

ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 7: "[Francis' Approach to Divinity](#)"
sheet 1

[1. Our Relationship with God](#)
[\[I\] Spirituality](#)



Francis = vir catholicus et evangelicus par excellence; a man madly in love with God; crazy for Christ & wanting to identify with him in everything

Spirituality is based on our unique experience of God. As Pius XII said, 'Every saint sees the attributes of God through the lens of what they most frequently meditate, what draws them most deeply, what attracts them and what conquers them. For each saint, one particular virtue of Christ is the ideal towards which they must tend...' —for Francis this was the self-emptying Christ who had everything, but chose to have nothing; who was perfect, but became sin; who was stripped and beaten, ridiculed and nailed to a cross; the Lord Jesus Christ who 'though he was rich' for us 'became poor, so that by his poverty' we 'might become rich' [II Cor 8.9]. Francis would be poor, like his Christ—knowing that 'he who sanctifies [makes holy] and those who are sanctified [the ones made holy] have all one origin' [Heb 2.11]

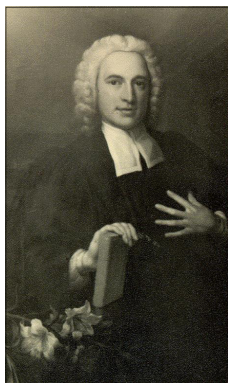
Therefore, to incarnate and live an authentic Franciscan spirituality, we first need to understand this spirituality to which God has drawn us. In this way the 'charism of St Francis' can mature in us and we will be able to make it present in the life and mission of the Church [Rule, 1]

Spirituality arises and nourishes itself from personal contact with God

- as he got older Francis spent weeks in silence [authentic spiritual development = prayer]
- Christ was alone with God [Mk 6.46]; when time was running out the more time Christ gave to prayer [Mk 14.32ff]

Spirituality is the experience of what one believes

- faith is the essential element in every aspect of the Christian life
- the primary understanding of faith in the NT is not so much propositional or creedal as trusting—absolute confidence in God, as demonstrated by the OT heroes of Heb 11 [who had nothing to go on, and ‘these all died in faith, not having received what was promised’ (v 13) ‘though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised’ (v 39): but kept trusting all the same] Their faith [trust in God] brought assurance of the things hoped for; conviction of the existence of things they couldn’t see; divine approval (v 1f)
- faith is not just something on our lips but in our lives [again, as evidenced by the conduct of those listed in Heb 11.4ff; their faith enabled them to do quite extraordinary things! And so carried away by what he is relating, and running out of space, having only got to the story of Joshua, he just lists names, cramming them into a few lines, finally giving up even mentioning names at all in favour of rattling off events (so excited is it merely to think about the life of faith—let alone live it)]
- for the Christian, the faith of others is an encouragement to trust more completely, for this trust brings us into nothing less than the very presence of ‘Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.’ And when we feel like giving up, sick of being made fun of, being the odd one out, we are exhorted to ‘Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.’ (v 1-3
- such faith may be very small indeed—but it can move mountains—‘nothing will be impossible to you’ [Matt 17.20]



Charles Wesley

**Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, It shall be done!**

**Obedient faith, that waits on thee,
Thou never wilt reprove:
But thou wilt form thy Son in me,
And perfect me in love.**