- A RESOURCE FOR ONGOING FORMATION -



Part 1: The Essence of Franciscan Spirituality

Chapter 7. The Holy Spirit

The words of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians provide an excellent background against which to reflect on the writings of St Francis—I Cor 2.10-16.

In much the same way, St Francis teaches 'spiritual things spiritually, that is, according to the ways of the Spirit. The very heart of his view of life seems to be summarised best [where] the saint encourages his followers to pursue 'what they must desire above all things to have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy manner of working.' Throughout his writings St Francis teaches the transparent, inconspicuous, and unassuming ways of the Holy Spirit, and this teaching is expressed through the saint's concern for God his Father, Jesus his Lord and Brother, his fellow human beings, and the marvels of God's creation. He already begins to cultivate an atmosphere or environment in which the 'school' of Franciscan theology of the spiritual life develops and focuses on that love, the medium of the Holy Spirit, which teaches us 'to understand the gifts that he has given us' (I Cor 2.12).

Many commentaries on the writings of St Francis have overlooked this aspect because of weak pneumatology. In this 'privileged moment of the Holy Spirit,' as Paul VI described our age, the rich heritage of St Francis is entering a new phase in interpretation. The very use of the word 'Spirit' is seen best in the Pauline sense...expressing the Spirit of [God] overwhelming the spirit of the human person. Thus Francis, like Paul, slips inadvertently from references to the Spirit of God to the spirit of the human person. He perceives the dignity of the human personality, which could become the transparent expression of the divine presence. The many activities of the spiritual life, as Francis describes them, are simply expressions of the Holy Spirit: the spirit of loving obedience, of prayer and devotion, of peace...The saint considered the Holy Spirit to be the true Minister General of the Order...articulating the prominent role of the Holy Spirit in the understanding of the Franciscan life.

Francis & Clare: the complete works Introduction (p 11-12)



Why is the Holy Spirit called 'Helper'? [John 16.7]



Complete: 'do not get drunk with wine....'
[Eph 5.18]

...the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvellously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them.

Vat II Lumen Gentium 34

What is meant by 'pray in the Spirit at all times'? [Eph 6.18]



We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. Rule *Prologue*

The Secular Franciscan Order...is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful. In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their Profession they pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of St Francis by means of this Rule approved by the Church. Rule 2

Scripture—

Ezek 36. 26-27

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

3 Cor 2. 10-16

These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God 's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God 's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else 's scrutiny. 'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ.