



Canticle of Creation

Franciscan based YouFra

Faith Development Sessions



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Session Protocols

The Canticle sessions were written with students 14-17 in mind. However, they are easily adapted to accommodate younger or older youth. In some cases, this may become an afterschool Franciscan club model; a monthly series; an added part to another youth group; or an introduction for young people interested in YouFra (Youth Fraternity). See Appendix A for the Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Mission Statement, which will clarify the reason for providing these sessions. Appendix B gives Franciscan prayers. Appendix C is the bibliography and list of suggested resources.

We do not suggest a “teacher-student” model, but rather express that the whole group (both young people and their mentors) will help one another explore our faith and grow in holiness together. It is especially important to promote interactive, engaged meetings prompted by the needs and desires of those involved, and to provide experiential learning as often as possible. Leader notes are included in some sessions in order to give background, or to share if information is age appropriate. No matter which model or age group, the four components for regular Secular Franciscan Fraternity gatherings should be included in each session:

1. Social time. Whether youth are coming from school or home, they will need some time to check in with their peers and leaders. This can be accomplished in a circle as each person shares a minute or two about their week or month, or by simply mingling with one another as they enjoy a snack.
2. Prayer. Young people appreciate experiencing different types of prayer. Each session includes opening and closing prayers that are geared to the topic. The group might decide to choose a particular Franciscan prayer to open each meeting.
3. Ongoing faith development. Each session expands on a line from the Canticle of Creation. Through studying this beautiful composition by St. Francis, we gain insights about our faith and particularly Franciscan spirituality.
4. Business. Time spent in business should be minimal. Business may include coming to a group decision regarding an outing or service project, how to fund raise, or brainstorming ways to invite other youth to join you.

Some points to consider:

τ Use the session ideas as they are presented, or feel free to adapt depending on the age, maturity level, and needs of those participating. Be creative. Utilize the gifts and talents of the members. Young people have great ideas for supplementing the themes, prayers, and activities.

τ Vary your format to ensure interest and accommodate various learning styles. What is here are the bare bones.

τ Use songs, DVDs, YouTube videos, and other weblinks to enhance your program. Again, young people will be familiar with current music and media.

τ Extend or lessen the material as you see fit.

τ A core team of young people can work with you to plan.

τ Check out the provided bibliography and resources if you wish to examine new topics.

Session One: Who Was St. Francis?

Leader Notes/Preparation Before Gathering

Francesco Bernadone was born in Assisi, Italy, in the region of Umbria in 1182. His father, Pietro Bernadone was a wealthy merchant whose travels often took him to France. Francesco was born to Pietro's wife, Lady Pica, while he was away. He was baptized John, but when Pietro arrived home he changed the name to Francesco because he was so taken by the country of France.

Francis was born during a time of political uncertainty as well as dramatic cultural changes. The feudal system with Lords and fiefdoms was diminishing and the mercantile class was emerging. It was also a time of chivalry and knights. City states were overseen by nobles who showed allegiance to either the emperor or the Holy See (Catholic Church). There was a lot of division, fighting, and corruption in the government and in the Church.



(Have pictures, statues, San Damiano Cross, Tau, and books of St. Francis to let young people peruse. Explain they will learn all about the items they are looking at as the year progresses.)

Opening Prayer

Display San Damiano Crucifix

Francis gazed upon this icon crucifix in an abandoned little countryside church, San Damiano, and he prayed:

Most high, glorious God,
Enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me, Lord
Correct faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,
Sense and knowledge
So that I may carry out your holy and true command. ¹

Whole Group Discussion

What do you know about St. Francis? (Francesco Bernadone) Take time to share answers and record. (Save for the last session in order to evaluate how much you have learned.)

Francis time-line, his early life: Review together. How does each age compare to yourselves or to young people you know.

¹ Armstrong, Regis, OFMcap; Hellman, J.A. Wayne, OFMconv; Short, William, OFM (edited by). *Francis of Assisi, The Saint: Early Documents, Vol. 1.* (New York: New City Press, 2003) pg. 40

1. Francesco was born into the merchant class of Assisi in 1182 to wealthy parents. (What kind of family have you been born into? How do you think that affects your behavior, dreams, choices?)
2. At 16 he would legally be allowed and would be capable of conducting business in his father's name. (Think about the jobs of your parents. Would you be able to do either? What are typical chores for a sixteen year old?)
3. At age 18, he liked to party with the sons of nobles and spent a lot of his father's money. (How do you spend your free time? Do you also like to party? Hang out with friends?)
4. He was a soldier at age 20, and wanted to be a rich and famous knight. (Do you have dreams you want to work toward? Have you ever wanted to be rich and famous?)
5. At 21 he became a prisoner of war and lived in a dark, underground cave. He questioned his choices. Money, pleasure, and glory didn't appeal to him anymore for some reason. (Have you ever been disappointed in a choice you made, and wondered "What was I thinking?")
6. By age 22 he was bedridden with illness.
7. He returned to fight as a crusader at age 23, but he falls ill again and the Lord speaks to him in a dream. "Who would you rather serve, the Master or the servant?"
8. He had many conversion experiences, and eventually realized God was calling him to do something different...to be different.
9. Francis was declared mentally incompetent at this time, as people didn't understand why he wanted to give up his wealth.
10. When he stole his father's beautiful fabrics to give to the poor, he was charged with theft.
11. He left home by age 24 declaring God as his only father. He trades his clothing with a beggar.
12. He chose to be poor and homeless, so things wouldn't distract him from growing closer to God. He wandered as a preacher and beggar. He still didn't know what God wanted him to do. (Have you ever thought to ask God what his will for you is?)
13. Although repulsed by lepers in his earlier years, he embraces a leper and realizes he has met Jesus. "That which seemed bitter to me was changed to sweetness of the soul and body."
14. He drew many followers to this way of life by age 26. He hears a voice from a cross in the church of San Damiano. The voice tells him, "Go, Francis, and repair my house." Francis obeys, thinking God means for him to repair the fallen walls of the church.
15. Eventually Francis understands that God means for him to spread the Gospel to others. To live a life faithful to the Gospel teachings.

There are many, many more stories about Francesco Bernadone--the little poor man of Assisi--and we will hear them as we progress through the sessions. It's important to note that Francis suffered many afflictions, partly due to his austere way of living, but also because he received the stigmata, which means he wore the wounds of the crucified Christ on his body. Among other diseases, he had trachoma, a painful inflammation of his eyes with accompanying headaches, great sensitivity to light, and near blindness. He lay in the dark toward the end of his life, suffering greatly and unable to walk or see, and yet his intense love of God inspired him to compose the famous Canticle of the Creatures, the poem on which this series is based. Although Francis has other traits worthy of attention, we will focus on his love of all creation.

Group Action

Discuss how you want the group to function.

- Do you want to include apostolic works outside of the fraternity gatherings?
- Should you decide on a biography of St. Francis that you can all purchase--perhaps *Tales of St. Francis*, by Murray Bodo?
- Do you want to include journaling? Should each person bring their journal to gatherings, or will it be an optional at home activity?
- Are there ways each person can help so the group runs well--ie. Hospitality, snacks, presenters, public relations to the parish, prayer chain, phone tree, etc.

Closing Prayer

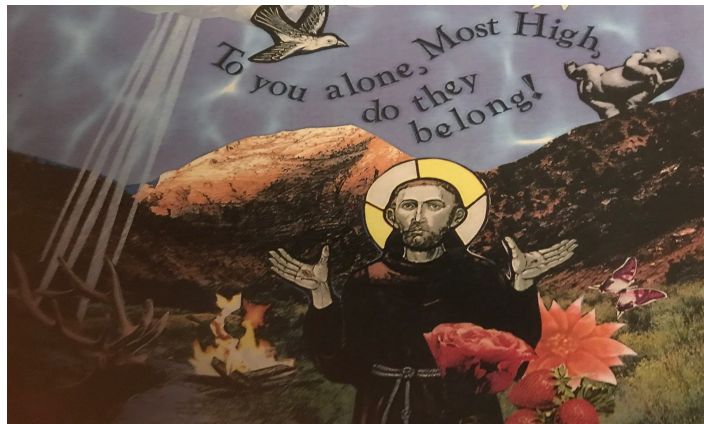
Leader: Thank you Lord, for bringing us all together. May we always respect one another and help our group become a place in which our faith and holiness can grow.

All: May the Lord be in our hearts and on our lips, so that we may live the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the spirit of St. Francis, and proclaim it to all the world. Amen

At Home, Invitation to Act

Reread the story time-line of Francis. Where are you in the story? Have you had similar experiences? Make a time-line of your own. Include the major points in your life, especially times that contributed to your faith growth.

Session Two: The Canticle of Brother Sun



Leader Notes

Consider using William Draper's hymn "All Creatures of Our God and King," or Marty Haugen's "The Canticle of the Sun," to open your gatherings. Both songs use phrases from St. Francis' poem.

The Canticle is one of the first known works of literature in the Italian language. It was written in the Umbrian dialect and is studied for its literary importance. The poem is meant to be sung and uses assonance rather than rhyme. We will spend time studying its spiritual relevance. In the Canticle, Francis affirms his kinship with all creation (all of creation having been brought into being by God), and rejecting accumulation of wealth and material goods in favor of "Lady Poverty." We see Themes of Creation: Anima/animus, the integration of all creation, male and female; Forgiveness; Peace; Death; Praise and Gratitude. The elements work in harmony to each other and to those of us who live on the earth. Everything becomes a gift to Francis, and he lives in love and gratitude.

Saint Francis is said to have composed most of the canticle in late 1224 while recovering from an illness at San Damiano, in a small cottage that had been built for him by Saint Clare and other women of her order. According to tradition, the first time it was sung in its entirety was by Francis and Brother Angelo and Leo, two of his original companions, on Francis' deathbed, the final verse praising "Sister Death" having been added only a few minutes before. The last verses were written to help settle a dispute between the Mayor and Bishop of Assisi.

Opening Prayer:

Listen to one of the songs listed above.

Read the Canticle together, or one person at a time verse by verse

The Canticle of Brother Sun Circa 1226, by St. Francis of Assisi

Most high, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.

To you alone, most high, do they belong,
And no human is worthy to mention your name.

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures,
Especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom you give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
And bears a likeness of you, most high one.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In Heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
And through the air, cloudy and serene,
And every kind of weather,
Through which you give sustenance to your creatures.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,
Which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom you light the night,
And he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
Who sustains and governs us,
And who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

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, they shall be crowned.

Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
From whom no one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in your most holy will,
For the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord and give him thanks
And serve Him with great humility. ²

Small Group Discussion

² Ibid, pg. 113

Give each group one of the verses to work with, magazines, scissors, glue and a quarter sheet of poster board. They will reflect on their paragraph.

- What does the verse tell us about Francis?
- Is this part of creation respected and cared for in our society?
- How? How is it damaged?

Work together to make a collage depicting their section of the poem. Add a copy of their verse somewhere on the poster. Gather together in the large group and share. If you are fortunate enough to have a special room, you can display. Otherwise, perhaps it can be bound into a “book” for members to share with younger students.

Group Action

Look ahead at the calendar and plan to use the Creation Prayer service in the Appendix to commemorate a special event (Earth Day, Feast of St. Francis, beginning or ending of these sessions, etc.)

Closing Prayer

Each person is encouraged to share something in nature they are grateful for. “Lord, I am grateful for_____.”

When all have had a turn, say together, “We thank you, Lord. Help us to grow in appreciation of all you have created for us. Teach us how to take care of our earth and all her creatures.”

End with an Our Father

At Home, Invitation to Act

Spend some time witnessing the wonder of creation and write, draw, dance, or sing your own psalm of gratitude.

Take a mindfulness walk and find a created object. Sit and let it “speak” to you.

Session Three: Praise



Leader

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 145:103, "I will extol You, my God, O King; I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable."

Share one at a time what you feel called to bless and thank the Lord for.
End with an Our Father together.

Discussion Talking Points

- "Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks; and serve Him with great humility." These are words from St. Francis.
- Listen to the following quote from Carolyn Townes, who at the time of this writing was the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Commission Chair of the National Fraternity of Secular Franciscans (NAFRA). It is an excerpt from the 2014 Advent reflection, *12 Weeks of Franciscan Peace*. "Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less. It is knowing your place before God, and taking it. Being humble is a true knowing of yourself and your limitations. Humility is about being real and authentic with people and discarding the false masks. Those who see themselves as they truly are would surely be humble indeed."
- Yes, we do have talents and gifts which hopefully we share through serving others. It's important, though, to remember that all our gifts are from God. We are not in charge--God is. We are His hands and feet.
- South African pastor Andrew Murray once said, "Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and am at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble."
- When you have a modest view of your own importance, then God can enter into your littleness and create great and mighty works.
- The following article is excerpted from "Prayer, Chapter nine of *Following Francis of Assisi: A Spirituality for Daily Living*, by Patti Normile (St. Anthony Press, and is available on the web) "Each path Francis took on his journey to God led him to a single action: praise of God. Through the entire domain of earth, from the glory of daybreak to nightfall's softened light, Francis praises the Lord. Through all weather, the elements of fire and water and the motherhood of the earth, Francis continues in praise. Sickness

and trial give birth to continuing praise. The inevitable encounter with Sister Death spurs Francis to close his work with praise, blessing and thanksgiving. Everything that happened in Francis' life fueled the fire of his praise to the Lord."

Small Group Discussion

- Do we give God thanks and praise for everything?
- Do we trust He knows our needs and wants what's best for us?
- What about the humility part? Does that mean I can't be proud of my accomplishments?
- Do we offer humble service to others?

Group Action

Plan a movie night and invite others. Perhaps "Soul Surfer" or "God's Not Dead" would be good choices. Think of some appropriate discussion questions for afterwards and share what you've learned about giving God praise in all things.

Closing Prayer

Around the group, each person says "For _____, which _____."
(for example: "For my brothers and sisters, who help me grow in my faith," or "For the ocean, which is a relaxing and fun place to visit.")
All respond: "Praised be to you, my Lord."

End with the blessing given to Brother Leo at La Verna: May the Lord bless you and keep you; May He show his face to you and be merciful to you! May he turn His countenance to you and give you peace."³

At Home, Invitation to Act

Look in Scripture for other verses that highlight praising God. Find a favorite and place it somewhere you can see and read it often.

³ Ibid, pg. 112

Session Four: Brother Sun

Leader Notes

Invite a crafty friend to help you conduct an art project using sun-print paper. There are directions and ideas on YouTube, and paper is relatively inexpensive.



Find a video clip that might inspire and awe respect for the sun.

<http://www.eamesoffice.com/the-work/powers-of-ten> or

<http://www.sciencechannel.com/tv-shows/through-the-wormhole/>

Choose a clip about the sun.

Reflect on the following quote:

“The sun is the image of that sovereign reality upon which all life depends and from which life is drawn. To enter into communion with Brother Sun is to open one’s being to that well spring of light, that prophecy of what we are to become. To dialogue with Brother Sun is to probe the meaning of ultimate vocation, ultimate destiny, the Creation, the reign of God.”⁴

Opening Prayer

Guided meditation found on pg. 142, *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*, by Ileo Delio, OSF, Keith Douglas Warner, OFM, and Pamela Wood. (perhaps this can be done outside in the sun)

Small Group Discussion

Read the following quote.

“Each morning our planet turns toward the sun, soaking in its warmth and suckling its life energy. In each second our great, generous sun offers up 4 million tons of itself, transformed into radiant light and energy daily, free for all of life on earth to use. Green plants have evolved to take in this energy from the sun and convert it to food and energy for themselves. By doing so, plants feed all life on this planet as they make that energy available to humans and other mammals to ingest when we eat. All life depends on energy, and all energy has the sun as its ultimate source. With Francis, we too revel in the miracle of Brother Sun, whose life giving energy courses through our own bodies too: warming our hearts, igniting our dreams and fueling our work in the world.”⁵

- All life on earth uses the energy of the sun.
- How does our mistreatment of the natural world diminish our own dignity and sacredness?

⁴ Dennis, Marie; Hangle, Joseph, OFM; Lobeda-Moe, Cynthia; Taylor, Stuart. *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*. New York: Orbis Books, 2015

⁵ Delio, Ilea, OSF; Warner, Keith Douglas, OFM; Wood, Pamela. *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*. Ohio: Franciscan Media, 2016

- As we destroy resources that future generations of humans will need, we are engaging in actions that certainly don't relate to St. Francis view of our responsibility to care for all of creation.
- In what ways is our society misusing our resources? Share small ways you as an individual or in your family help the planet? How do turning off the computer, replacing incandescent light bulbs with LED, obeying the speed limit when driving help?
- Is there something new you can suggest that your family take on as a practice?

Group Action

Do a sun art project. Enjoy a "light" activity that will allow students to take a project home that "reflects" their understanding of the sun's power. (sun art paper/kits are sold at craft stores)

Closing Prayer

This is called a "Found Prayer."

Leader will pass around a tray filled with little everyday man-made items. As the tray is passed around, each person will choose one of the items. For the prayer, each person will share How that item reminds them of God. (for example: the bandaid reminds me that God can heal my wounds; the eraser reminds me that God forgives me and erases my sins; the mirror reminds me that God sees me differently than I see myself.)

At Home, Invitation to Act

Think of an item you use every day. (backpack, toilet paper, cell phone etc.) make a commitment to pray for those in need every time you use that item. Put a little reminder note to get you into the habit.



Session Five: Sister Moon and the Stars

Leader Notes

"The various cycles of the moon recall the cycles of life, the dying and rising on the journey toward ultimate destiny, the process of becoming. The wisdom of the moon enables one to accept the process of dying and rising and to surrender to the mystery of the night, the unknown, the depths of self, the shadow sides of life...the moon gives focus to substance, being, mystery."⁶

Opening Prayer

Sing "Our God is an Awesome God" by Chris Tomlin (found on YouTube) On Words in Motion: Awesome God, students can follow along with the sign language that goes with the song.

Some choices of topics to discuss are:

- The vastness of the night sky--awesomeness of God's creation! To show a clip about the vastness of our universe, use <http://www.sciencechannel.com/tv-shows/through-the-wormhole>
- Moon cycles affect our ocean's tides. When we add the global warming factor, many coastal areas are in danger.
- The moon's cycles evoke a poetic stir in our beings. Reflect on our *shadow* side. Using the story of the Wolf of Gubbio, think about those who are marginalized, the "others" in our society--this could even be ourselves. (Tales of St. Francis, Murray Bodo, OFM.)
- Use the quote above to stimulate a conversation. Why does the moon for some people signify dying and rising, becoming, or the shadow sides of life? What does it signify to you? What about constellations? Do you see stories in them the way ancient people did? What is a modern name and story you could tell using a constellation?

Group Action

Does anyone in the group have a telescope at home? Plan a special "full moon" evening to meet together and gaze at the moon through a telescope or at a planetarium. Eat moon cakes, and practice the moon walk! (refer to YouTube to learn)

⁶ Foolishness of God

After enjoying the peaceful, starlit evening, think of a way you (as a group or as individuals) can offer a peaceful moment to someone else. Perhaps babysit without charging; cook dinner for and spend time with an elderly neighbor; make cards to deliver to a rest home; or invite your family for a game or karaoke night.

Closing Prayer

Listen to *God of the Universe*, by VOTA on YouTube
End with an Our Father

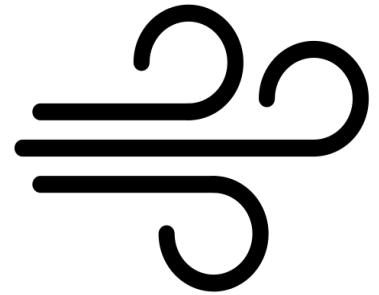
At Home, Invitation to Act

Watch a video clip of the first walk on the moon in 1969. The world was awestruck by this event. Why? What do you think you would have said if you were the first person to step on the moon's surface?

Session Six: Brother Wind

Leader Notes

From *Ask the Beasts*, by Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, we're reminded: "In the Hebrew Bible the word for spirit is ruach, which can also be translated as wind or breath. In the creation account, the ruach Elohim which can be translated as breath or spirit of God, moves, sweeps, blows like a wind over the face of the waters, and the world begins to take shape (Gen.1:1-2). When it blows over a valley of scattered dry bones so that they reconnect, click together with a rattling noise, get clothed with flesh and infused with the breath of life, a fabulous prophetic symbol that vanquished people will have their lives renewed. (Ezek.37: 1-14)"



There are many images of the breath of God--the spirit blowing. Johnson also says, "The Spirit dwells in the world like wind, blowing freely and affecting everything. It cannot be corralled or enclosed, restricted or caged...something new is stirred up."

Opening Prayer

Read John 3:8 "The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going; so it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

Spend a few minutes in quiet reflection. What does this passage mean to you?

Discussion Talking Points

- In order to exist, we breathe in air constantly, most of the time without even paying attention to this act.
- We are actually breathing in the same molecules of oxygen that our Lord inhaled when He walked this earth over 2,000 years ago!
- Breathing--We take it for granted, without realizing the work the powerful muscle called the diaphragm does 15-20 times a minute, enabling our lungs to fill with air, and then to have this exchange of oxygen for carbon dioxide in the little alveoli, with fresh oxygen going into our blood cells and throughout our body while we exhale byproducts of carbon dioxide.
- Breathing is amazing! Besides keeping us alive, deep breathing promotes relaxation and a sense of calm. This helps us to center and find the life within us.
- In *Ask the Beasts*, Johnson says "The Spirit dwells in the world like wind, blowing freely and affecting everything. It cannot be corralled or enclosed, restricted or caged...something new is stirred up."
- Wind and breath serves us well and provides a beautiful image of God, and yet, we have polluted the very air we breathe. We all breathe the same air! Lakes in one country can be negatively impacted by acid rain caused by emission from industrial factories far away. The exhaust from our automobiles creates more carbon dioxide into an already stressed ozone layer.

Small Group Sharing

- Pollution in the atmosphere does not respect boundaries--someone else's pollution can blow into our space. Have you witnessed this even with the smoke when a neighbor burns their leaves or from a smoker nearby?
- Have you ever experienced the wind or breath of air as a wonderful thing? (sailing, breeze on a hot day, etc.) Your parent might have blown warm air on your cold hands when you were a little person.
- What do we need to do in order to introduce truly fresh air in our lives?

Group Action

Is there anything we as a group can do to improve air quality? (write a letter together to share our concerns with our congressmen, set up a carpool for our group, make a commitment to use public transportation when possible, etc.)

Closing Prayer

Listen to "Breathe Peace" by the Robbie Seay band (on YouTube) while you practice deep breathing. Use the muscle called the diaphragm and breathe deeply and slowly. Your belly should fill first with air, and the belly button goes out. Then let the air out slowly as the belly button goes inward. Concentrate on breathing in peace, love, goodness, mercy, healing, trust, or courage. When breathing out, concentrate on the negatives leaving. Breathe out emotions like anger, hate, gloom, meanness, sadness, or violence.

At Home, Invitation to Act

Do a bit of research about what creatures in your area are affected by bad air quality. Build a bird or bat house, plant flowers that draw pollinators, or even help your community establish pollinator friendly gardens. Perhaps you can gather some of your youth friends to join you.

Practice deep breathing. What good qualities do you want to breathe in? What negatives do you want to get rid of when letting your breath out?

Session Seven: Sister Water



Leader Notes:

Have a table ready with a little meditation water fountain if possible. Also place a pitcher of water, a bowl large enough to hold the water as we do the demonstration (see below), a globe, and various size rocks (see closing prayer).

Following is an excerpt taken from a Lenten Program entitled *I Thirst. A Lenten Journey from Desert to Garden*, produced by Terri MacKenzie, SHCJ, for Franciscan Action Network.

“Humans can live without food for weeks, but after one day without water, dehydration leading to death can begin. The earth has a finite supply of water which is continually being

recycled. Snow, rain, steam, glaciers, oceans, lakes and rivers become clean and reusable. All life that preceded us used the water molecules that are here today, and future generations will use the same molecules. In the human body, water makes up 60-70% of the body by weight. The earth’s surface is also 70% water. God reveals himself through his creation of water, and water is prominent in our rituals and sacraments. Water is a powerful symbol of renewal, and cleanses and refreshes both body and soul. We use water to baptise, and bless ourselves with Holy Water when we enter and leave the church.”

Opening Prayer

The Bible often uses water to symbolize faith, salvation, and provision. Water is essential to our physical living just as Jesus is essential to our spiritual living!

Spend a few quiet moments to write down words that you think of when you think of water--any word or phrase--be creative. Write as many as you can in two minutes.

Hand out the following references, one to a person. Read each passage one at a time, reflecting for a moment after each one.

Ezekiel 36: 25-26
Matt. 10: 42
Revelations 21:6

2 Samuel 22:17
Isaiah 43:2
Revelations 22:17

John 3:5
Isaiah 49:10
John 7:37-39

John 4: 10-15
Revelations 22:1-2
Isaiah 55:1

Now share with the group any particular words or phrases from your list that are unique or special to you. Did you find examples of your thoughts on water in the scripture passages?

Demonstration and Discussion Talking Points

- The globe shows that 80% of the Earth is water. This is what the water in the pitcher represents.
- 97% of the Earth's water is ocean, which means only 3% is fresh. (pour out all but about an inch of the water). What's left in the pitcher represents the 3% of Earth's fresh water.
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of that fresh water is unusable. It is either frozen, underground, or contaminated. (pour out $\frac{2}{3}$ of the water in the shot glass, into a tablespoon or thimble.)
- This is the water we all have to share--everyone in the whole world.
- What do you think happens when one part of the world uses more than their share?
- What happens when a part of the world does not have access to even this little bit of water?
- What are some ways you can save water, protect water, clean up areas where water is polluted already?

Closing Prayer

Gather around the empty bowl and the pitcher (which has been refilled with the water from the various containers used above).

All: Lord, we gather together, in order to learn and grow. Teach us, Lord, what you want us to do for You.

The bowl begins as an empty vessel. It is like the heart of many people in need, Lord—alone and empty—waiting for someone to show them love.

All: Teach us, Lord, what you want us to do for You.

(place several large rocks in the bowl) The large rocks represent those who have done big things to make our world a better place. We pray for people like Blessed Teresa of Calcutta or Pope Francis who have given their whole lives for the sake of bringing justice, peace, compassion and love to all. They have made a significant impact throughout the whole world because of their commitment to a Gospel life and their tremendous sacrifices.

All: Thank you, Lord, for sending us people such as these, but they are not enough.

(place 5 or 6 medium sized rocks in the bowl) The medium sized rocks represent those who have worked hard in their communities to make necessary changes. People such as politicians who advocate for the poor and base their decisions on God's will; church leaders who encourage those under their care to live holy lives; business leaders, superintendents of schools, or hospital directors who have a responsibility to put into place policies which reflect Godly principles.

All: Thank you, Lord, for sending us people such as these, but they are not enough.

(pour many small pebbles into the bowl) The small pebbles represent people like parents, teachers, coaches, or volunteers in the community who are an influence and example of Jesus to others. They may not be in a position to change major policies or for their voice to be heard

throughout the world; but they minister to those around them with love and dedication and help us know how to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

All: Thank you, Lord, for sending us people such as these, but they are not enough.

(fill the bowl with as much sand as will fit) The sand represents each one of us, and all the little things we do. We don't take up a lot of space in the world, and it may seem like our efforts are insignificant, but the sand flows gently, filling in all the cracks and spaces. We do our part wherever we are needed, and by all working together, we can make a big difference.

All: Thank you, Lord, for sending us people such as these, but they are not enough.

(now pour water into the bowl) The final addition is the water, which represents our baptism. We are all a part of God's big family, and even if we can't help the whole world, we can help one person at a time. The water is poured and slowly touches every single speck in the jar, whether it is a big rock or a grain of sand. The water starts as one little drop, but when the drops work together, they are forceful, like a waterfall, the ocean waves, or a rushing river, that runs throughout the world.

All: We thank you, Lord, for inviting us into your family, and we ask that you help us in our desire to make a difference in the world you have created. Amen

Sing: *Go Make a Difference/Steve Agrisano (on YouTube)*

Group Action

Participate in the H2O Project which can be found on-line, <https://www.theh2oproject.org>. Decide as a group how you will conduct, how many days you will participate, and where you will send the money you've saved by having water be your only drink. Remember, each of us will respond in our own way. It is your own personal decision, and no pressure should be applied to one another. There are many ways to get involved in care for God's creation.

At Home, Invitation to Act

Post the words you wrote in the beginning of the session in a prominent place in your room or home as a reminder of the importance of water. Decorate if you wish.

Session Eight: Brother Fire



Leaders Notes

The discovery of fire changed history. Humans were able to live in colder areas now that they could keep warm. They could eat meat now that they cooked, and do activities in the evening since light could brighten the darkness. But in order to have fire, one needs fuel to burn whether that fire is a candle, cooking stove, heating furnace, or an industrial power plant. Think about the different fuels that fire is consuming. Where do these

fuels come from? Coal, oil, gasoline, electricity are all fuels we find necessary to keep us warm, cook our food, and protect us from the darkness. The question we must ask is, what can we do to use fuel more responsibly?

There is a very interesting project undertaken by the Heifer organization with a different form of fuel. From *The World* (Heifer, Spring 2015): "In Uganda, less than 5% of the rural population has access to electricity. Most households in the country--at least 80%--burn firewood for energy, leading to deforestation and health problems. Collecting and foraging for firewood takes an enormous amount of time and energy."

In many areas it is also unsafe for the women and children to whom this task is relegated. Smoke inhalation contributes to millions of deaths every year. Five hundred farmers in villages throughout the world are using a Heifer sponsored "biogas digester" that leaves nothing to waste. Through the use of simple technology, animal manure is transformed into fuel, fertilizer and electricity. The program addresses deforestation in these areas (a major contributor to global warming) and reduces air pollution.

How would switching to a biogas digester change things for these villages? (safety, healthy air, more time for families, ability to be employed rather than spending time foraging, etc.)

Opening Prayer

Read Exodus 3: 1-6

Then Read Acts 2: 1-4

After a moment of quiet reflection, pray, "Lord, help us to know your will for us. Help us to have the courage to follow you and be guided. Help us trust the words, 'Here I am,' and believe that You are always with us." Amen

Discussion Talking Points:

- Fire has the capacity to comfort and to consume. It is a symbol of the movement toward union, of passion, the pathos of love.
- When we think of fire biblically, we can explore Moses and the burning bush story in the Old Testament, and the Pentecost Story in the New Testament. Both are vivid images of our great God intervening to show us His power, strength, glory, and intimacy.
- Both stories show God's empowerment to go forth in His name.

There is a wonderful story of fire which illustrates the passionate love Francis and Clare shared for the Lord. It is one of the legends in *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*, pg. 53-56. (either read the story, or share in your own words) Clare wants to eat with Francis as she had not seen him in a long time. Francis, reluctantly and only at the urging of the brothers, invites Clare and some of her sisters to join him and the brothers for a modest meal at the Portiuncula. The legend goes that during their prayer, the love of God that fills them is so great and strong, that the entire wooded area burst into flames and fire was seen for miles. The residents of Assisi rushed to put out the fire, but there was none there, so there was nothing to extinguish. They realized what they saw was not an earthly fire, but the flame of love for God and for the deep friendship between Francis and Clare.

Small Group Sharing

- What strikes you in these stories of fire?
- Do you have an experience of being “on fire” for something, or someone, or God? Do you remember your excitement?
- Did you want to tell everyone about it or keep it to yourself so it wouldn’t be spoiled by people who don’t understand? Did others see the passion in you?

Group Action

Conduct or participate in a Taize prayer service or spend time in Adoration using candles or only a few lights. Invite your parish to attend with you, and speak to them about what you’ve learned.

If allowed, maybe a fun bonfire or campfire can end the evening. Cook hotdogs or s’mores and keep discussing how to share our enthusiasm for a cause in our community. How can we spur others to join us in peaceful ways of seeking change?

Closing Prayer

On slips of paper, write one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with a one sentence definition of the gift as a review). Place the slips in a jar. (There can be duplicates, as there need to be enough for each participant to pick one.) Next to the jar is a candle.

Give each person an unlit votive candle.

Listen to (and/or sing) *Send Us Your Spirit*, by David Haas, as each person goes to the table, lights one of the candles, then chooses a slip of paper from the jar.

When everyone has lit their candle and returned to their place with the slip of paper (see below), spend a few moments of quiet reflection.

Leader: “Lord, St. Francis asked in his prayer before the crucifix, to ‘enlighten the darkness of my heart.’ We ask you now to bless us with the ability to know and use the many gifts you have given us.”

Each person:

“Lord, thank you for the gift of _____.” (they will name the gift on the slip they chose)
(add as an option) “I will try to use this gift when _____.”

All pray the “Prayer Before the Crucifix” together (See pg. 4, session one)

At Home, Invitation to Act

See if your family would be willing to invite an energy specialist to inspect your house for ways you can save electricity. Perhaps your group can ask families to participate in a “contest”, and compare before and after utility bills to see who is improving.

If possible, offer to prepare the Holy Spirit prayer at home, repeating it for the family, using a candle, fireplace or outdoor fire pit. Or write each gift of the Spirit on a slip of paper and place in a jar. Pull one out each day. Focus on that gift then share at the family dinner table how you saw the Spirit in action during the day.

Slips for the Closing Prayer: (taken and adapted from *Catholic Teen*, <https://catholic2themax.wordpress.com>)

1. Wisdom

Wisdom is closely linked to faith. As Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., notes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, “Where faith is a simple knowledge of the articles of Christian belief, wisdom goes on to a certain divine penetration of the truths themselves.” Wisdom is the ability to correctly judge things of a supernatural nature, such as the existence of God.

2. Understanding

Understanding is very often confused with Wisdom and Knowledge. After all, their meanings in our language are often very similar. Understanding is the ability to comprehend the meaning of the teachings of the Church. Without Understanding, you could have memorized a term and its appropriate definition, but you would never realize what it actually means.

3. Counsel

While Wisdom was the perfection of faith, Counsel is the perfection of prudence. Prudence can be practiced by anyone, but counsel can only be gained as a free gift from God. Like the cardinal virtue of prudence, counsel helps us to judge what to do in any given situation. What separates it from prudence; however, is that counsel can make the decision quickly and without a second thought. Think of it as your Holy Instincts.

4. Fortitude

Probably the most well-known, Fortitude is the courage to stand up for what is right. It’s not rash, but always reasonable. Fortitude would help you to stand up for your Faith in conversation, or as the martyrs did, even die for it.

5. Knowledge

Knowledge is the result of the Holy Spirit working through our human intellect to help us make sense of the world in light of our Christian faith. Like the other gifts, it builds on human nature

and illuminates what we see, hear and learn. Knowledge helps us to judge things in perspective to the ultimate goal of someday reaching heaven.

6. Piety

Piety is the perfection of justice towards God. CatholicCulture.org says that piety “produces an instinctive filial affection for God and devotion toward those who are specially consecrated to God”. Piety would help you to be perfectly contrite of your sins (being sorry because you offended God, not because you are afraid of eternal punishment) and to love others because you can see God in them.

7. Fear of the Lord

Fear of the Lord does not mean being scared of God. Rather, it is the perfection of hope. It is a profound respect for and awe of God, which produces a strong desire not to offend him. Not like a slave fearing his overlord's punishment, but a child wishing not to offend his parents. It is also a firm belief in his mercy and confidence in His power. Again, fear of the Lord is not dread, but a filial respect.

Session Nine: Sister Mother Earth

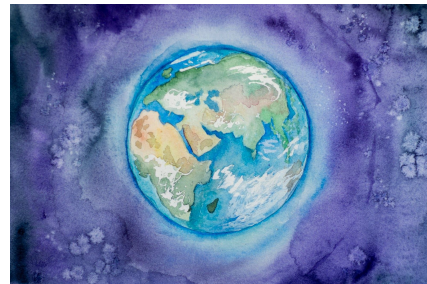
(Two meeting times are allotted for this topic)

Part A--Franciscans and Care for all Creation

Opening Prayer

Sing: *Holy Ground*, by Christopher Beatty (*John Michael Talbot has a beautiful rendition on YouTube*)

Read Psalm 24:1-2



Reader: Listen now to this passage from a Lenten prayer by the Passionist Earth and Spirit Center: “Lord, the earth is our home. It is holy ground. From the beginning, You declared it good. Now there is growing awareness that our planet is being damaged and it’s resources not fairly shared. Help us to care more deeply for creation by living more simply, as St. Francis did, and by learning how to follow in his footsteps and those of your son Jesus by loving and respecting all that You have created.” Amen

Discussion Talking Points

- Franciscans believe that God created a place that could provide a good life to humans, despite violence, aggression, addictions, and evil that exists in the world.
- All animals, mountains, streams, oceans, and trees are created for our good, as are minerals, oil, precious metals, gems, and natural gas.
- All created things, animate and inanimate, are from God and are entwined together. Think about the link between some of these creations.
- God remains committed to us, his human creatures, no matter how foolish we become. The Bible is filled with stories of God’s compassion, forgiveness, loyalty, and unconditional love. He will not let go of his precious people.

Group Action

If you are allowed, discuss a way to liven up your meeting place with a nature display. Maybe a collage with pictures you all bring in. Or hand out cloth squares that each person will decorate for a quilt. Invite an artist or a quilter from your parish to help you with this project.

Closing Prayer

Introduce the Laudato Si’ Chaplet Use regular rosary), which was created to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis’ Encyclical, *Laudato Si’, On Care For Our Common Home*. See (<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/eco-spirituality/>) for ways to enhance this chaplet. They include background information regarding spiritual attitudes that we are praying for through the chaplet; suggested song; and variations on the words depending on your prayer intent (praise, thanksgiving, or repentance). Below is the praise version.

Decade One: Praise to You, my Lord, through Sister Air (x10) Chorus from song of your choice.

Decade Two: Praise to You, my Lord, through Sister Water (x10) Chorus

Decade Three: Praise to You, my Lord, through Brother Fire (x10) Chorus

Decade Four: Praise to You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth (x10) Chorus

Decade Five: Praise to You, my Lord, through (person names something from nature they appreciate, x 10) Chorus

At Home, Invitation to Act

Ask your family to spend time outside in nature this week. Take time to enjoy our connection to the people, plants and animals in our neighborhood, park or local hiking spot. Use your talent in social media to share pictures and inspirational quotes to inspire others to enjoy nature.

Part B: How Can Franciscans Approach Care for our Earth?



Watch together, *The Story of Stuff* (20 minute YouTube video). This is a film about the way we make, use, and throw away so much stuff in our lives. It is a fast-paced fact-filled look at the underside of our production and consumption patterns, and its impact on the planet, our communities, and our health. It exposes the connections between a huge number of environmental and social issues, calling us together to create a more sustainable world. This documentary was made in 2007.

Another startling fact to consider, found in *Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair with Trash*, by Edward Humes: “The typical American will produce 102 tons of trash in a lifetime. For the one grave we need for the body we leave behind, we’ll need 1100 more for all the trash we created in our short visit here.”

Small Group Sharing

- One of the things that strikes us about Francis and his followers was their simplicity. KISS: Keep it simple. Simple! (Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap, *What it Takes to be an OFS Franciscan*.) In what ways has your family life become complicated, and in what specific ways can you simplify?
- The documentary we watched was made in 2007. What issues are still present, are new, or have been dealt with well since that time?
- What is the difference between needs and wants? Make a list together.
- What about high tech consumerism--the newest I-phone, I-pad, electronic gadget?
- What are some ways to help our Earth and her people and creatures that you and/or your family might have adopted. For instance, recycling, repairing clothing or furniture rather than buying it new, repurposing items for gifts, etc. Share with the large group.

Group Action

Invite your families to a special Care for Creation evening. Do you know that how you eat can affect the planet? Watch the documentary *Food, Inc.*, discuss in small family groups how you can prevent food waste, shop locally, or plant a garden. Decide on discussion questions ahead of time. Serve a home cooked (by all of you!) vegetarian soup supper with water to drink. Pray for the farm workers before you eat.

Closing Prayer

Leader: "When Jesus teaches us in our Lord's Prayer to ask our heavenly father to give us "Our Daily Bread", he isn't just talking about food. We are asking God to give us whatever we need to sustain us. We are also acknowledging that all that sustains us in this life is a gift from God. Let us pray now for all these gifts.

Our response is, "The Lord is King, let the earth rejoice."

All: "The Lord is King, let the earth rejoice."

For abundant food to eat and fresh water to drink, that we continue to be nourished. (response)

For good, true friends, that we aren't alone in our faith journey. (response)

For our family, that we grow to love and trust one another. (response)

For the beauty of nature, that we experience God's presence in His creations. (response)

For what else shall we pray? (pause, then response)

Our Father...Amen

Song: "Tend the Ground," by Curtis Stephen

At Home, Invitation to Act

Invite your family or some friends on a walk, or go by yourself. Get out into nature and record in your journal what you hear, smell, see, and touch. Describe in as much detail as you can, either in words or pictures.

Talk to your family about actions you can take to reflect care for creation.

Teach them the Laudato Si' chaplet and pray together.

Session Ten: Those Who Give Pardon

Opening Prayer

Leader: I invite you to be present in this time and place and take a rest in God's heart.

Listen to Matthew West's *Forgiveness*. (Copies of lyrics would be helpful)



Discussion Talking Points

- Forgiveness is powerful. When one is truly forgiven, it can change the forgiven person's life and the life of the one who has done the forgiving.
- There are many modern day stories of forgiveness, ie: Immaculée Ilibagiza is a Rwandan Roman Catholic and Tutsi author of *Left to Tell*; *Amish Grace* is a DVD retelling of a time when a gunman killed five children and injured five others in a Nickel Mine. Share one of these stories.

Small Group Sharing

Read the lyrics out loud to Matthew West's *Forgiveness*. Discuss the lines as you go along.

- Forgiveness is hard. You may be really hurt and angry. What can you do to help gain the heart and courage you need?
- Is there someone who you need to ask forgiveness from? That is difficult too.
- Would anyone like to share a story of a time they forgave or were forgiven? What was the result?
- Discuss the phrase "Someone else's behavior is never an excuse for your own." What does this say about responsibility for our own actions.
- Discuss the phrase "When we are faced with a person who is difficult to love, it should bring out the best in us, not the worst." It's easy to love loveable people...but loving our "enemy?" And who is your "enemy" right now?
- Discuss the phrase "Treat others the way you want to be treated." We all make mistakes, so think about being on the side of needing to be forgiven. What would you want?

Group Action

Attend reconciliation together at a parish service or a special time allotted for confession. Go out for ice cream afterwards to celebrate this beautiful sacrament.

Or do the Stations of the Cross together (Doesn't have to be Lent!) The Stations have their root in our Franciscan heritage.

Closing Prayer

Read Luke 6: 27-36

Time permitting, have each person find a place outside where a stick of incense can be safely burned. Place the stick of incense in the ground, sit next to it and light. We will each pray for someone or a group of someones who need forgiveness or whom we are asking forgiveness

from. As the incense burns and the scent and smoke mingles, your prayers move from one person to another. We will continue until the incense burns out.

At Home, Invitation to Act

You can find on-line many good Examination of Conscience resources geared to your age group. Download one you like and spend time in reflection. Be honest with yourself regarding faults and failures, but also pray for trust that God will forgive you if you are truly sorry. The Sacrament of Reconciliation gives you the grace you need to fight temptation.



Session Eleven: Those Who Bear Infirmary and Tribulation

(This is primarily a prayer that is incorporated into the whole session.)

Leader Notes

Francis enfleshed the Gospel. He lived out Jesus' ministry to the poor, the disenfranchised, the marginalized, and the sick. (recall a few of the stories as examples) There is an inherent dignity of all life, given to us because we are each created in the image and likeness of God. And yet, we deal with the realities of life which includes sickness, debilitating illnesses, diseases, and developmental disorders. We also know that many of our society live in conditions that breed disease because of socio-economic inequalities.

Some excerpts from *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*:

"The haves of the first world* have a disproportionate control over the resources of the earth, while those who work the land, the poor of the world, have little access to decision making power and basic necessities, including land itself."

"It is more and more urgent that citizens of the first world* recognize the critical role that they must play in the just distribution of creation's blessings...We are called to relinquish our grasp on our excesses, so that others may have the basic necessities of life."

(*We are all one world--there is no first, second, or third world, which is an important distinction that has been made since the printing of this book.)

The authors posit that race, economic status are also leading factors in environmental problems facing us today, and that there is a link between racism, injustice and environmental destruction, with the correlation to the lack of seeing the "divine seed" (OFS Rule: Article 19) in all peoples and cultures of our world. ⁷

Prepare ahead of time, cards which say:

This pair of shoes belongs to a person who(choose **one** of the following statements for each pair)_____ (lives in poverty, has no education, lives in fear of an abusive parent, had a child when she/he was 14 years old, is trying to escape a war-torn area, walks home through a gang neighborhood, cannot function on his own because he has a mental disability, is unable to get around without a wheelchair, is homeless, is addicted to drugs, is an alcoholic, has to walk several miles a day just for clean water, is only given one bowl of rice each day, etc.) There should be enough cards for each pair of shoes.

Introduce the topic using the notes above, then enter into the prayerful activity below.

⁷Foolishness of God

Opening Prayer, adapted from Catholic Relief Services Prayer called *In Another's Shoes*. (<https://www.crs.org/>) Full prayer includes Stories from the Field and can be downloaded if you wish to include reading them as part of the service.

Have youth sit in a circle. Ask them to take their shoes off and place them in the center, silently. Leader will quietly place a card on each pair of shoes which represents a disadvantage of another person. Then have each person choose a pair of shoes (not their own) and place them on the floor in front of them.

Spend time (10-15 minutes) in reflection using the following questions. Students might be encouraged to get comfortable, walk around, sit in another part of the room. Provide pencil and paper for those who wish to journal.

- What kinds of problems might the person whose card/shoes I picked have to deal with?
- What does it mean to walk in another person's shoes? Would I understand their life better if I "walk in their shoes?"
- How can I be in solidarity with my person?
- What does God want my relationship to look like with my brothers and sisters around the world?

Gather back together. Spend time sharing the experience.

Leader: As we continue to meditate on walking in another's shoes, let us ask God to guide us on our solidarity journey. Our response is "Lord, make me holy."

Leader: God, because of your love for us you sent your son, Jesus, into the world to show us the ultimate example of solidarity. Help us receive fully that love so we may share it with others.
(R) Lord, make me holy.

Leader: Jesus, by your very life, death and resurrection, you showed us the way of solidarity. Help us to live for the common good.
(R) Lord, make me holy.

Leader: Holy Spirit, through our baptism you dwell within us. Help us to live out our baptismal call to love and care for others.
(R) Lord, make me holy.

Leader: Lord, help us to understand through our relationship with you, we are connected with all people.
(R) Lord, make me holy.

Leader: If one part suffers, all parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all parts share its joy.
(1 Corinthians 12:26)
(R) Lord, make me holy.

Leader: During the Angelus on November 11, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI reflected on the life of St. Martin of Tours:

“While many miracles are attributed to him, St. Martin is known most of all for an act of fraternal charity. While still a young soldier, he met a poor man on the street numb and trembling from the cold. He then took his own cloak and cutting it in two with his sword, gave half to that man. Jesus appeared to him that night in a dream smiling, dressed in the same cloak.

Dear brothers and sisters, St. Martin’s charitable gesture flows from the same logic that drove Jesus to multiply the loaves for the hungry crowd, but most of all to leave himself to humanity as food in the Eucharist, supreme Sign of God’s love. It is the logic of sharing which he used to authentically explain love of neighbor. May St. Martin help us to understand that only by means of a common commitment to sharing is it possible to respond to the great challenge of our times: to build a world of peace and justice where each person can live with dignity. This can be achieved if a world model of authentic solidarity prevails which assures all inhabitants of the planet food, water, necessary medical treatment, and also work and energy resources as well as cultural benefits, scientific and technological knowledge.

Let us turn now to the Virgin Mary so that all Christians may be like St. Martin, generous witnesses of the Gospel of love and tireless builders of jointly responsible sharing.”

Leader: Together let us pray the “Hail Mary” three times.

At Home, Invitation to Act

Go through your personal possessions. Think about which are items you need or those you simply want. Of course, we do need some enjoyment/entertainment in life; we do need beauty; we do need basic necessities. But if you’re honest with yourself, you may discover many possessions that you haven’t used in a long time, some that you have duplicates of, and some that you’ve “outgrown.” Is there anything of value (Not just the old ratty, broken things!) that you are willing to give away? If you’re not sure, or this is too difficult, put them in a box and think about it for a while. Mark your calendar for the time you will go through the box again.

Group Action

Conduct a yard sale with the items you have all decided to give away. Proceeds from the sale can go to a local food bank or other charity. Or, collect only items that a homeless teen might need--and take to a local shelter that ministers to homeless teens.

Plan ahead to use *Twelve Weeks of Franciscan Peace*, by Carolyn Townes, OFS National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation commission chair. This begins the first week in October and ends just after Christmas--depending on how the weeks flow. Each week includes readings, reflections, and challenges that are all related to peace and justice in our world. Contact the current Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation commission chair via <https://secularfranciscansusa.org/> for a copy of the most current document.



Session Twelve: Those Who Endure in Peace

Opening Prayer

Invite members to share difficult things they've dealt with in the past few weeks.

All respond with:

Lord, grant us peace.

For instance, "This week I had a big biology test and I don't know if I passed it;" "My Mom and I had a big fight;" "I broke up with my boyfriend;" "I lost a sweater at school that I had borrowed from my sister;" etc.

Listen to David Haas "Peace Prayer" (Chris Brunelle version on YouTube is good)

Discussion Talking Points

- Francis suffered many illnesses toward the end of his life, including damaged and painful eyesight. He had been bleeding continually from the stigmata that he received, and was quite ill when he wrote this verse.
- Francis instructed his brothers to sing it to the Mayor and the Bishop of Assisi who were embroiled in an angry dispute. Neither was talking to the other. This was his way of encouraging them to peaceful dialogue and resolution of their issues.
- Peace is not just the absence of war. What does this mean? Where might you experience a lack of peace in your home, neighborhood, school or society in general?
- Would it be harder to maintain an attitude of peace if you are also enduring hardship?
- Peace begins within ourselves. In order to spread peace to others, we must be determined to have a peaceful attitude both inwardly and outwardly.

Small Group Activity

Give each group one of the stories of Francis encouraging a peaceful stance. From *Tales of St. Francis*, by Murray Bodo, OFM, pg. 26--St. Francis Meets a Leper; pg. 36--Of Bernard of Quitavalle; pg. 52--The Hungry Brother of Rivo Torto; pg. 77--St. Francis and the Sultan; pg. 128--Of Perfect Joy. What does your story tell us about peace?

Which words below might go with which story, and how do they lead us to peace?

1. Dialogue is different than debate.
2. Don't judge. Listen, try to understand where others are coming from and what they need.
3. Our purpose in life is to help ourselves and others reach salvation.
4. Surround yourselves with those who share your faith.
5. Moving out of our own selfishness, helps us to focus on the needs of others.

Group Action

Where are we called to dialogue, and how? What are some of the issues that force people to “endure in peace?” Decide on an action that will give peace to someone who is struggling. Some ideas (may take some research): Meet on a Saturday to make bag lunches, then distribute; Gather to write letters to your local government about an issue of concern; Volunteer to work a day at Habitat for Humanity; Visit an assisted living facility to share music, reading, or do humorous skits.

Closing Prayer

Read the “Peace Prayer of St. Francis.” Give students a copy to take home.

At Home, Invitation to Act

Is there something you’ve wanted to talk to your parents about, but you’ve been afraid? Pray for courage, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the right words, and ask for a time to sit with them. Bring up the subject and practice “peaceful dialogue.” Here are some suggestions below, found on <http://kidshealth.org/en/teens/tal-to-parents.html>. There are many other ideas on this website about communication.

- Be clear and direct. Be as clear as you can about what you think, feel, and want. Give details that can help parents understand your situation. They can listen better or be more helpful if they understand what you mean and what’s really going on.
- Be honest. If you’re always honest, a parent will be likely to believe what you say. If you sometimes hide the truth or add too much drama, parents will have a harder time believing what you tell them. If you lie, they’ll find it hard to trust you.
- Try to understand their point of view. If you have a disagreement, can you see your parents’ side? If you can, say so. Telling parents you understand their views and feelings helps them be willing to see yours, too.
- Try not to argue or whine. Using a tone that’s friendly and respectful makes it more likely parents will listen and take what you say seriously. It also makes it more likely that they’ll talk to you in the same way. Of course, this is hard for any of us (adults included) when we’re feeling heated about something. If you think your emotions might get the better of you, do something to blow off steam before talking: Go for a run. Cry. Hit your pillow. Do whatever it takes to sound calm when you need to.

Session Thirteen: Sister Bodily Death

Leader Notes

This might be a difficult topic for young people to discuss, depending on their maturity, the depth and understanding of faith, and their experiences. It's especially important to maintain a respectful atmosphere, open to the various attitudes, and encourage sensitivity.



Opening Prayer

Read a version of the transitus of St. Francis (the time of passage from death to life). Tales of St. Francis, pg. 158. On October 3, which would have been the night of St. Francis' Transitus, many Franciscans hold a special commemoration. Throughout the celebration the story is retold, prayers are recited, and often the transitus is acted out.

Read together Psalm 142, the psalm St. Francis sang at his death.

Discussion Talking Points

- Begin the session with an honest sharing of stories and feelings. Have they experienced the death of someone close? How have they dealt with the strong feelings/emotions attached? Were they involved in the actual dying of that person, with visits, prayers, by the bedside etc?
- What did St. Francis think about death? What does the transitus story tell us about how Francis faced this moment in his life?
- (from *St. Francis and the Foolishness of God*)

"Francis sought oneness with Sister Earth; on his deathbed he asked to be stripped naked and placed on the ground. He died in the embrace of Mother-Sister Earth, fully accepting his own finite identity as dust, knowing his absolute limitations. Finally, Francis embraced the ultimate poverty, the deepest relinquishment of life, the most radical detachment from self--that which is demanded by Sister Death." ⁸

Small Group Discussion

- Francis was challenged once by his brothers. They admonished him for not taking care of his body. His fasting and penance and the lifestyle he had undertaken were extreme, and took a great toll on his physical body.
- Why is it important to maintain good health and to treat our bodies with respect?
- Discuss the ideas that we are "temples of the Holy Spirit," and "the place of His birth." What do those comments mean about healthy living, both spiritually and physically?
- What are ways we can ensure we have healthy bodies? (exercise; good eating habits; avoidance of drugs, alcohol, and sexual activity; a balance of work and play; healthy relationships; etc.)

⁸ Ibid, pg.

- When you die, how would you like to be remembered? What would someone say about you? What words on a tombstone would describe you?

Group Action

Ask your city if there's a need for help in the local cemetery. Maybe you can clean up the grounds, place or remove flags on Memorial Day, or donate flowers.

If it is near Oct.3, offer to conduct a Transitus service for your parish. A local Secular Franciscan Fraternity can help you.

Visit a cemetery and prayerfully wander. Each of you can "adopt" a person who has died and pray for that person and their family.

Visit an elderly person and ask them to share a story with you from their history. Share the stories when you reconvene with the group.

Closing Prayer

Pray the Peace Prayer of St. Francis or listen to or sing one of the versions in song.

Take Home Activity

Talk to your parents about today's topic regarding death. Share what you learned, and ask them questions. Perhaps you can place pictures of those who have died in a special prayer space. Light a candle and pray for their souls.

Session Fourteen: Liturgy of Creation

Composed by Edward Shirley, OFS
Adapted for Bl. John XXIII OFS Fraternity,
October, 2011 by Jean D'Onofrio, OFS

Opening from the Ritual

Gathering Song: Canticle of the Sun

R. Most high, almighty, good Lord!
All praise, glory, honor and exaltation are yours!
To you alone do they belong,
And no mere mortal dares pronounce your Name.

L. Praise to you, O Lord our God, for all your creatures:
First, for our dear Brother Sun, who gives us the day and illumines us with his light;
Fair is he, in splendor radiant, bearing your very likeness, O Lord.

R. For our Sister Moon,

L. and for the bright shining stars,

All: We praise you, O Lord.

(BRING UP A PLANT)

R. For our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and feeds us,

L. producing fair fruits, may colored flowers and herbs.

All: We praise you O, Lord.

Minister: Spirit of God, Spirit of our Mother Earth, you are the womb from which we are born, the breast which nourishes us. To you, one day, we shall return. Make us truly grateful for the gifts you have given us, and help us to see ourselves as cells of your body. Let us truly know that when one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers, and when one member is built up, the whole body is built up.

All: Amen

R. For our Brother Wind, for fair and stormy seasons,

L. And all heaven's varied moods,
By which you nourish all that you have made.

All: We praise you O, Lord.

Minister: I invite you to take these next few moments to breathe in God's love, and breathe out the tension of the day. You might want to use the ancient mantra as you silently pray: Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. (pause a few moments while all breathe and pray)

Minister: Spirit of God, you are the Divine wind which blew across the waters of Creation, the Breath of God which made Adam a living being. Let every breath we take be a deepening of our union with you, and let us hear the Word of God in every breeze.

All: Amen

(BRING UP CANDLE)

R. For our Brother Fire, who brightens up our darkest nights;

L. Beautiful is he and eager, invincible and keen.

All: We praise you O, Lord.

Minister: Spirit of God, you are the primeval fire of Creation, the light of wisdom to our minds and the fire of love in our hearts. As you descended like tongues of fire at the first Pentecost, so burn in us, that we can be vehicles for your light and warmth in a world all too often turned dark and cold.

All: Amen

(BRING UP GLASS BOWL OF WATER)

R. For our Sister Water

L. so useful, lowly, precious and pure.

All: We praise you O, Lord.

Minister: Spirit of God, you are the primeval waters of Creation, the ancient sea from which all life springs. You are the lifeblood flowing through our veins. You cleanse, refresh and give life. Baptize us, we pray, in your Presence that the Fountain of Divine Life may well up as living springs within us and flow out into the parched desert of human suffering. Like a mountain waterfill, let justice for all of God's creatures roll down from the heavens.

All: Amen

Reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans (8:18-22)

Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, with the hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is

groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.”

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection

Responsorial Psalm: Liturgy of the Hours. Week 1, Sunday. Canticle of Daniel (pg. 708-709 in One Volume Christian Prayer) We will pray this antiphonally, with the last verse together.

Intercessions

Our Father

THE SAINT FRANCIS PLEDGE

Together: I Pledge to:

- PRAY and reflect on the duty to care for God’s Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- LEARN about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
- ASSESS how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations-contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste,etc.
- ACT to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
- ADVOCATE for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.

Minister: O divine and loving mystery, you are the source of all. You have spoken to us in your Word made flesh, and your presence is revealed in all of creation. The presence of Christ in each creature shines forth like a radiant beacon, and transforms us, we pray, into a more complete reflection of your glory, in whose image we are created. We ask this in the name of the triune God.

Part 2: Other Franciscan Topics



St. Elizabeth of Hungary **Patroness of the Secular Franciscan Order** **Feast Day is Nov. 17**

Share the Story of St. Elizabeth of Hungary

Francis and his followers went about preaching the gospel mostly by their actions. Many people watched and were drawn to their way of life. One such person was St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a medieval woman who became a follower of Francis while a queen. She was born into a royal family, married young, was a mother and widowed when she observed the self giving life of Francis and his brothers. Her social conscience and the way she loved God makes her a woman for our time, especially for Franciscans.

Elizabeth was a lover of justice, and of the poor. While her husband lived, he fully supported her efforts to ease the pain of others. But when he died, her husband's family wanted her to stop giving all her dresses away, sharing their wealth, and feeding the poor and destitute. She refused to eat meat at her husband's banquet table if she knew it was obtained through unjust taxation or extortion. She eventually left, giving up all her wealth in order to follow in Francis' footsteps. She built a small hospital below the Wartburg Castle, with twenty-eight beds. Her personal touch was evident as she visited patients daily to attend to their needs and at the same time aided hundreds of poor people by distributing food and supplies. Elizabeth's story is one of courage, determination and fidelity to the gospel.

Because she served the poor and worked for justice, she is considered a patroness of the Secular Franciscan Order, whose members try to emulate that trait of generosity. In 2008 Secular Franciscans around the world celebrated the 8th centenary of her birth.

Discussion Talking Points

- What impresses you most about St. Elizabeth's story? Do you see personality traits you would like to emulate? Can she be a role model in your life the way Francis was in hers?
- What are some ways you would be able to serve the needy and/or work for justice in your community? Every community is different. Who would you consider the needy where you live?
- What would you be willing to give up to make a statement, the way Clare refused to eat meat because of the unfair way it was obtained?

Group Activity

Research a food industry or company practices. What did you learn? What action is your group prompted to make in order to share your concerns? Invite someone to your gathering to teach you how to write a letter to a politician or a company head.

Closing Prayer

O God, by whose gift Saint Elizabeth of Hungary
recognized and revered Christ in the poor,
grant, through her intercession,
that we may serve with unfailing charity
the needy and those afflicted.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(from *The Roman Missal*)

Take Home Activity

Share the story of St. Elizabeth with your family. Bake bread together and deliver it to an elderly person or family with small children, letting them know you appreciate how difficult such a chore would be in their situation, and offering them support and friendship.

St. Elizabeth is also the patron saint of widows and widowers. Do you know someone who has lost a spouse? Write them a card, and include the prayer to St. Elizabeth below intended for widows and widowers.

“O blessed **St.** Elizabeth of Hungary, you were faithful to your husband and as a couple were a beautiful example of fidelity and respect. We ask that you intercede for widows and widowers asking the Lord to bless them with peace, patience, courage, wisdom, hope and renewed faith. Plead with Him to bring their faithfully departed spouses into the light of His presence and grant them eternal peace and joy. Amen”

Greccio and the Incarnation (December/Advent session)

Before the session:

Invite youth to bring one piece from their nativity set from home, or a special religious decoration of some sort.

Find a nativity scene blessing to use during the gathering.



Opening Prayer:

Our Nativity crèches have their origin in Greccio, where Francis wanted to recreate the birth of our Lord using real ox and ass, sheep and people at the midnight Mass. He was so taken with the extravagant love of our gracious God to come to us not in his glory but as a dependent poor little baby amidst a smelly stable. It is our belief as Franciscans that God's love is what prompted God to send Jesus to earth to be with us.

Read a version of Francis and Greccio either from the Early Documents or from Bodo's book, *Tales of St. Francis*.

Let everyone share why they chose the piece or artifact they brought, then do a group crèche blessing.

Sing a Christmas Carol such as Silent Night.

Discussion Talking Points

- Do you and your family display a Nativity set in a prominent place during Advent?
- How do you feel about this public display of the Incarnation?
- What other Christmas decorations compare to the crèche? Your tree? Outdoor lights?
- Do you connect the meanings of other decorations to the message of the birth of our Lord?
- Sin is not what influenced God to send Jesus. Rather, whether we had sinned or not, Jesus would have come among us because God's love seeks to be with us

and was made visible in the humanity of Jesus Christ. Only secondarily, according to Franciscan spirituality, did this love rescue us from sin and unfaithfulness. God chose to come among us because God loves us.⁹

- We too have an opportunity to be the face of God. Where are you called to be an example of God's love to others?

Group Activity

Adopt a family as a group. Solicit help from your families to provide what a chosen family needs in order to have a safe winter and joyous Christmas. Or consider holding a "baby shower" where members can donate formula, diapers, newborn clothing, rice cereal, baby food and other items a local pro-life organization or battered women's shelter may need.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Amen.

- *Henri J.M. Nouwen*

Take Home Activity

As a family, discuss how you can focus on the true meaning of Christmas. Is there a service project you can work on together--for instance make cards to deliver to a rest home, Christmas carol at a children's hospital, or clean to make a neighbor's house sparkle for the holidays.

⁹ Bach, Lester, OFM. *The Franciscan Journey*.



Blessed Virgin Mary (October or May)

Our Mother Mary always prayed with a heart of compassion for others. Her Magnificat speaks of God's justice for those who are on the margins of society. Her words are bold and clear as she speaks of the lowly, the hungry, the humble and the poor as being exalted in God's Kingdom. As a very young and unmarried girl, being chosen to bear the Messiah might have caused Our Lady to focus on herself and the enormity of her role. And yet, she gave herself as the handmaid of the Lord, trusting that He would take care of her.

Opening Prayer

Read Luke 1:46-55 (the Magnificat)

Discussion Talking Points

- What is Mary's song about? How can you relate to it? Can you relate to Mary?
- How have you been asked to say "yes" to something that frightens you? What do you do to be more trusting that God will help you through anything?

Listen to the following story. (from Tales of St. Francis, Bodo)

There was a time at the very beginning when Francis and his brothers lived at a place near Assisi called Rivo Torto. At Rivo Torto they fasted and did penance with all the enthusiasm and sometime imprudence of novices as the story shows:

One night, as they all lay sleeping soundly, a loud cry broke into their dreams: "I am dying! I am dying! Help me!" And the brothers, startled for their sleep, saw St. Francis already at the side of the terrified brother. "What is it, brother? Tell me." And though he was now embarrassed, the brother overcame shame and said: "Forgive me, Father Francis, but I am dying of hunger." Then St. Francis immediately ordered the brothers to light a torch and go out and gather some herbs and vegetables and whatever else they

could find for all of them to have a good, nourishing meal. He said this so that the poor brother would not have to be humiliated by eating alone. And so all the brothers set themselves eagerly to the task of preparing a meal and then they all sat down with the hungry brother and ate a midnight supper.

- Empathy is the ability to imagine yourself in another's place and understand their feelings, desires, ideas and actions. Empathy doesn't mean giving advice or talking about yourself. It's putting yourself in the shoes of another to offer comfort and support. Empathy is being present to someone else.
- How does this story illustrate Francis' empathy to his brother?
- Can you think of times Mary was empathetic to others? (ie: wedding feast of Cana; visiting her cousin Elizabeth during her pregnancy)
- Have you thought about what it means to "give birth to Christ" in your life? In what ways do you need to be present to others?

Group Activity

Invite someone to help your group make blankets. Simple fleece, tied blankets can be fun to make in a short amount of time. Blankets can be donated to a local shelter or a foster care organization.

Closing Prayer

Say a rosary together, then sing one of the Mary songs.

Who Was St. Clare?

(A session to precede the Transitus of St. Clare on August 10)

Share the Story of St. Clare

Clare was a beautiful Italian noblewoman born about 12-13 years after Francis who became the foundress of an Order of Sisters now called "Poor Clares." As a young woman, when she heard Francis preach, her heart burned with a great desire to imitate Francis and to live a poor humble life for Jesus. One evening, at age 18 years old, she ran away from home and in the little chapel outside Assisi, she gave herself to God. Francis cut off her hair and gave her a brown habit to wear, tied with a plain cord around her waist. Once her hair was cut, her allegiance was to God, and her family was not allowed to insist she return home.



Soon her sister Agnes and eventually her mother joined her, as well as other young women who wanted to be brides of Christ and live dependent upon God without becoming entangled in any money. Clare and her sisters wore no shoes, ate no meat, lived in a poor house, and kept silent most of the time. Yet they were happy, because Our Lord was close to them all the time.

Once, He saved them from a great danger in answer to St. Clare's prayer. An army of rough soldiers (the Saracens) came to attack Assisi. Although very sick, Clare had herself carried to the wall with the Blessed Sacrament in hand and prayed to the Lord for protection for the Sisters and Assisi. A voice seemed to answer: "I will keep them always in My care." A sudden fright struck the attackers and they quickly fled.

Members of Clare's family also came to live at San Damiano, and other Poor Clare convents sprang up in Europe. Not the least important part of Clare's work was the aid and encouragement she gave to Francis. It was to her he turned when in doubt, and it was she who urged him to continue his mission as an itinerant preacher out in the world with people rather than becoming cloistered away from the world. When in an attack of blindness and illness, Francis came for the last time to visit San Damiano, and Clare erected a little wattle hut for him in an olive grove close to San Damiano. It was here that he composed the *Canticle of the Sun*. After his death, the procession which accompanied his body from the Porziuncula to the town stopped on the way at San Damiano in order that Clare and her daughters might pay their final respects and venerate the pierced hands and feet of him who had formed them to the love of Christ crucified. (compiled from Catholic Online and Catholic Encyclopedia website).

Chairra, Clare's name in Italian, means light. She clung to the privilege of poverty radical dependence on God for all their needs, till her dying breath. She was granted that privilege by the Pope just before she died after years of fighting and pleading for it. She was in love with God, and truly touched by Francis' example of living the Gospel.

She was contemplative, a lover of humanity, devoted to Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament, faithful to her ideals as God had made these known to her, and a true servant leader to her sisters in community.

Discussion points:

- What struck you in hearing Clare's story?
- What personality traits did you hear in Clare's story? Do you have any of those traits too? Which traits would you like to develop?
- Clare was influenced by her friend Francis. Who in your life inspires you to be a better person?

Group Activity

Plan to attend Mass or Adoration together. Spend time asking the Lord what His will for you is?

The transitus is celebrated on August 10, the eve of her feast day, to commemorate her death and entry into eternal life. This service celebrates Clare's life by interweaving readings and songs with the reverencing of symbols of Clare's religious life which are brought forward to the altar. Plan a transitus celebration for a younger group or your parish in order to share the story of St. Clare. Because Clare was known for sharing bread with the poor, perhaps baking little loaves of bread for guests to take home would be a nice gesture.

Closing Prayer

O Blessed **Saint Clare**, your life shines like a beacon and cast its light down the ages of the Church to guide the way of Christ. Look with compassion on the poor and humble who call on you for help. As you bow before your Eucharistic Lord in Heaven, speak to Him of my afflicted body and my broken spirit. (www.vaticansite.com)

Take Home Activity

Get into the habit of spending time each day to pray, especially asking God to reveal His will for you. Start with 5 minutes and try to add a few more minutes as you develop the habit. Talk to your parents about your plan so they can help you find an uninterrupted, private time of day.

Appendix A

MISSION STATEMENT

of the Franciscan Youth and Young Adult (FY/YA) Commission of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) of the United States of America

Inspired by the life of St. Francis of Assisi and guided by our OFS Rule (Art. 24) and General Constitutions (Art. 96 & 97), our mission is to bring the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the youth and young adults of the United States of America. We are called to share this Franciscan way of life through prayer, formation, and social justice action with all youth whom we encounter.

We envision journeying with youth and young adults as they discern their purpose in life and develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. After experiencing Franciscan fraternal life, these young people may desire to form a FY/YA community, and the OFS at all levels commits to support them.

GOALS

The FY/YA Commission will:



Provide the necessary training and resources to aid OFS fraternities in their outreach to youth and young adults and in the formation of FY/YA groups, being sensitive to differences in culture, settings, and environments.



Provide networking opportunities between the National Executive Council, the FY/YA Commission, the OFS regional and local fraternities, and the FY/YA groups within the United States and YOUFRA worldwide.

The FY/YA Commission will encourage and assist regional and local fraternities to:



Recognize the importance of our responsibility to youth and young adults and to understand the significant impact their presence has on the Franciscan family.



Introduce Catholic and other interested young people of the United States to St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi.



Share with young people the connection between the Gospel of Jesus and the Franciscan spirituality and way of life.

Approved by the OFS-USA National Executive Council September, 2019.

Permission to photocopy granted.

Appendix B

Franciscan Prayers

Prayer Before the Crucifix

Most high, glorious God,
Enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me, Lord
Correct faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,
Sense and knowledge
So that I may carry out your holy and true command.

Peace Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon
Where there is doubt, faith
Where there is despair, hope
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy
O Divine Master, grant that I may
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand
To be loved, as to love
For it is in giving that we receive
And it is in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life. **Amen**

(Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order, closing prayers for fraternity gathering, pg. 36)

Let us pray,
Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God:
Grant us in our misery that we may do for your sake alone
What we know you want us to do,
And always want what pleases you;
So that, cleansed and enlightened interiorly
And fired with the flame of the Holy Spirit,
We may be able to follow in the footsteps of your Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ,
And so make our way to you, Most High, by your grace alone,

You who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,
And are glorified, God all-powerful, forever and ever. Amen

The Canticle of Brother Sun
Circa 1226, by St. Francis of Assisi

Most high, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.
To you alone, most high, do they belong,
And no human is worthy to mention your name.

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures,
Especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom you give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
And bears a likeness of you, most high one.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In Heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
And through the air, cloudy and serene,
And every kind of weather,
Through which you give sustenance to your creatures.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water,
Which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom you light the night,
And he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
Who sustains and governs us,
And who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

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, they shall be crowned.

Praised be you, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
From whom no one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in your most holy will,
For the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord and give him thanks
And serve Him with great humility.

From Francis' Office of the Passion: (can be sung also)

Let us bless the Lord, the living and true God.
Let us always give back to God,
Praise, glory, honor, blessing and every good.
So be it, so be it, Amen Amen

Blessing of Francis to Leo (taken from the Book of Numbers 6:24-26. Prayer is written on a scrap of paper and preserved today in Assisi!)

May the Lord bless us and keep us.
May his face shine upon us and be gracious to us.
May he look upon us with kindness and give us his peace. Amen

Appendix C:

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