sought the help of the students’ chaplain and requested him to reason with them and urge them to get married. The pastor, who knew both Karl and Maria, tried to calm down the angry parents. This was something the parents could understand even less. As good Catholics, they knew that a pastor must do everything to influence the young people to put their relationship “in order” before God and the Church. What the parents did not know: Both managed very well with their financial allowance and did not have to work during the term break like other students. For this reason they could go regularly to the beach and stay there for three weeks. For the past three years they had even taken two young spastic patients with them, who could walk only with difficulty and were handicapped also in other ways. Naturally they caused a stir on the camping site. Often, Karl and Maria – and even worse, both spastics – had to hear remarks that it was expecting too much to them, having to share the beach with such people; after all, there were homes for such people! When their pastor came to know about it, he thought of the parable of the Good Samaritan. He was a little surprised at the thought, that the robbers this time should be more or less well-built, sun-tanned, people who live in “orderly conditions.” By the way, the students became social educators. They work as a married couple with children of their own in a children’s village (Othmar Noggler, OFMCap)

Which cultural changes are shown in this story? How should incultruation take place here? Do you know similar examples?

David, a middle-aged man, is sitting in front of his hut, carving a root, partly to pass time, partly as a hobby. He found the root today by the brook as he was driving cows home. He is satisfied. Now and then, he draws at his long clay pipe, which his wife had given him years ago. Carefully, he is looking for the figure which is hidden in the old root and which he wants to call forth with his carving knife. He is satisfied. In a few days, when the moon reaches its first quarter, his son, who is named David after him, will come home. He would have preferred to keep the second born of his six children on the farm, but he seemed to follow a call. Something similar must have happened to him just like to his old friend, he medicine man. Like all his children, he had sent his son David to the mission school. He would have become a good farmer. And then came this evening,
when David told him that he would like to go with these men who call themselves Capuchins. He had gone far with them, his son! And in a few days he would be coming home. He is lost in his thoughts while his skilled hands are carving away at the root. While he is working he is looking down the narrow path again and again, looking for the cloud of dust which would signal the arrival of his son.

For a long time now his son David has been ticking off the days on the calendar, which separate him from the visit to his home. To be at home again, from three weeks, with his parents and with his youngest brother! Once again, he would be breathing in the familiar smell of the fields, the animals, and the open fire, which he loves so much. Then the day has come. With a little luck he can make it in ten to twelve hours and be home before dark. The Guardian, a European of about the same age as his father and a paternal friend, has given him enough money for his return home and for a trip with his parents. Would father and mother want to go away at all? At any rate, his youngest brother will marvel at the Land Rover and will always want to be with him just as he himself did not leave Fr. Stephen’s side when he was between ten and twelve years old. With such thoughts, he is steering the vehicle dexterously along the dust road and then, faster than expected, he has arrived.

After the warm welcome of his parents and his youngest brother, father and son are sitting in front of the cottage, waiting for the supper that is being prepared by mother. The walls still radiate the warmth of the day, while all around the cool of the evening makes one almost shiver. Silently they relish the joy of being together once more. Then the father points to his shirt and says, “Look, what a poor shirt I am wearing!” The son had not noticed it. He already wants to contradict his father and say that there is nothing wrong with his shirt and that he looks good in the shirt. Then the father repeats the question and suddenly, the young man feels the blood rise to his face. He did not bring any gift with him! At first he thinks, “the Guardian …, he should have … no, it is my fault. I forgot!” And the new question that comes to his mind, occupies him for a long time on that evening, and after, “Am I no longer an African? Have I inwardly turned into a white man?” (Othmar Noggler, OFMCap)

Do you live together with brothers and sisters from other cultures? How much consideration do you or your community have for these people? To what extent is your own way of life, your family or community’s way of life regarded as the only binding and acceptable one.
UNIT 11

THE ECONOMY AND GLOBAL REALITY FROM A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE

I. OBJECTIVES

A. General Objective:

To understand the Franciscan tradition’s response to a medieval socio-economic context and to understand the implications for today’s socio-economics.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To see Francis’s conversion in its entire socio-economic context.

2. To know the difference between a profit spirituality and a gift Spirituality.

3. To know what is meant by “Franciscan poverty” and “preferential option for the poor.”

II. RESOURCES


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction

Francis’s conversion was a response to the social context of his time. He wanted to make the Gospel alive and vibrant in the economic context of his time. His lifestyle, then, had economic implications. Today, Franciscans must continue to bear witness to the alternative economic structures.

B. Highlights of the Lesson

1. Francis’s act of disrobing was a social statement. This act has been interpreted by Bonaventure to speak of Francis’s renunciation of the present economic situation.

2. An explanation of the economic reality of Assisi at the time of Francis’s conversion follows.
3. Gift-economy vs. profit economy
4. Gift-economy: goods and services are exchanged without specific, calculated values assigned to them
5. Profit-economy: everything has an assigned value
6. Francis and Clare were rooted in the gift-spirituality, understanding that all good gifts come liberally from God, thus they must be shared with others. All good gifts were to be used but not possessed.
7. Voluntary poverty became a real value.
8. Bonaventure unpacks the difference between what are necessities and superfluities, concluding that a Franciscan cannot possess superfluous goods to the detriment of those who do not even have the necessities of life.
9. While economics divides and dehumanizes, Franciscans call us to be brothers and sisters.
10. Franciscans speak on behalf of the voiceless, sometimes addressing the unjust structures that bind the poor in poverty.
11. A preferential option for the poor: Franciscans opt to see reality from the perspective of the poor.
12. It is clear that Francis held this perspective, and Franciscans today should. This might ask us to have new eyes (conversion).

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A. Research in greater depth the intricacies of the economy (especially the emerging profit economy) at the time of Francis and Clare.
B. Research in greater depth the intricacies of our own economy.
C. Define the following terms: free market economy, planned economy, globalization, NAFTA, IMF, World Bank, Gross National Product (GNP), Neodarwinism, and Neoliberalism.
D. In this following exercise, each participant’s view of the world’s injustice will come to light.

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In the first column, list the three most important problems of your country, your region, and/or your continent. In the second column, identify the respective effects of the problems. In the third, list the apparent (and probably
E. Role-play the following “The Thoroughly Uncomplicated History of Debt Bondage” by Traude Novy

Directions: three participants act out the following sketch (one could elaborate if the sketch holds to the basic meaning). The roles: a speaker, Anita (a woman from the Manila), and George (a man from America)

Anita: Hey, Mister, here, buy this shirt from me. It is very well sewn and cheap besides.
George: Let’s see. Yeah. And What do you want for it?
Anita: Five dollars.
George: I’ll give you four. You know, I can get you a loan. You can buy yourself a new sewing machine and then, in the same time, sew four shirts and earn twenty dollars.
Anita: Thank you, Sir.

Speaker: Later –

Anita: Here, Mister, here are four shirts. The new machine is really great.
George: Unfortunately I can only buy two of your shirts. I don’t have customers.
Anita: Ten dollars, please.
George: I can’t give you ten dollars. You know, I can get the shirts in China for two dollars a piece. As for the four dollars, I have to take out the interest on the credit. You’re going to have to put more into your sewing, for next year you have to begin paying back the loan.

Speaker: A year later – George doesn’t need any more shirts. Anita sells her shirts to a commercial chain at a dollar a piece. The sewing machine is pawned. The debts are still there...

Questions: Where does the debt cycle come from? How could it all have come out differently? Does Jesus or Francis offer a different model for economic behavior?

Act out the new version of the story. Assign roles to different actors.

F. The Sabbath Year and the Jubilee Year

There are passages in the Bible that speak directly to economy issues, property, and debt. The theological context for all
rights to land and property is the assumption that Yahweh owns the land (Lev 25:23). Private property counted as "entrusted space for living." That is, no one had the right to fence it off with no concern for others, or to enrich oneself at the cost of those who were economically weak. From this principle came first of all the ban on interest towards one’s countryman (Deut 23:20ff); secondly the Sabbath Year (Deut 15:1ff), which remitted loans every seventh year; and thirdly the so-called Jubilee Year (Lev. 25:8), which occurred every fifty years. Land acquired in that time returned to its original owner and all those enslaved for debt could return to their families. The biblical rules for Sabbath and Jubilee Years cannot be applied literally today; social, cultural, and economic conditions are structured in a basically different way. The thought behind them, however, is as valid today as it was then.

Lev 25:8-11: The Jubilee Year
Count seven times seven years, a total of forty-nine years. Then, on the tenth day of the seventh month let the trumpet resound; on this, the Day of Atonement, the trumpet blast shall re-echo throughout your land. This fiftieth year your shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for, when every one of you shall return to his own property, every one to his own family estate. In this fiftieth year, your year of jubilee, you shall not sow, nor shall you reap the aftergrowth or pick the grapes from the untrimmed vines.

Ex 23:10-11: The Sabbath Year
For six years you may sow your land and gather in its produce. But the seventh year you shall let the land lie untilled and unharvested, that the poor among you may eat of it and the beasts of the field may eat what the poor leave. So also shall you do in regard to your vineyard and your olive grove.

Deut 15:1-3: The Sabbath Year
At the end of every seven-year period you shall have a relaxation of debts, which shall be observed as follows: Every creditor shall relax his claim on what he has loaned his neighbor; he must not press his neighbor, his kinsman, because a relaxation in honor of the LORD has been proclaimed. You may press a foreigner, but you shall relax the claim on your kinsman for what is yours.

Choose one of the three texts above and break up into small groups. To understand the situation of the people Israel and to grasp that of people today, we must look at the economic and social factors, and the political and religious conditions.
Questions: What is the content of the passage? The situation of the people: how is their economic, social, political, religious situation as revealed by the text?
How does Scripture explain the economic and social reality in the light of faith?
What rights do the poor have here and for what reason?
How does the text challenge our faith in God?
What sort of God do we believe in?
How could this social adjustment of Jubilee demanded by the law concretize itself in our day, in our personal and communal life, in family, parish, region, country, continent, internationally?

Bring together insights from small groups into large group.

G. Read the following text and react to the point of view put forward by the author.

The Christian faith does not base itself on the idea of God who always appears on the side of the one who wins. On the contrary, it bases itself on the confession that Jesus of Nazareth is risen from the dead. That is the core of our faith. The confession that Jesus (defeated, condemned, and executed by the Roman Empire and by the Temple) has risen from the dead is the belief in a God who is not allied with the victors, with the Roman Empire and the Temple. This faith enables us to distinguish between victory and might on the one hand and truth and justice on the other. Jesus’s disciples were not taken into custody because they taught there was a life after death but because they proclaimed the resurrection from the dead in Jesus (Acts 4:2). The great revolutionary, startling Good News did not consist in proclaiming the resurrection of the victorious and the mighty, but in announcing the resurrection of those overcome politically and religiously and who, in God’s eyes, were "the holy and just" (Acts 3:14). At the same time, we discover that Jesus, the crucified, is risen from the dead, we also discover that the dominant social order and those in power are neither just nor do they represent the will of God. This faith leads us to give witness to the resurrection of Jesus by protecting the life and the human dignity of the poor and the meek.

Luke tells us how the first communities gave witness to Jesus’ resurrection:
Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of these things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them,
for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:32-35).

This moving passage has something in it quite strange. The core of the message is witness to the resurrection of the Lord. But this central message is embedded in two passages (Acts 3:14 and 4:32f) that resemble one another and say nothing about the resurrection, but speak about economic matters; people put together their goods and properties, as each one could, and then some distributed to each in need, so that no one among them lacked life's necessities. Sharing turned a crowd into a community. Some might propose that the two paragraphs containing the central message appear there through an oversight of Luke, and that therefore witness to the resurrection of the Lord has nothing to do with economic questions. Others can point out, correctly, that, by handling concrete goods in this way, the Christians bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord.

Belief in Jesus's resurrection makes clear that redemption does not lie in the accumulation of power and wealth, but in the forming of human communities where everybody is recognized, independently of their wealth or other social distinctions.

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus is a revolution in the way we perceive things, a revolution in understanding. It enables us to discover the real image of God and the human being, when we see the true face of God and the fundamental dignity of every human being, we feel that the cry of the poor speaks to us, calling us to build a more human and a more just society (Jung Mo Sung).

H. Read Francis's Letter to the Rulers. Then read the following adaptation of the same letter to today's time:

To all, in the whole world, who exercise power and authority, to the kings and presidents of the peoples, to chancellors and ministers, to parliamentarians and experts, to directors and governing boards and to everyone who reads this letter,

Brother Francis, Your little worthless servant wishes Peace and all good things.

There is something that you must also integrate in your political perspective: The certainty that death will come to all of us.

I therefore beg of you, with all the reverence I am capable of: Do not forget God in your political actions. Let his commandments guide you, when you shape this world.
Notes

For all who forget God and turn away from his commandments (Ps 118:21) shall be forgotten by him too (Ex 33:13).

And at the moment of death,
Everything falls away into nothingness,
And we must let go all our insecurities.

And the more knowledge and power you store up
And use against others,
The greater will be the torments you will have to endure in hell.

For this reason my Lords, I say this to you:
The important principle of your political dealings
Becomes tangible in the symbol of bread and wine –
The Holy Body and Blood of Jesus.
In the crib God takes the side of the poor and weak
In an attitude that renounces power and domination.

This you should acknowledge publicly
Through signs that one can see and hear,
Through laws and norms, through structures and institutions, through officials and executive boards.

Your intentions should be: to promote God’s love and commitment to Him by Your people.

Praise and thanksgiving to Him
Not only through one or two, but through all,
Because it is only by fixing our eyes on Him that we can live a truly human life.

If you refuse to do this,
You will be held responsible for it on the day of God’s judgement.

Those who keep a copy of this letter and act upon it,
may know that they receive God’s blessings (Anton Rotzetter)

Write a similar letter to the politically responsible persons in your country/region.

I. Read through Chapter 9 of the Rule of 1221. In what way does Francis relate Jesus Christ to the poor? What does poverty have to do with power? What conclusions does Francis draw for himself and his community? How does Francis try to cope with human need? What do you understand by the word alms, what views does Francis attach to it?
J. What is context and meaning of Clare’s Privilege of Poverty? What does this free her community from and how does this root her in the Franciscan tradition?

K. What is the basic thrust of Liberation Theology? How does the Franciscan tradition relate to this? How does it not?

L. Explore other alternatives to free-market capitalism (Marxism, Distributism, etc.). What do each offer and how does it or does not resonate with the Gospel?

M. Read the Church’s documents that speak to these socio-economic models: Rerum novarum, Quadragesimo anno, Populorum progressio, Gaudium et spes and Sollicitudo rei socialis. What surfaces in these Church documents regarding our prophetic role in the world as Christians?

V.APPLICATIONS

A. What new kind of poverty on the social, political, economic, cultural, health...etc. level exists in your area today? What actions are already taking place in the Franciscan family in your region? What actions would be possible and desirable for the Franciscan family in your region or in your community? How are you and your community being called to be voice for the voiceless?

B. Meditation on Money: lay a bank-note of your currency on the ground, in the middle of a circle. Read the text slowly. Take your time in going into each theme. The meditation is to bring to light the many layers of the phenomenon of money. The many levels of money play a role deep within the individual and collective psyche. This meditation addresses these levels.

Preparation and Warm-up:
Sit comfortably and be aware of your breathing. How does your breath enter, how does it leave your body, what does it bring with it and what does it take away?

Where am I at present with my feelings?
What is worrying me at the moment, what refuses to leave me alone?
In what direction do my thoughts carry me?
How far or near to our theme do I feel this moment?

Guided Meditation:
What passes through my mind when I look at the familiar bank-note?
What were the circumstances when I last had one in my hand?
How did I spend it or receive it?
What would I really want to do with it?
What role does money play in my life?
How often do I think about it and in what way?
How has my relation to money changed in the course of my life?
How did we talk about it in my family? And how is it today?
Have my standard of values also changed because of money?
When and in what circumstances did I first earn money, and what are my memories and feelings about that time?
How much money do I carry around with me, and is there a sum that makes me feel secure and another that makes me feel poor?
Have I ever lost a big sum? What were my feelings?
Do I give beggars money? How much and with what feelings?
Is there a connection between money and my personal sense of worth? Do I feel guilty handling money?
What would change today if I had no money?
What would change today if I had a large sum of money?
What is the most important thing which money makes possible for me at present?
Is there anything which money hinders? Do I know aspects of my personality which perhaps without money would come into play in new ways?

Finale: Slowly come back, become aware of the others around you. Write down important insights of your "journey through money." Collect the papers, and redistribute them amongst the group at random. Read them and comment aloud on the various points of view.

C. Read the business section of your local/national paper.
What economic activities does the paper report on? What presupposed purpose do the reports serve? Who benefits from and who suffers from this sort of economic activity? Be specific in naming things. Who gets left out? If the word "economy" means "household," then how does the paper witness/not witness to the caring of the entire household?

D. How do you differentiate between "necessity" and a "superfluity"? What are concrete ways you can bring the Gospel to bear on your economic decisions?

E. Share stories of when and how money has divided relationships, families, communities, etc? Was there another way of being in relationship regarding the exchange of goods and service? Is there a way to live the central message of Acts 4:32-35 in today’s world – for Franciscans? For Lay people?

F. Read one of Leonardo Boff’s texts and have a study group around it substance.

G. Go to the websites of “The Acton Institute” and “The Catholic Worker.” What are the differences and similarities between these two Church-based groups? Who are their inspirations/founders? Is one more “Franciscan”?
UNIT 12

RELATING AS FRANCISCAN WOMEN AND MEN OF FAITH

I. OBJECTIVES

A. General Objective:

To understand the dynamics and tensions between men and women throughout Franciscan history and to appreciate anew the voice and presence of Franciscan women/feminine.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To read Franciscan/Gospel texts using contemporary feminist critiques that allow the fullness of the text to surface.
2. To recognize the prejudices, errors, blind spots that have affected our vision and our living out of the Gospel.
3. To see in Francis’s and Clare’s life how they were or were not in touch with the feminine.

II. RESOURCES


Carney, Margaret. The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Herald Press, 1993.


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction: Throughout Christian and Franciscan history, there has been a cloud of prejudices, blind spots, and misogynist behavior, but there have been much in contemporary research, reformation, and reconciliation between Franciscan men and women/feminine. The voice of Franciscan women throughout history continues to be surfaced and spoken. This has made the tradition richer and more fruitful.

B. Highlights of the Lesson:
1. Francis had a peculiar relationship with women.
2. Over the centuries, the Franciscan narrative has mainly been researched, translated, and studied by men.
3. Where was the female viewpoint?
4. Recently, a growing number of women (and men) are taking up the woman's voice within the tradition.
5. The ethic of compassion (identified with women) is rooted in relationships, responsibility and cooperation.
6. Francis’s emphasis on minority regarding power, privilege and prestige gives us a glimpse of Francis who offers a compassionate alternative model to the hierarchical structure of power, authority, and obedience (which has mostly been in the hands of men).

7. This is also a mother’s perspective.

8. Rooted in this tradition, we must grapple and critique systems of patriarchal injustice.

9. The story of “Brother” Jacoba offers a unique glimpse into Francis’ relationship with women.

10. Clare, too, in her fight for the approval of her way of life, must be seen as a strong woman fighting amidst patriarchal structures.

11. Lady Poverty and the crucified Christ become powerful feminine images within the Franciscan tradition.

12. The Franciscan tradition should not support prejudices, errors, blind spots that affect our relationship with others, but our actions and liberating attitudes should offer full participation and human dignity to all brothers and sisters.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A. Read the following sentence from Franciscan hagiography, 3C 37, “Open the door and bring her in, for our Brother Jacoba does not have to observe the rule against women.” What does the phrase “Brother Jacoba” mean? What basic conclusions do you draw from this sentence? Describe the relations between sisters and brothers in your area.

B. Research more deeply several women whose voices have helped shape the Christian tradition. What have they offered to the Church? How has the Church heard them? Who are our female contemporary theologians and what kind of work have they invested themselves in?

C. Explore the history of feminism more deeply. Who are important voices in this history? What have women gained from this hard-fought journey? What work is still left to do?

D. How do gender roles still play a role in the work place, in the home, in the Church? Are there truths to the roles? What roles do you carry and do you find yourself oppressed by them?

E. What is the relationship between feminism and Franciscan “minority”? Feminism and clericalism?
V. APPLICATIONS

A. Read the following two passages and reflect on how their attitudes express or do not express your perspective and/or your community’s perspective:

From the Inter-Franciscan Message of Mattli, 1982:
We are dismayed by the situation of the woman in the Third World. She is the poorest of the poor. She is sometimes looked down upon because she is a woman. She is treated as an object or as merchandise, often exploited sexually (sex tourism, prostitution, new kinds of slavery in pleasure centers, especially in the First World), used as cheap labor, and kept illiterate.

As Franciscans, concerned about discrimination against women, we are reminded that St. Francis discovered and highly esteemed the Feminine in creation. He had a special love and devotion for the Mother of God who gave Christ to the world. He saw himself as a mother conceiving life and protecting it (2C 16). He also tried to interpret inter-human relations in terms of motherhood. In his wider love of God, friendship flowered with St. Clare of Assisi and Jacoba of Rome. In his Canticle of Brother Sun he called everything sister and brother, thus bringing them into a harmonious unity.

Therefore we, brothers and sisters in the Franciscan Family, believe that we must make a special option for the oppressed woman within our option for the poor. We are convinced that only in mutual giving and receiving will we be able to realize our Franciscan vocation. In a special way the sisters of our Franciscan Family can prove their solidarity efforts against the discrimination of women. Thus they will be a sign of St. Francis’s liberating stance within their various cultures. Francis’s example stimulates us to assure women their rightful place, participating in the decision making processes of Church and society.

From Second Celano, 112: Of avoiding familiarities with women, and how Francis talked with them.
That honeyed poison, namely, familiarities with women, which lead astray even holy men, Francis commanded should be entirely avoided. For he feared, that from such things the weak spirit would be quickly broken and the strong spirit weakened. Avoiding contagion from association with them, unless it were a question of a most proven man,
Francis said, in accordance with Scripture, was as easy as walking in a fire without having the soles of one’s feet burned. And that he might speak from deeds, he always showed himself an example of all virtue. Indeed, a woman was so unwelcome to him that you would think that his caution was not a warning or an example but rather a dread or a horror. When their persistent talkativeness caused him difficulty in speaking with them, he would ask for silence with a humble and speedy word and with his fact cast down. Sometimes, though, he looked up to heaven and seemed to draw from there the answers he gave to those who were muttering out of the ground.

But those women in whose minds an urgency of holy devotion had set up the abode of wisdom, he taught by wonderful yet brief words. When he talked with a woman, he spoke what was to be said in a loud voice so that he could be heard by everybody. He said once to a companion: “I tell you the truth, dearest Brother, I would not recognize any woman if I looked into her face, except two. The face of the one and of the other is known to me, but I know no other.” Rightly so, Father, for they provide no profit but only great loss, at least of time. They are impediments to those who would walk the difficult way and who want to look up to the face that is full of graces.

What is the context of these two texts? How did this context shape the content? What is the attitude towards women imparted by these texts? Are these attitudes fostered in your community?

B. Debate the issue around women’s ordination. Is priesthood a “role” anyone can serve? Can the Church respect women’s voices and still not ordain them as priests? Do you agree with the theological explanation for ordaining men only? How have other churches navigated through this issue and how has this changed their ministry? What would the Church look like/feel like if she only ordained women?

C. How can we bring a feminine voice to our work? Are we in touch with the various voices within us, masculine and feminine? How do we express and live these out? How can we advocate for more female presence in our workplace?
UNIT 13

BROTHER SUN AND SISTER MOON: A FRANCISCAN VIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENT

I. OBJECTIVES

A. General Objective:

To see understand the Franciscan view of the environment and to see its challenge to today’s utilitarian model.

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To understand why Francis was named the “patron of ecology,” in light of his writings and the hagiography
2. To know the difference between an utilitarian approach to nature and an approach that reverences the intrinsic worth of nature.
3. To see Mother Earth and her needs as the “new poor” for whom Franciscans can be a voice

II. RESOURCES


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction: Francis’s reconciling way of life as brother and sister to all things made him the patron of ecology in contemporary spirituality. This has deep roots in the hagiographical tradition and was echoed by Franciscan writers throughout Franciscan history.

B. Highlights of the Lesson:
1. There are many examples from the hagiography where Francis shows reverence and tenderness to nature.
2. Francis’s witness has contemporary social and ecological implications.
3. Our view of nature: utilitarian worth or intrinsic worth?
4. Intrinsic and symbolic/sacramental?
5. Our view of nature shaped by our relationship with the Eucharist. Creation is the place where God is present to us.
6. Franciscan image: the earth as the “new poor,” with whom Franciscans have the responsibility to be in solidarity.
7. Universal fraternity of all living things calls Franciscans to abandon excessive consumer mentality – to adopt a simple lifestyle, to foster the spirit of fraternity in all relationships, to be in solidarity with all life forms.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

A. Read the following extract of the Declaration of the Franciscans in the UN on the occasion of the Conference of the United Nations on Ecology and Development (UNCED/ECO) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992:

Diverse alternatives for development have arisen. The proposals in this sense were gathered in the term...
“sustainable development.” These two words contain diverse concepts and emphasis. From a Franciscan perspective, this alternative development must point to quality of life for the people and not only economic growth; toward recognizing the need to attend to future generations and the need to reconstruct cultures as a part of the growing ethic with all life. For the Franciscan family, this means to assume the project of life, without imposing a dominating style and recuperating the art of shared living. The ecological crisis was caused by a rationality that is outdated today, and this is evident from its own weakness.

Utopias and positive developments: Facing the conception that there only exists one type of positive development in Latin America, there are diverse utopic practices springing up. Consequently alternative styles of development can be generated, based on utopic dreams.

These utopic experiences are being generated by ethical commitment in the defense of all life. Part of this utopia is to look forward to a socio-ecological democracy in which the natural environment is maintained, not only to sustain contemporary society, but also to give attention to the other life forms, the plants and animals, who have a right to pursue their own life projects. Life in itself is a value and as such should be respected and promoted. These utopian projects, in the Franciscan perspective, are realized outside the logic of domination, and are recognized as part of life, in communion with life. Human beings thus become relational beings.

New Spirituality: This ecological perspective allows us to develop a new spirituality anchored in the Franciscan charism. All creatures are related to each other in universal brotherhood. Human beings recognize themselves as part of a cosmic unity encompassing the whole of creation. Only the human person is capable of consciously welcoming the fact that other creatures are different and that we need to live with them in a responsible way otherwise there is the danger that they can dominate them or even destroy them. We recognize the earth as Mother because it generates and sustains life; we also call her Sister because, together with her, we experience and celebrate our relationship with the Creator.

From this Franciscan cosmic vision, we invite all people to renounce consumerism: the accumulation of goods, the plunder and utilitarian abuse of nature. In the same way,
we invite you to a simple lifestyle, with fraternal relations, solidarity and reverence for all forms of life. We want to place ourselves in defense of the most threatened creatures. New culture: A new culture is needed that appreciates anew the feminine, and the masculine; the symbolic, the affective, the caring, so as to overcome machoism, cold rationality and all the forms of domination. There is a need to create a world of fraternal presence, where we rediscover the message of life. There is urgent need to substitute a culture of death with a culture of life. The creation of this new culture leads to an inculcation in diversity, in which we assume the projects of others, not only of human beings, but also the projects of plants, animals, rocks and water.

This will generate a new practice in the light of ecology and the option for the poor. So, as a consequence, it is necessary to renew pastoral practice, where we look for true socio-ecological subjects and where we don’t reproduce structures of domination. New politics must also be born, where community organizations are examples of the process of change and solidarity, and that permit one to be inserted in the world of the poor, of the marginalized and of nature.

And so, the Franciscan family should convert itself into an instrument of change, which from its own utopia, makes the generation of this new culture possible: as the sacrament of God of Life at the service of all life.

Signed by: FRANCISCANS as NGO in the United Nations, Brooklyn, NY, USA; CIPFE Montevideo, Uruguay; and SINFRAJUPE, Servico Interfranciscano de Justica, Paz e Ecologia, Petropolis, RJ, Brazil

Questions: From the Franciscan perspective, what are the criteria for “sustainable development”? What is a socio-ecological democracy and what would it practically look like? What is meant by “alternative styles of development...based on utopic dreams”?

B. Exploring the hagiographical tradition, what is unique to Francis regarding his relationship with nature?

C. In 1979, Pope John Paul II named St. Francis “patron Saint of Environmental Protection.” What motivated the Pope to name Francis this? How has this shaped the public perception of Francis?
D. Explore more deeply the relationship between creation and the sacraments.
E. How might contemporary religious life with its emphasis on communal and shared living, simplicity, and celibacy help model this fraternal and sustainable living? Have religious orders of the past taken up this cause? Why or why not?

V. APPLICATIONS

A. Research and describe a contemporary model of this kind of fraternal and sustainable living happening in your area. Have them come and speak to your group. How can we who are rooted in the Christian/Franciscan tradition learn from others (perhaps not rooted in the same tradition) who are putting this fraternal/ecological living into practice? What is possible for us now, in our lives, as a community, in our Church, in our country?
B. What possibilities for action do you see, personally and politically and communally, in your area?
C. How do we use the earth’s resources in a responsible way, and not waste them? What guides our actions?
D. Where do we buy our food? Can we grow more food? Support local farmers? Join cooperative markets? Buy from organic and sustainable farmers? Eat more fresh, local, and seasonal fruits, vegetables, and meats?
E. Evaluate your transportation habits. Can you drive less? Use more public transportation? Ride bikes? Walk more? Purchase cars that support alternative energy use? Carpool more?
F. Do you support local businesses? Businesses who support sustainable methods? Businesses who support fair and just wages?
G. How can you help create a consciousness in your area that will bring attention to these ecological issues, especially the power we all have in what and where and how much we consume?
H. Meditate on your local geography/natural surroundings. Take a long walk with your senses open, with your heart vulnerable, with new sensitive to the energy surrounding you in the wild. Compose your own Canticle of Creation, praising what you’ve seen and felt and experienced. Then with poem, song, painting, drawing, or collage, let your inspiration move you to creativity.
UNIT 14

THE CONTINUING FRANCISCAN TASK IN THE CHURCH

I. OBJECTIVES

A. General Objective:

To understand the many ways Franciscans can live and preach the Good News in today’s world

B. Specific Objectives:

1. To understand the Franciscan role/charism within the Church
2. To be familiar with the Franciscan principles for evangelization

II. RESOURCES


III. LESSON PROPER

A. Introduction:

The Franciscan charism is a gift, and it is a gift for the world and the Church, both of which need a fresh and yet ancient voice to reignite the passion to live out the Good News.

B. Highlights of the Lesson:

1. Francis’s experience before the San Damiano crucifix ("rebuild my church") must ask us as Franciscans how we are still rebuilding/renewing/reforming the Church.
2. The Church is called to on-going conversion and evangelization.
3. The Holy Spirit is central to this process.
4. The ecclesial structures and programs must always be related to the impulses of the Spirit of God, who works in structures and in people.
5. The Franciscan is neither to make individually defined infallible statements nor to live in unquestioning subservience but to live a life that imitates Francis’s call to be peacemakers among the people, which sometimes challenges “the powers.”
6. Francis was also courageous in his creative and new ways of living and preaching the life of the Gospel.
7. Key to this new way of living was Francis’s open heart (poverty/courteousness) that embraced everyone’s and everything’s fundamental goodness. He did not live condemning others or preach by dishing out heavy blows.
8. Franciscans, then, are called not to defend the faith but to heal and mend and to call others into the Gospel life. It is a living model.
9. The list of “Franciscan principles” of evangelization:
   to live the Gospel, to use love-in-action as a mode
   of sharing the Gospel, to live among the poor, and to
cross the accepted boundaries of the church to others.

IV. SUGGESTED FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

1. Read 1 Cor 12:1-30. List the ministries existing in the
   Church of Corinth in Paul’s time and try to find the names
   of the corresponding ministries in the Church today. Which
   of these ministries do not exist in your parish/community?
   Do you know of any other ministries found in your
   parish or community today? Which is the most important
   ministry among those in your community or parish?
2. What is Jesus’s relationship with Gentiles, or those outside
   of the Jewish walk? How does this connect or disconnect
   from Francis’s witness and ours?
3. Has the Church always been open to conversion and
   evangelization? When has it and when has it not? What
   have, historically, been the good and bad fruits of being
   open to conversion and evangelization, and not being
   open?
4. When is Jesus prophetic and calling for renewal/conversion
   of Judaism and its leadership, and when is Jesus not? To
   what end does Jesus call his people to new life? Why is
   there resistance and what does this resistance say about
   Jesus’s call?

V. APPLICATIONS

1. Do you agree or disagree with the statement “If the people
   do not go to Church then the Church has to go to the
   people”? Where have you met “unchurched people” in
   society, in the Church, in your community? What kind of
   people are they? Do you know of any pastoral programs
   that could do justice to them? Which? Try to design such a
   pastoral program in your group?
2. How does fidelity to the Church and to the prophetic
   role to which we are all called meet in your spirituality?
   Do you see yourself “rebuilding the Church”? In what
   capacity? What in your community/ministry needs
   renewal/reformation? How might you play an active (and
   Franciscan) role in this area?
3. Read about the journeys of some contemporary Catholics
   who have found themselves in the prophetic role in the
Church and have been challenged by the structures of the Church: Leonardo Boff, Tissa Balasuriya, Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and/or Daniel and Philip Berrigan. What do these voices offer the Church? How do these voices resonate or not with the Franciscan tradition? Some of them have been silenced, excommunicated, asked to leave their communities, arrested, and/or killed. How does this affect you?