

ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 1: "VOCATION, CHARISM & MISSION"
sheet 2

1. Vocation
[II] Total Availability & Franciscan Vocation {A}

VOCATION COMES FROM GOD AND IT CANNOT BUT BE ORIENTED TO HIM; VOCATION DEMANDS OUR WHOLE LIFE

God calls; God enables by his Spirit

'men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God' [II Pet 1.21]

Living the vocation as a life in the Spirit corresponds to devoting oneself to others in love, in an *exodus without return* in which we can reach the fulfilment of our "being" and of our "doing" in the accomplishment of God's plan: "Called for the love of those who have not yet been called to realise the communion with God".



Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te
['Thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.'
Augustine, *Confessions*, Book I, cap 1]



Ἐγὼ ἐξελεξαμην ὑμᾶς ['I have chosen you.' John 15.16]



Benedicta tu in mulieribus ['Blessed art thou among women.']



Ἐξελεξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ ['He chose us in him.' Eph 1.4]



Me semper rogo, Quid faceret Christus? ['I always ask myself, What would Christ do?']

— δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτωχευσεν ['He became poor.' II Cor 8.9]

The world is searching for Christ—who himself came seeking and saving that which was lost—and finds in Francis his living, vibrant and fully understandable representation, in both an historical and human form. That is why so many find themselves attracted by Francis. All that Francis did and what he became, was the result of his ‘imitatio Christi’ [imitation of Christ]. Francis became an ‘alter Christus’ [another Christ]. This is why in every age, both believers and non believers, have been inspired by Francis of Assisi: he has become a true sacrament of Jesus Christ.



Christ shows his wounds to doubting Thomas
[John 20.24-29]

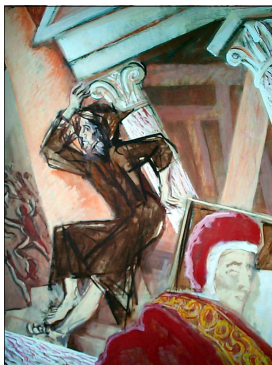
St Bonaventure said:
Francis ‘by perfect imitation, strove to be conformed while living to Christ living; dying to Christ dying; and dead to Christ dead, and deserved to be adored in his body with the visible image of Christ...Surely he was the most Christ-like of all men!’
[Major Life, XIV.4]



Francis receives the Stigmata

‘I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.’*

But being attracted does not necessarily correspond to a vocation to bind oneself permanently to the Franciscan form of life—though being drawn to Francis will be a part of having a Franciscan vocation. We have to understand from God what he wants of us. We may start by thinking it is to be ‘Franciscan’ and end up by finding ourselves called to a completely different way of life. This is why ‘discerning vocation’ is such an important part of discovering God’s call. So, to understand if we have a genuine Franciscan vocation it is essential to **know Francis**. We have to be confronted by him; we have to move away from sentimentalism, romanticism, and superficiality, and understand if, in fact, the project God has prepared for us goes in the very same direction of Francis’ project.



Real Franciscan vocation—called to take same path of identification & total conformity that Francis took with his Christ

Genuine Franciscan vocation—is to verify our own availability fully to embrace this path

* Gal 6.17—The Greek word ‘stigma’ [plural ‘stigmata’] referred to the brand mark of the slave signifying ownership. This way of speaking is totally in line with the way St Paul views his relationship with his Lord: ‘I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...’ [Gal 2.20] The receiving of the Stigmata is the physical manifestation of Francis’ sanctification and union with Christ.