

Francis and the Blessed Virgin Mary



Secular Franciscan Order (SFO)

NAFRA

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"The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently" Rule, Article 9.

Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community. Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love. SFO Constitutions: Article 16.1, .2

The Role of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation:

Illustrated:

Both Old and New Testaments

- Gen: 3:15; Is 1:14; Mic. 5:2-3; Mt. 1:22-23

Esteemed Traditions

- Lumen Gentium

The Role of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation

- Mother of God (Theotokos – “God bearer”) – Council of Ephesus, 431
- Mother of the Redeemer
- Unique relations to God
- Special relationship to Church
- Mary depended on Jesus for the things of Heaven
- The New Eve

The Role of Mary to Franciscans

- Mary is to lead us to her Son
- Mary continuously points to Jesus
- Mary brings us to Jesus
- Mary never separates herself from her Son
- Mary says “yes” to both happiness and sorrow
- Mary trusts Our Father, although she might not understand all the mysteries of His Will.

The Role of Mary to Franciscans

- Rule identifies qualities we want to emulate that Mary possessed and by which she lived:
 - Humble servant
 - Openness
 - Complete self-giving
 - Earnest and confident prayer
 - Pure
 - Poverty/Simplicity
 - Obedience

Our Franciscan Heritage

- Called to serve
- *Francis embraced the Mother of our Lord Jesus with indescribable love because, as he said, it was she who made the Lord Jesus our brother, and through her we found mercy. After Christ, he put all his trust in her and took her as his patroness for himself and his friars. In her honor he fasted every year from the feast of Saints Peter and Paul until the Assumption. (Major Life IX, 3. Omnibus, p.699)*

Our Franciscan Heritage (cont.)

- *As he was living there by the church of our Lady, Francis prayed to her who had conceived the Word, full of grace and truth, begging her insistently and with tears to become his Advocate. Then he was granted the true spirit of the Gospel by the intercession of the Mother of Mercy and he brought it to fruition. (Major Life III, 1. Omnibus, p.646)*

Our Franciscan Heritage (cont.)

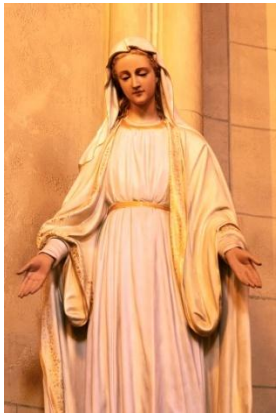
Toward the Mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of Majesty our brother. He sang special praises to her, poured out prayers to her, offered her his affections, so many and so great that the tongue of man cannot recount them. But what delights us most, he made her the advocate of the order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave that she might cherish them and protect them to the end.(II Celano 198, Omnibus, p.521), also Writings of Saint Francis 4 Salutation of the Blessed Virgin (p.135); Celano, First Life 24 (248); Legend of the Three companions Ch.V 15 (905); Mirror of Perfection 55 (1177).

Our Franciscan Heritage (cont.)



Reflect how you serve others.

1. How do you nourish your spirit in order to serve others more humbly and express your service more deeply?
2. Consider how Our Blessed Virgin Mary is protectress of Franciscans and how does she nourish you to do more for others in the name of Jesus Christ.



Titles of Mary (cont.)

Other titles that reflect her role in the salvation of us

- Mother of Sorrows: A model for us to not allow our troubles to conquer us.
- We can offer our sufferings through Mary's heart because she remembers how it is to suffer

Titles of Mary (cont.)

Queen of the Universe

- Servant to all
- Shunned earthly powers and materialism
- Acknowledged that all we have belongs to the Creator to always build up the body of Christ

Titles of Mary (cont.)

Queen of Peace

Mary lived in peace

As Franciscans we strive to live in peace and
approach all we do in peacefulness

Titles of Mary (cont.)

Woman Clothes with Sun

- Radiant with Christ's gift of grace
- She is clothed in the sun and clothed with the Son
- Revelations 12. 1

Titles of Mary (cont.)

Refuge of Sinners

- Comforter
- Protector
- Desires to bring us to her Son
- When we fall short, Mary is there to intercede for us.

Titles of Mary (cont.)

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Francis sought Mary for help and for guidance because he felt she was the role model that leads us to Jesus, the Word of God

Mary always turned toward Jesus, never away from Him

Franciscan Traditions

Two devotions to Mary as alternative means of
praying the Liturgy of the Hours

Franciscan Crown Rosary

Little Office of the Blessed Virgin

Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Hail holy Lady, most Holy Queen, Mary, Mother of God, you are the Virgin made Church, chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven, whom he consecrated with his most beloved Son and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, in whom there was and is all fullness of grace and every good. Hail, his tabernacle! Hail, his dwelling! Hail, his vesture! Hail, his handmaid! Hail, his Mother – and all you holy Virtues that by the grace and light of the Holy Spirit are infused into the hearts of the faithful, that from faithless souls you may make souls faithful to God!

Franciscan Doctors, Philosophers and Theologians

Saint Anthony of Padua

- Praises Mary for her role in our redemption

Blessed John Duns Scotus

- Mary was without Original Sin

Franciscan Spirituality

From the *beginning of time*:

- **God loves us even after we commit sin**
- **Primacy of Christ** is a key element of Franciscan spirituality
- **Jesus sent** because of the **love God has for us**
- He would have come **whether or not we sinned**

Franciscan Spirituality (cont)

- **Creation** is based on God's **absolute freedom and love** because God's very nature is love. (Col 1: 12-20).
- God needs nothing but **His love endlessly overflows** –abundantly
- **Incarnation** is the **single most defining act of God's love.**
- **Love is more powerful than anything.**

Franciscan Spirituality (cont.)

- He **sent His only son** to be with us and **live with us** and **show us** how **God loves** us.
- He **accepts us** as we are.
- We **cannot earn** His love.
- He **gifts us love**
- He **calls us by name**

Mother of the Franciscan Order

Mary wears the royal cloak and crown of
POVERTY

Portiuncula (the poor tiny church outside of
Assisi) was cradle of the Franciscan Order.

Portiuncula: badge of God's noble children

Dedicated to Our Lady of Angels which today
envelopes the Portiuncula

Mary teaches us humility

Mother of the Franciscan Order

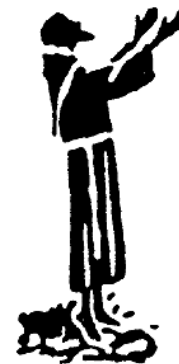
Magnificat shows Mary

- In awe of our Father
- Obedient to His will
- Trusts the Lord
- Surrenders
- Confident and earnest in prayer, as way of life

Let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do (SFO Rule, Article 8).

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

- What qualities or attributes of Mary most stir you? How do you imitate those qualities/attributes in your daily routines?
- How is the Magnificat a world-shattering prayer? What is it calling us to do?



Reflection and Discussion

Questions (cont):

- What is Mary's role in the life of the Church? Explain why we honor Mary so much?
- Why is Mary the Mother of the Franciscan Order?
- How did Don Scotus contribute to argument for the Immaculate Conception?

Reflection and Discussion

Questions (cont):

- Identify events in Mary's life which brings you closer to her as your mother?
- Reflect on how often you recite the rosary. What does it mean to you to recite the rosary? What part of the rosary speaks to you the most and how does it apply to our Franciscan lives?

Reflection and Discussion

Questions (cont):

- How do you, such as Mary, welcome the Spirit to create a community of love? (*SFO Constitutions, Article 16.2*) What steps do you take to help your fraternity to be a community of love? What steps would you need to work on more diligently to help your fraternity be a better community of love?

Reflection and Discussion

Questions (cont):

- Compare and contrast the text from Luke 1:46-55 and Luke 2: 41-52. Offer your own reflections on what the texts say about Mary and her perspectives.
- Mary was the first Christian, disciple and apostle. Explain how she became this and what it means for the Franciscans

Resources

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