

*Prayers of John Paul II*

Father, rich in mercy, may this new millennium be a time of openness, of dialogue and encounter, among all who believe in Christ with the followers of other religions: in your immense love, be bountiful in mercy to all. AMEN

To you, Father of life, eternal source of all that is, highest good and everlasting light, be honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving, with the Son and with the Spirit, for ages unending. AMEN



**PREPARING FOR THE MILLENNIUM**

Part 1 (1997)

**“WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”**

- Reflection on Jesus Christ -

## PREPARING FOR THE MILLENNIUM

### Preface

In her statement on the Millennium the Minister General of the OFS, Emmanuela de Nuncio, stated that each brother and sister should make a conscious effort to engage in a preparation for the great jubilee of the year 2000. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are celebrating two thousand years of Christianity, two thousand years since the birth of Christ.

*First Year (1997)*

### “Who do you say that I am?”

- Reflection on Jesus Christ -

Object: to renew faith

Themes: a renewed appreciation of baptism as the basis of Christian living; a renewed interest in the bible; a detailed study of the Catechism; Mary—the model of faith in practice.

Remember, when we share God’s word with others it grows in our own lives. We recommend that you look up the Catechism references, linking it all into the life and spirituality of St Francis, and the Rule.

Start the year by reading the Gospel According to St Mark, noting down the most vivid impressions you have of who Jesus is for you.

## Bibliography

[works cited in the text above]

Regis J Armstrong, J A Wayne Hellmann, William J Short *Francis of Assisi: early documents* Vol I, II, III [New York City Press, 1999] {FAED}

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [Geoffrey Chapman, 1994]

Stephen Clissold *The Wisdom of St Francis and his Companions* [New York: New Discoveries Publishing Corporation, 1979]

## Some books you might find helpful especially with your prayer sessions

Joseph Stoutzenberger & John Bonher *Praying with Francis of Assisi* [Winona: St Mary's Press, 1989]

Ramona Miller & Ingrid Peterson *Praying with Clare of Assisi* [Winona: St Mary's Press, 1989]

Carlo Caretto *I Francis* [London: Fount Books, 1982]

Carlo Caretto *Blessed are you who Believed* [Tonbridge Wells: Burns & Oats, 1982]

John Paul II *Tertio Millennium Adveniente* [London: CTS, 1994]

*The Coming of the Third Millennium, a popular version of Tertio Millennium Adveniente* [London: CAFOD, 1996]

*The Common Good* [London: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, 1996]

## Session 1: JESUS CHRIST

### Theme:

We need to discover who Jesus Christ is for us as individuals and as a Fraternity. Having read the Gospel According to St Mark, and some of the following Scripture passages, say who Jesus is for you. Share this with the rest of the Fraternity.

### Scripture:

- Mk 8.29—Peter's profession of faith
- Heb 12.1-4—The example of Jesus
- Eph 1.3-10—God's plan for salvation

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- Jesus Christ, 430-455 (p 96-101)

### St Francis:

The place of the gospel in Francis' life. The gospel was the rule for St Francis and his companions. He wanted to follow it exactly, but he knew that the Holy Spirit constantly teaches us the meaning of the Gospels. To his first companions he said, 'we will go to the church, and there we will learn through the Gospels how the Lord instructed his disciples.'

### Action:

In the light of what we have learned in our own lives of what Jesus means to us let us look at some way of communicating this to others. This month, let us look for ways of telling others about Jesus, the Church, and the OFS. We could wear the OFS emblem, praying that people will ask us what it means.

## Session 2: JESUS, SON OF GOD AND CREATOR OF THE WORLD

### Theme:

We will look at creation in the light of Jesus, Son of God and creator of all. In this we follow the example of St Francis.

### Scripture:

- Mk 4.35-41—The calming of the sea
- Matt 6.25-34—Trust in Providence
- Ps 139.1-24—The inescapable God#

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

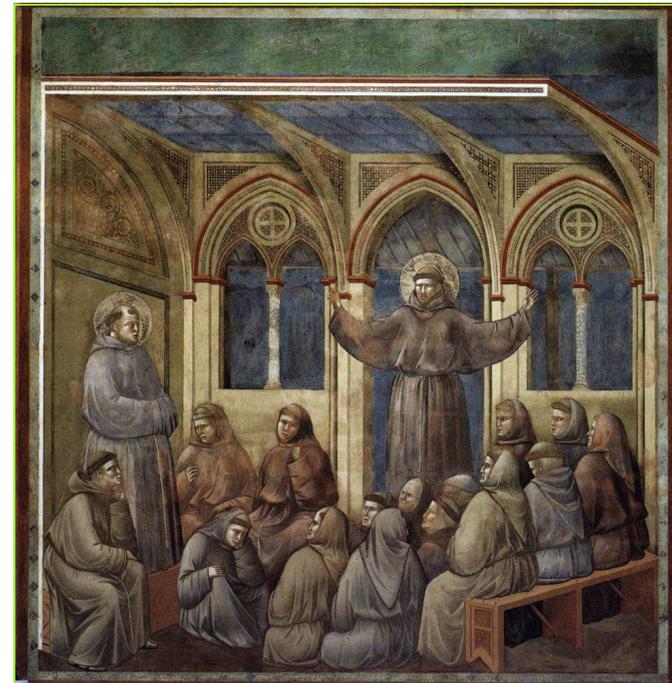
- Catechesis on creation, 282-324 (p 66-75)

### St Francis:

The Canticle of the of the Creatures, *FAED I* (p 113-114)

### Action:

Read, pray, and meditate on the Canticle of the Creatures. Do something about an environmental issue—collect and save paper, bottles, tins etc, to be recycled. Buy recycled products. Work for conservation of natural spaces in your area. Can you do something as a group/Fraternity?



## Session 10: MARY: MODEL OF FAITH PUT INTO PRACTICE

### Theme:

Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, shows us how we should respond to God's call to each of us. Let us look at Mary's role in leading us to God.

### Scripture:

- Lk 1.26-38—The Annunciation
- Lk 1.39-56—The Visitation
- John 19.25-27—Jesus and his Mother

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church, 963-975 (p 220-223)

### St Francis:

He embraced the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ with indescribable love because she had made the Lord of Majesty our brother and had obtained mercy for us. After Christ, it was Mary in whom he placed his trust and whom he chose as advocate for himself and his brothers. [FAED II Bonaventure: Major Legend of St Francis cap 9:3 (p 598-599)]

### Action:

Let us examine our own commitment to Mary. Which mention of her in the Scriptures reflects your devotion to her? Write it on a card and share it with the Fraternity. What title given to Mary by the Church do you most easily respond to?

## Session 3: JESUS, DEFENDER OF THE WEAK

### Theme:

Jesus is our example of how we should be aware of the needs of those around us. What are the justice and peace [presence in the world] issues we should be involved with today?

### Scripture:

- Isa 58.6-10—fasting pleasing to God, working for justice
- Mk 9.42-50—On leading others astray
- I Cor 13.1-13—The 'love chapter'

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- Social justice, 1928-1968 (p 421-429)

### St Francis:

He turned with marvellous tenderness and compassion toward anyone afflicted with physical suffering; and when he noticed deprivation or need in anyone, he saw in that person the suffering of Christ himself. The love of Christ only intensified his natural bent towards compassion. [Cf. FAED II Bonaventure: Major Legend of St Francis cap 8:5 (p 589-590)]

### Action:

What can each of us do on a justice and peace [presence in the world] issue? Write to our MPs or our prospective MPs to discover their views on abortion, euthanasia, help for the Developing World—or any other issue decided upon by the Fraternity. Join or work for an organisation helping the needy.

## Session 4: JESUS, TEACHER AND EVANGELISER

### Theme:

It is the duty of us all to spread the good news—the gospel. Jesus sends us all to evangelise those around us.

### Scripture:

- Mk 1.16-18—The first disciples are called
- Matt 28.16-20—Go out into the whole world
- Mk 6.7-13—The mission of the twelve

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- Handing on the faith, 4-10 (p 7-10)

### St Francis:

Carried away by the force of his preaching, great numbers of people adopted the new Rule of penance according to the form instituted by St Francis. The way of penance is common to all who are on the road to heaven, and so this life includes members of both sexes, clerics and lay folk, married and single. How meritorious it is in the eyes of God is clear from the numerous miracles worked by some of those who followed it. [Cf. *FAED* II Bonaventure: Major Legend of St Francis cap 4:6 (p 553)]

### Action:

Pray for all those working in catechesis, RCIA, First Communion and Confirmation programmes, and those being catechised. Offer to be a sponsor or prayer companion to those preparing for the Sacraments.

## Session 9: BAPTISM

### Theme:

Our sacramental Baptism brought us into the Church, gave us our true identity, made us children of God and opened the door for us to become Secular Franciscans. Let us thank God for this great grace.

### Scripture:

- Mk 1.9-11—The true identity of Jesus is proclaimed
- Rom 6.1-11—Baptism
- Acts 2.37-41—The first conversions

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- Sacrament of Baptism, 1213-1284 (p 276-289)

### St Francis:

We are baptised into Christ. Francis was always occupied with Jesus: Jesus he bore in his heart, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in the rest of his members. And because he always bore and preserved Christ Jesus and him crucified in his heart with a wonderful love, he was marked in a most glorious way above all others with the seal of him whom, in a rapture of mind, he contemplated. [*FAED* I Celano: Life of St Francis cap 9:115 (p 283-284)]

### Action:

Let us renew our Baptismal vows and our commitment to the OFS. We can offer to help in preparing those for Baptism and their families. And we can pray for those in Formation.

## Session 8: JESUS, FRIEND TO ALL

### Theme:

Jesus accepted all who came to him, he turned no one away. Let us look to be reconciled to all. This month we examine our relationships with everyone.

### Scripture:

- Mk 12.28-34—the greatest commandment
- Lk 19.1-10—The story of Zacchaeus
- John 4.4-42—The woman at the well

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- Sacrament of Reconciliation, 1485-1498 (p 334-335)

### St Francis:

St Francis taught his companions to use this greeting, 'The Lord give you peace! When you proclaim peace by your word, he told them, you, must carry an even greater peace in your hearts. Let no one be provoked to anger by you, or be scandalised, but let your gentleness encourage all men to peace, good will and mutual love.' [Stephen Clissold *The Wisdom of St Francis and his Companions* (p 31-32)]

### Action:

Is there anyone with whom you are not at peace, in your family, your neighbourhood, your parish, the Fraternity? Now is the time to be reconciled. Make your peace with them. Say sorry. Write or telephone someone you have been meaning to contact. Is there something you can do as a Fraternity towards repairing division—e.g. an ecumenical undertaking?

## Session 5: JESUS, HEALER OF THE SICK

### Theme:

Jesus healed all those who came to him for healing. We can do our part by our care for the sick.

### Scripture:

- Mk 1.21-34—A number of healings
- Mk 2.1-12—Healing of the paralytic [whole person]
- Acts 3.1-10—Healing of a lame man

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- Anointing of the sick, 1499-1532 (p 335-342)

### St Francis:

'The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world.' [FAED I The Testament 1-3 (p 124)]

### Action:

Let us seek help and console those in need by visiting a sick person, volunteering to help at a hospital, giving lifts, comforting the bereaved, baby sitting for young parents...Is it possible to organise a group to undertake one of these tasks on an ongoing basis?

## Session 6: JESUS, SAVIOUR OF ALL

### Theme:

Jesus lived and died to save us all. God does not have favourites—salvation is offered to everyone. We need to seek out those in most need.

### Scripture:

- Mk 9.33-37—Who is the greatest
- Mk 3.31-35—The true kinsman of Jesus
- Micah 6.8—This is what God asks of you

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- The human virtues, 1804-1811 (p 400-402)

### St Francis:

The true masters are those who set an example to their neighbours in good works and in kindness. For a man is learned in so far as he works for others; he is wise in so far as he loves God and his neighbours; and he is a good preacher in so far as he knows how to do good works and humbly. [Cf. Stephen Clissold *The Wisdom of St Francis and his Companions* (p 31-32)]

### Action:

To seek out and help those most rejected by society—prisoners, the homeless, the housebound, the lonely. Make a meal for a hungry person. Join a group caring for the homeless.

## Session 7: JESUS, FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH

### Theme:

Jesus called the apostles to found a Church which would bring salvation to all. What role do we play in helping to build up the Church—the body of Christ?

### Scripture:

- Mk 3.13-19—The appointment of the twelve
- Matt 16.13-20—Peter's profession of faith [the Rock]
- Acts 2.42-47—The early Christian community

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church:*

- I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, 748-780 (p 172-180)

### St Francis:

Restore my Church—'Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to our Lord Pope Honorius and his successors canonically elected to the Roman Church.' [FAED I Later Rule 1223 cap 1 (p 100)]

### Action:

We are all called to service in the Church. This month, let us see what we can do to help in our parishes. We can offer to perform a particular ministry—welcomer, reader, Eucharistic minister, cleaner, sacristan, server, cantor, flower arranger, news letter typists, coffee maker at parish events...