

From Gospel to Life . .

The Gospel Life: How do we encounter the living and active Person of Christ in Sacred Scripture and how does it lead to deeper conversion.

Franciscan Focus:

Francis' highest intention, his chief desire, his uppermost purpose was to observe the holy Gospel – Celano, First Life, Ch. 30: 84.

By his conformity with Christ [through prayer and a life of virtue], Francis practiced the truths which are contained in Scripture and carried their Author in his heart by the abundant infusion of the Holy Spirit – Bonaventure, Major Life Ch. 11:1-2.

References for Prayer and Study

Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order
Sections: 4 and 5

General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order
Articles 1:2; 3:3; 8:1; 9:2; 42:1

Catechism of The Catholic Church
53, 101,106, 125, 131, 133

Sacred Scripture
John 1: 1-18 // John 14: 21 // Matthew 7:24
1 Thessalonians 2: 13 // Hebrews 4:2,12

Church Documents
Dogmatic Constitution: Dei Verbum, Vatican Council II

Examination / Resolution Questions

1. Where in my attitudes and actions do I need conversion so I can encounter Christ within Sacred Scripture more fully?
2. What resolution will I make in my life to respond to the Lord's call of love this month?

Lectio Divina

Where do you get your instructions?

BIBLE: **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth.

Through the Bible God shares the instructions of His Divine Heart. Those who enter through humility and prayer find The Way!

Read John 13: 1-15

V5: "He ... began to wash the disciples' feet..."

Reflection Points

- Washing the feet was an act of hospitality performed by slaves.
- The works of God should inspire awe and reverence. Consider then, the humility of Christ, Who in Himself held the infinite majesty of God, when He performing the service of a slave.
- Christ gave us an example not to admire, but to follow. The mark of true humility is not found in the interior attitudes of a person alone, but finds its expression in acts of self-giving service.
- The actions of Christ described by John in this passage call to mind the humility of the Incarnation:
 - He rose from table – He arose from His seat next to the Father at the Heavenly Banquet
 - He laid aside His garments – He set aside the glory that was His from all eternity
 - He tied a towel around Himself – He took on human flesh
 - He poured water – He poured out His life for the salvation of all



Lectio Divina

“The Word of God” – A title given to scripture and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. When we approach “The Word of God” we must do so prayerfully and reverently, knowing we are entering into an encounter with the living person of Christ. Every time we do so, it has the power to change our lives.

Read Matthew 25: 31-46

v40: ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’

Reflection Points

- Jesus identifies Himself with all men, especially the poor and afflicted. Thus by serving others we are serving Christ; by performing works of mercy we hope to find mercy ourselves.
- Our love for Christ, realized in our brothers and sisters, becomes our motivation for all corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
- Jesus announced the Judgment of the Last Day, in which our attitude toward our neighbor will reveal our acceptance or refusal of divine love (CCC, 678).
- Christ has identified Himself with the poor. To receive the Eucharist in truth and not dishonor His table, we must be committed to the poor (CCC, 1397).
- In order to draw Francis to Himself, Christ led Francis during the early days of his conversion among the lepers so that he might practice mercy (Testament of St Francis).
- Mother Teresa when summarizing the source of her spirituality and mission, touched each finger of a person’s hand and said one-by-one, “You...Did...It...To...Me.”



Lectio Divina

SFO Rule 5: Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in ... Sacred Scripture.

Read Luke 9: 23-25

V23: ‘...let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’

Reflection Points

- Christ places self-denial and carrying the cross as the requirement for discipleship.
- In His mercy, Christ teaches us how to properly accept and carry our crosses by giving us what we must do and the order in which we must do it:
 - 1st Step: Deny yourself – Put God first. You are not God. Place yourself before God with humility. He is in complete charge of everything.
 - 2nd Step: Take up your cross – Identify what your cross is and accept it. You have a choice. Accept whatever God wills for you in your life as coming from His loving hands.
 - 3rd Step: Daily – Steps 1 and 2 must be done every day. Conversion is an ongoing process. Focus on Today. Do not be anxious for the future and leave the past to His mercy.
 - 4th Step: Follow me – Once you’ve accepted your cross, now walk with it. Do not get stuck in self-pity or resentment. Focus your eyes on Christ and by His grace live your day-to-day life by His promptings and example. Live for others.



Lectio Divina

The will of the Father is that we may know Him and be united to the life of the Most Holy Trinity. For this purpose He sends His Son, the living Word: My word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will (cf. Is 55:11). As Franciscans we must prayerfully meditate on the Gospels to know the Living Word.

Read John 1:1-5

V3: 'All things were made through him...'

Reflection Points

- Through love God brought creation into existence to communicate His glory and goodness to His children. His ultimate expression of glory and goodness is found in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity (CCC 293).
- God created everything by the eternal Word, his beloved Son. In him "all things were created, in heaven and on earth... all things were created through him and for him (CCC 291).
- Creation was brought into existence so that God could become Incarnate. The Holy Trinity unites us to Himself through the Incarnation of Jesus.
- God's glory is found when we fully realize this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for the glory of God is man fully alive (CCC 294).
- Francis' understanding of the love of God through the Incarnation and creation itself brought about a radical conversion: "from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, Francis would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of 'brother' or 'sister' (*The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, VIII, 6).
- Through Creation we are challenged by the power and goodness of God towards humility and poverty. We are challenged to form right relationships with God, our brothers and sisters, and creation itself.



Lectio Divina

Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower. (CCC 2707)

"Learn the heart of God from the Word of God" – Pope St. Gregory.

Read Luke 8: 4-15

V11: '...the seed is the word of God.'

Reflection Points

- Christ Himself is the seed: In his preaching the Lord Jesus often makes use of the signs of creation to make known the mysteries of the Kingdom of God... He gives new meaning... for he himself is the meaning of all these signs. (CCC 1151)
- What chokes us from letting Christ take deep root in our lives?
 - The Devil – Carries away the word in case they should believe and be saved.
 - The World – In times of trial they give up.
 - The Flesh – Choked by worries, riches, and pleasures
- How does a seed grow? How does conversion parallel the growth of a seed?
- Perseverance: Christ describes for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God. (CCC 1724)



Lectio Divina

The Christian faith is not a "religion of the book". It is the religion of the "Word" -- incarnate and living. If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, open our minds to understand the Scriptures. (CCC 108).

Read Luke 24: 13-35

V32: 'Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?'

Reflection Points

- The Emmaus journey reflects the structure of the Eucharistic liturgy, where Jesus gives Himself in word and sacrament; in the proclamation of Scripture and in the Eucharistic Bread of life.
- The disciples encounter Jesus in a powerful and mysterious way by accepting into their hearts the revelation of Christ through the Scriptures. Their hearts go from being "sad" to "burning within" them.
- In Sacred Scripture, we find nourishment and strength. Through it, the Father comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them. (CCC 104).
- All scripture hold the revelation of Christ: The Incarnate Word of God. "For this reason, the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's Word and Christ's Body" (CCC 103)



Lectio Divina

The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind's eye. In it we see our inner face. From the Scriptures we can learn our spiritual deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection. – Pope St. Gregory

Read Matthew 3:1-12

V2: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Reflection Points

- The image of using a winnowing fork to clear the threshing floor is something that is not familiar to many of us in our modern day, but would have been very familiar to the people of Jesus' time. It's a powerful meditation regarding how God purifies us through conversion.
- The un-sifted wheat is placed on the threshing floor. A pitch fork like tool called a winnowing fork is used to throw the wheat into the air, then the wind blows the chaff away and the purified grain falls back to the floor. The action is repeated many times until the grain is purified from the chaff.
- This is symbolic of how God digs into the deepest parts of us, stirs us up and purifies us through the breath of the Holy Spirit – separating from us all that is not holy so that we can be made into the pure bread of Christ.

