



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 7: "[Francis' Approach to Divinity](#)"
sheet 2

1. [Our Relationship with God](#)
[II] [Francis: Patrology—the primacy of the Father](#)

FRANCIS: A TRINITARIAN MAN



understood that every approach to God must go through Jesus Christ: Christ is the way and no one knows that Father except through the Son [John 14.6]. In this sense he can be called **Christocentric**. For Francis, Christ is the one mediator between God and man [I Tim 2.5]; he spoke to him in the San Damiano 'cross experience'; he is the one who was made flesh [John 1.14] and gives his flesh in the Eucharist— 'your Wisdom, by means of which you created everything, is made the food of our human weakness'. The **Father**, for whom Francis longed, is the goal, the objective purpose of Francis' life; and this is achieved by embracing and being totally conformed to **Christ** [Rom 12.2], which comes about as the work of the **Spirit** in us [Gal 5.22].

Francis has a living relationship with each of the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity

ORIGINALITY OF FRANCIS' THEOLOGY

'Fear and honour, praise and bless, give thanks and adore the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and Unity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Creator of all.'

'...may be able to follow in the footprints of your beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and by your grace alone may we make our way to you, Most High, who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity, and are glorified God Almighty, for ever and ever...'

is in his way of placing himself before the divinity, in the way he expressed his rapport with God—in the way he spoke about him. In his writings Francis mentions God as: omnipresent [219 times]; Lord [364 times]. He sees the Father as pre-eminent but expresses him in a Trinitarian context: 'Trinity and unity' [5 times], and the expression 'Perfect Trinity and simple unity' reveals in Francis a profound understanding of the "otherness" [or "distinction"] which characterises the relationship between the three divine Persons. But, in this relationship, it is the Father who is central for Francis—he calls God 'Father' 97 times in his writings. The true believer has come to know God [the Father] through the Word—which is Christ [the Son of the Father]. At the same time, the experience of the Father remains obscure and fragmented in this life, since the 'breadth, length, height and depth' of the mystery of the Father for the present escapes us. Only when the Father 'calls us into his kingdom' will we finally have that 'clear vision, perfect love, blessed companionship, eternal joy' that awaits us. Then we will be with him for ever— impossible to sin—the final destiny of our journey.

ECLIPSE OF THE FATHER?



'Gaining inspiration from the example and the writings of Francis and, above all, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, each day the brothers and sisters faithfully live the great gift which Christ has given: the revelation of the Father.'

[Constitutions, art 12]

With Jesus, obedient even to death, they should seek to know and do the will of the Father...In order to carry out the will of the Father, they should accept the help which is offered to them through the mediation of the Church...

[Rule, 10]

They should seek to discover the presence of the Father in their own heart, in nature, and in the history of humanity in which his plan of salvation is fulfilled...

[Rule, 8]

Many of us are essentially 'Christocentric' in that, while we speak of the Father, we more readily identify with Christ the man; God made man. For this reason, our prayer to the Father is often non-existent. We pray the Our Father, of course, but we do not have a true, lived knowledge of the Father, and in consequence do not develop an intimate rapport with him. We often picture the Father as a rather distant old man—characterised by Michelangelo's creation scene! [In 1963, John A T Robinson, *Honest to God*, shocked many Christians by suggesting that our image of God must go!] Suffice to say: we Franciscans need to rediscover the Father, and like Francis, we must go to the **Father**, through and with the **Son** by means of the grace of the **Holy Spirit**.

In other words, we must bring an end to this eclipse of the Father, for it is the Father—God hidden [Deus absconditus] who is encountered in the Son—God revealed [Deus revelatus]. As we read in John 14—

Philip said to him, ' Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, ... ' He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?'