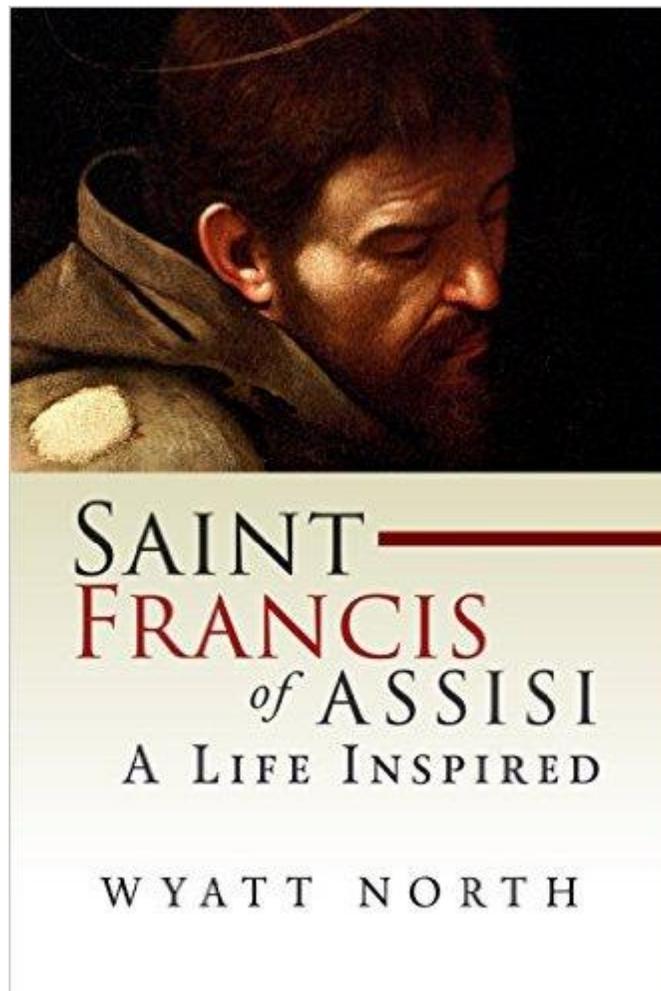


Study Guide For:

**St. Francis of Assisi A Life Inspired, by Wyatt North
Publishing Co.**



After each chapter, journal about each of the topics listed here. Answer the questions, Journal more as the Spirit Inspires you, note questions that come up in your mind and write them down also. Review each Chapter's journaling, and the additional questions you wrote down, with the Vocation Director, or the Friar assigned to you for these exercises.

Chapters of St. Francis of Assisi A Life Inspired:

Introduction

Beginnings

Francis Renounces the World

Francis's First Followers

1. In the first four chapters, we've been introduced to St. Francis's family upbringing, society and church of his day. Allow what you have read so far to help you reflect on what influences your family, society and church have had on you. Describe your family values growing up, and to what extent you, like Francis, have rejected values of family, society, and the world. To what extent are you now following Christ and building his Church?
2. This chapter describes Francis's "modus vivendi" from around 1206 to 1209 as "To repair his churches, to care for the lepers, to beg for his daily food, and to pray before the crucifix." Meditate and comment on how complete (or not) such a plan is for the life of a disciple of Christ. How would you describe your "modus Vivendi" (your way of life)?
3. What do you see as the Church's and world's greatest needs and how would you hope to be applying yourself to "Building the Church" in the future?
4. Read, meditate and pray on the three Gospel texts St. Francis and his first followers opened to in the Church of St. Nicolo di Piazza. (Mark 10:17-21, Luke 9:1-6, and Matthew 16:24-28). Use the method of praying with the Gospels described in the footnote below¹, and journal about what they say to you. Also

¹ "Pray the Gospels" by imagining yourself in the scene. You can be Jesus, or one of the disciples, or another figure in the passage. Pray one passage for many days at a time. Be one person one day, and another on another day. Use all your senses; hear the sounds, smell the smells, see the colors, touch and feel; especially feel with your heart the different feelings the scene invokes. Feel the tension, the fear, amazement, and all the emotions the

pray about and ask yourself, what role these passages had for St. Francis, and for the early Franciscans?

5. This chapter closes with a comment about how even though God had clearly spoke to St. Francis “Go rebuild my Church”, his life, especially his early life, involved much uncertainty, and like St. Francis, Pope Francis, is guided by the Holy Spirit. Actually, all followers of Jesus need to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Do you feel that the Holy Spirit is guiding you? If so, what are some signs that it is? What are some of the unexpected situations it has called you to?

The First Franciscan Community:

1. This chapter describes how the early friars “Took nothing for the journey”, no money, no supplies, and set out two by two into the world to preach the Gospel. It says that they did this even though it did not seem to yield results. It says that “The daring of these early Franciscans, and their willingness to risk all for the sake of Christ, planted the seeds for the future development of the Franciscan Order.” Do you have any experiences in your life of such an adventure; to step out into the unknown? If so, please describe it, and what you learned from it. Do you have a yearning for such a stepping out into the unknown? Explain.
2. This Chapter says “As a troubadour, Francis had acquired considerable story telling skills and even a talent for entertainment.” Francis was able to bring his unique upbringing and talents to the service of God, in response to the needs of his times. What talents and experiences do you have, and how do you see they could serve today’s Church?

passage evokes. Try to understand with your mind and heart why Jesus does and says what he does. Do the same with the other characters. Be sure to ask the Holy Spirit to be with you as you pray, that you may truly experience Jesus in the passage, and that you may hear His voice. Ask Jesus to teach you, as he taught the disciples. Ask yourself in prayer, what does this passage say to me? What times or areas of my life come to mind as I read? What teaching does this passage have for those situations? Finally, it helps to journal what you have discerned. I find that as I write down what happened during my mental prayer, more insights continue to come. Set aside one hour every day to pray this way! You will be amazed at how the Gospel will come to life, and Jesus become a close friend. As you go through your day, Gospel passages will come to mind that give insight into your life. The Gospel truly is “Living and Effective” and Jesus truly is our Good Shepherd, walking with us, on the Way. I pray that you will learn to hear his voice, and respond to his call.

Life at the Portiuncula

1. This chapter says that; “Their [the early Franciscans] learning was acquired by studying, not books, but the Crucified.” And it says that St. Bonaventure, when asked where he had acquired his learning, pointed to the crucifix. Franciscans are not opposed to education, but a Franciscan’s first teacher is Christ, and especially Christ crucified, and prayer is the classroom. Describe your relationship with formal education and learning through prayer and experience.
2. The chapter further describes the preaching of the early friars; “Their style of preaching was not concerned with doctrine; instead, their focus was on encouraging people to embrace a life of penance and to rely on the sacraments”. Franciscans have an ability to minister to all people, learned and unlearned. Are you more learned or unlearned? What examples might you point to in your life that show that you may effectively and humbly minister to both the learned and unlearned?
3. This chapter begins to talk about the role of poverty in the life of Francis and the early Franciscans. (A whole chapter will be devoted to ‘Lady Poverty’ later in this book.) Books could be written on the role of poverty in the Franciscan life. In fact, most of our divisions that have caused the many types of Franciscans that exist today, are because of disagreements about the role and importance of poverty. What is your view of the role of poverty in the spiritual life? Do you practice poverty? If so, how?

Political and Religious Developments

1. This Chapter talks, only briefly, about some of the political and religious issues in the days of St. Francis, and how he responded. What are the political and religious issues of today? Which of these (if any) do you feel called to respond to? How do you feel called to respond?
2. This chapter talked about the role of women supporting the early friars. What do you think is the role of women in the Church? Should anything regarding their role be different? If so, what?

3. This chapter also talks about Mary, the Patroness of our Order. Describe your relationship and devotion to Mary the Mother of God. What role does she play in supporting you and your spiritual life?

Clare of Assisi, Part I: Choosing Christ

1. This chapter talks about the relationship between Francis and Clare. It says that their relationship was a “Platonic friendship based on a common love of Christ.” Describe your relationship with Christ. Could you call it romantic, passionate, intimate, intense, completing, fulfilling, unitive? Is it a love relationship? Explain. Can this relationship with Christ sustain you in a celibate lifestyle?
2. This chapter also says that Clare and Francis were always true to their vows, and “Never mistook the beauty of God himself for the beauty of the other person.” Do you have any friendships with women? Describe them. Are they healthy? Are they chaste? Are they spiritual? How are friendships with women different for you than your friendships with men? Do you think you can, or will, have relationships with women if you become a friar?

Clare of Assisi, Part II: A Holy Heroine

1. This chapter states: “The chaste friendship of Clare and Francis remains one of the most remarkable friendships in the history of Christianity.” And then it goes on to say; “In fact, it is almost impossible to mention one without the other, so intertwined were the lives of these individuals.” What does that say to you? What is the significance of looking at the two together?
2. Some claim that a healthy person, and a healthy spirituality, achieves an integration or developing and complementing of the masculine and the feminine within each of us. How do you feel about this view of human personal development? Do you feel you have a feminine and a masculine side of your person? If so, are both sides developed and/or integrated into who you are? Do you continue to encourage both to be developed in yourself, or do you repress or ignore developing parts of yourself?

The Third Order of Franciscans

1. This chapter speaks of how to the “Many great leaders, artists, scientists, and other visionaries, devotion to Christ in the form of a Franciscan lifestyle was the religious inspiration behind their lives and work.” One can see that the Franciscan way of life is not just a way of being a priest or a brother, but a way of being Christian and human. How would you describe what being a Franciscan is?
2. Have you ever considered being a Third Order Franciscan (or tertiary of any other Order)? Why or Why not?
3. Do you see married or single life as less holy than being a priest or a religious? Can you live out a vocation in a way other than being a priest or religious? How? How would you describe what a vocation is? What do you think is your vocation? Why?

Francis’s Encounter with the Sultan

1. This chapter states; “In today’s world, as in Francis’s, Islam is a force to be reckoned with. Since September 11, 2001, the dangers of radical Islam have become apparent to the entire Western world. The imperative to preach the Gospel has not lessened since the time of Francis, although in our contemporary world, an emphasis is placed on interreligious dialogue. Francis’s desire to bring about peace and his zeal to save souls must be rekindled in the Church today.” What do you think about St. Francis’s attempt to talk with the Sultan, and his approaching him without arms? What if anything can St. Francis teach us about how we approach Muslims today? What do you think should be the Franciscan response to the threats of extremists, and terrorism, today?

St. Francis’s Love of Nature

1. This chapter describes the story of St. Francis and the “Wolf of Gubbio”. This is a very famous Franciscan story, and is often treated as a parable for Franciscan Peace and Justice work. Read the story yourself in Part I, Chapter 21 of “The Little Flowers of St. Francis”, (available at:

<https://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/flowers1.htm>). Do you see any meanings in it for peace and justice work among us humans? If so, please explain. Do you see any other lessons we can learn from the event?

2. This chapter includes the prayer written by St. Francis; “Canticle to Brother Sun.” Spend time praying and meditating with this prayer of St. Francis. What are some of the insights in it that seem significant to you? What do you think this prayer reveals about Franciscan Spirituality, and Theology?
3. This chapter concludes with the statement that Francis “Displayed a connection with nature, and a sensitivity toward all of creation, that the modern world would do well to emulate.” What is your attitude towards all creation? How does that attitude shape your life? What do you think Franciscans should be doing today regarding the care of creation?

The Stigmata

1. In the last paragraph of this chapter, the author gives his interpretation of what the stigmata of St. Francis says to us today. How about you? What would you say it means to the world today? What do you think it means to Franciscans today? What does it say to you?
2. What does Christ’s crucifixion mean for you? What place in your spirituality does the Crucified Christ have?

Lady Poverty

1. Describe in your own words what is the role of poverty in the Franciscan Charism.
2. Have you ever experienced poverty? Was it in your life, or in the life of others?
3. Do you practice poverty? If so, how? (Note you may have already answered this question in exercises for the chapter entitled: Life at the Portiuncula.)
4. Why do you think St. Francis personified poverty (that is, called it a Lady)?

The Death of Francis

1. This chapter states: “Francis’s death serves as a model for all Christians to follow. He left the world stripped of every worldly desire, and he focused on the passion of his Lord as he was dying. Francis’ death, however, was made all the more pure and holy since he had prepared for it throughout so much of his life by his great devotion to Jesus Christ Crucified.” What aspects of Francis death could be a “model” for us?
2. How is your life, “Preparing for your death”?

St. Anthony of Padua

1. St. Anthony is considered to greatly exhibit the Franciscan Charism. However, it seems he did not learn it from St. Francis, or other Franciscans. It seems rather that he already had it, and recognized that same charism in the friars whom he observed, and was attracted by them. Do you know any friars? What do you observe in them that attracts you? What do you see in them that you already possess? What do you see in them that you believe you currently lack?

The Franciscan Impact on the New World

1. How do you find this chapter on the impact of Franciscans in the Americas? What impact on the world would you like to one day say your life had? What is the best way to make that impact?

The Election of Pope Francis

1. How do you feel about Pope Francis’s time as pope so far? What has been both good and bad? Do you believe Pope Francis has done some particularly Franciscan things? If so, what, and why would you call them Franciscan?
2. What do you think about the reaction of both the Church and the world to Pope Francis? What does that say to us?

The Franciscan Spirituality of the Pope

1. What impact do you think Franciscan living can have on our church and world today?

The Importance of St. Francis for Our Time

1. The last three chapters have presented a hypothesis that you may, or may not, agree with. How would you describe the hypothesis that the author is presenting? Do you agree with it, or disagree with it? Why or why not?
2. What do you think are the major wounds, or brokenness, in our church and world today? If God spoke to you saying “Go rebuild my Church”, what would you do?
3. Do you believe, that thanks to Pope Francis, now is a particularly “Franciscan Moment” in our Church and world? Why not consider joining us? 😊