

Thoughts on Franciscan Spirituality

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What are the essentials of Franciscan spirituality?

The whole basis of Franciscan spirituality stems from God's love for all of creation from the very beginning, and is rooted in a lived experience of "incarnation" and "relationship".

1. Incarnation – God's presence is embodied in all that was created, animate and inanimate. All of creation embodies the Divine and has both a Divine and material/human dimension (OFS Rule, Art. 19, references to the "presence of the Divine seed" in everyone).

Jesus, the Christ (the anointed one) came to earth to live as a human person to demonstrate that all people embody the Divine and that the Divine and the human co-exist as part of God's plan for creation from the beginning. As some would say, Jesus came not to change the mind of God about humanity (ie. to "save" humanity) but to change the mind of humanity about God. This is the Good News proclaimed in the Gospels, the foundation of the Franciscan way of life.

The incarnation is not just about Jesus coming into the world as both God and human, but about all of God's creation embodying the Divine ... from the beginning, and Jesus being the communicator of this message.

2. Relationship – Because all of creation embodies the Divine, everything is sacred and in relationship with the Divine (refer to St. Francis relating to all of creation as "brother and sister"). A call to follow a Franciscan spirituality is a call to be in right relationship with all of creation.

How is Franciscan spirituality lived?

Because of the incarnation of God in all, humanity and all of creation are called to respect the presence of the Divine in everything and in everyone through life-giving relationships.

People are not called to community as such ... people are already in community as a result of the incarnation of God's presence in all of creation and, as a result, of their oneness with God. However, people are called to deepen their understanding of the community to which they belong – animate and inanimate – and to foster a respectful relationship with the members of this community (care of all creation). In the Franciscan tradition, this deepening of this relationship is realized through a call to live in **fraternity**. The fraternal relationship begins with a serene **contemplation** of the nature of humanity and with an immense gratitude for being part of God's family (prayer and thanksgiving). The relationship is characterized by a spirit of **hospitality** (welcoming all of God's creation and having an openness to its diversity), **poverty** (living simply so that others may simply live - caring for all in need), **humility** (realizing that we are all part of something much bigger and called to be in relationship with all of God's creation around us) and **service** (striving to sow peace and justice in our families, communities and the world around us).