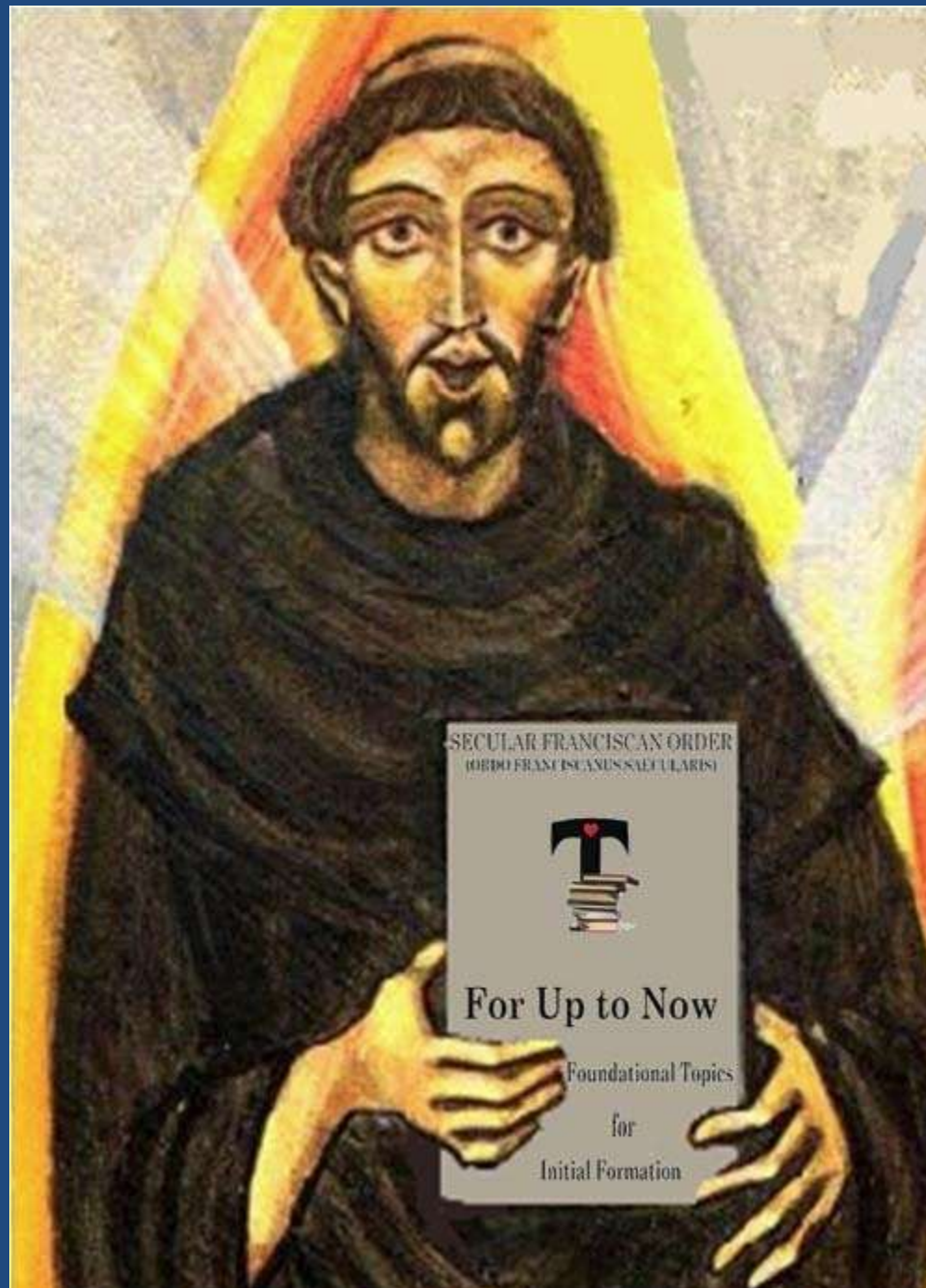


Our Lady of the Angels Regional Workshop January 20-22, 2012



Understanding Franciscan
Theology/Spirituality
Bob Fitzsimmons, OFS
National Formation Commission

For
Up
to
Now





Pop Quiz

1. Why did Jesus become human (Incarnate)?
2. Would Jesus have come if humanity had not fallen into sin?

Theology - Study of God

Spirituality - Relationship with God, our
charism or image of God -- 1 of many

2 distinct views of God

- Standard , primary, anthropocentric,
Dominican School
- Alternate – Christocentric
Franciscan School

Standard view/sequence of Creation



“O Happy Fault, O necessary sin of Adam”

St. Augustine -- Original Sin

St. Anselm

Doctrine of Atonement – *Cur Deus Homo*

Dominican Tradition -- Thomas Aquinas

- **Soteriology (salvation)**
- Sin & atonement
- Jesus - expiation for sin
- work at worthiness “earning salvation”
- Jesus – Incarnation not needed
- Pope Leo XIII -- 1879 *Aeterni Patris*
- Primary or standard theology
- Juridical – moral codes
- **Anthropocentric approach**

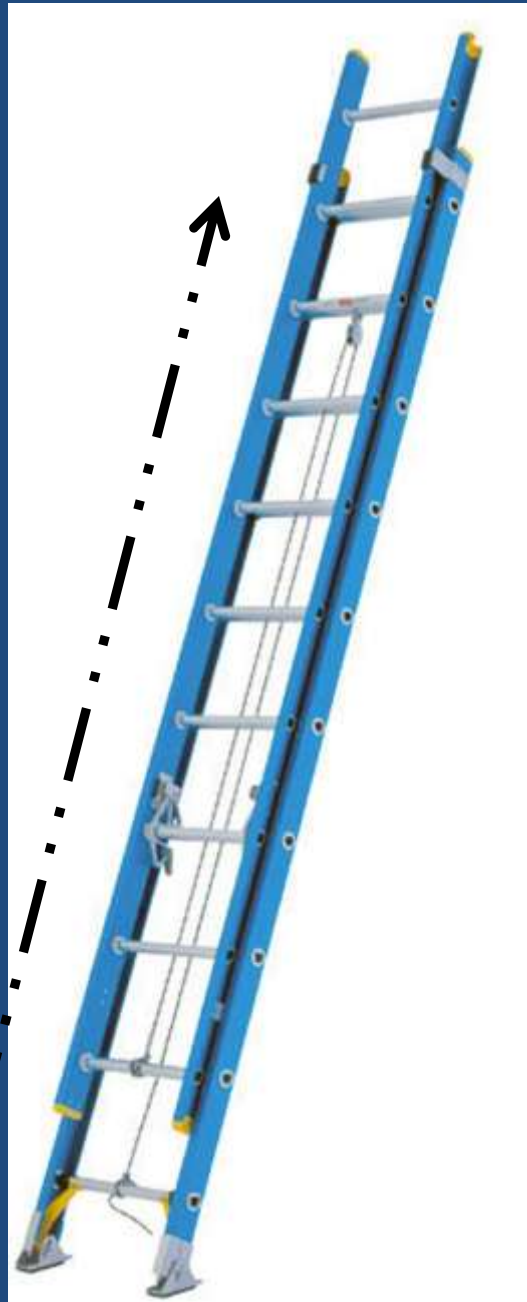
GOD

Spirituality of ascent

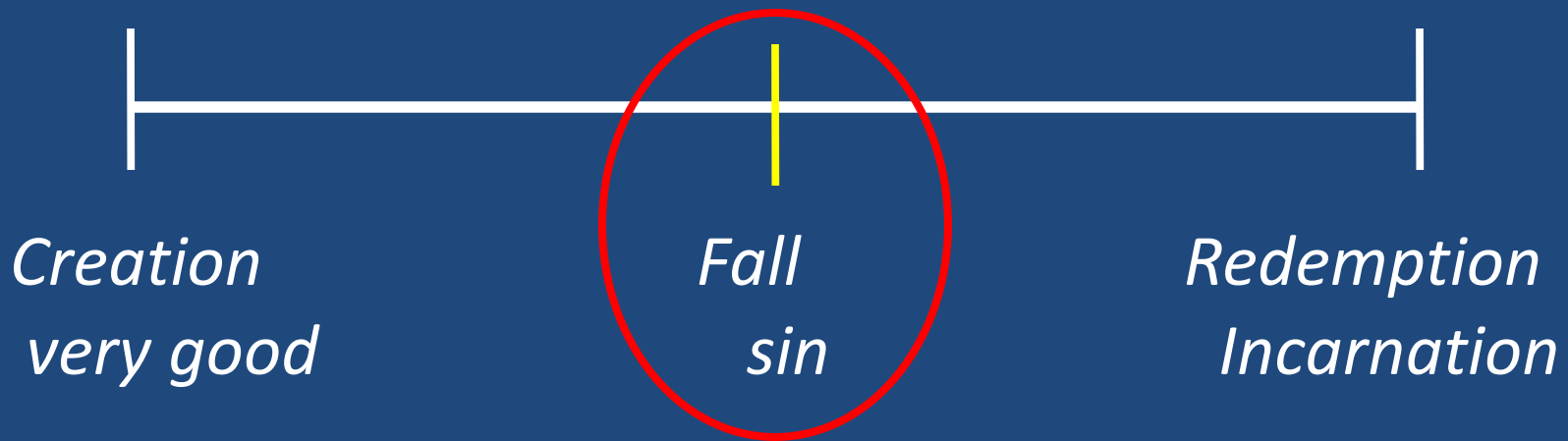
Seek Perfection and holiness by

escaping the world

- overcoming sin and temptation, the material world (flesh)
- Soul ascends to union with the Divine



The world,
material
flesh
sin



Necessity of Incarnation

St. Augustine

St. Anselm

Doctrine of Atonement

“Cur Deus Homo”

Athanasius, Basil the Great,
Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus

pseudo-Dionysius
Victorines

Franciscan Tradition

Dominican Tradition

Thomas Aquinas

1225-1274

- soteriological
- Sin & atonement
- Jesus –expiation
- work at worthiness
- **Jesus – no**
- Pope Leo XIII
- *1879 Aeterni Patris*
- Primary view
- Juridical

- anthropocentric

Francis & Clare

Bonaventure, 1221-1274

- Goodness of God = Love
- Poverty & Humility
- Trinity – relational
- Everything is God’s = gift

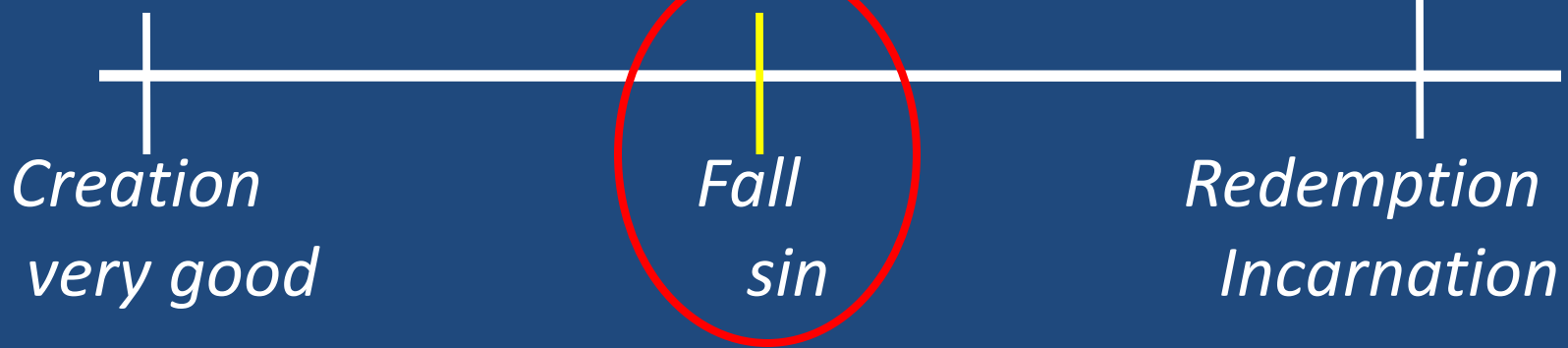
Scotus 1265-1308

- Jesus – Yes – Christocentric

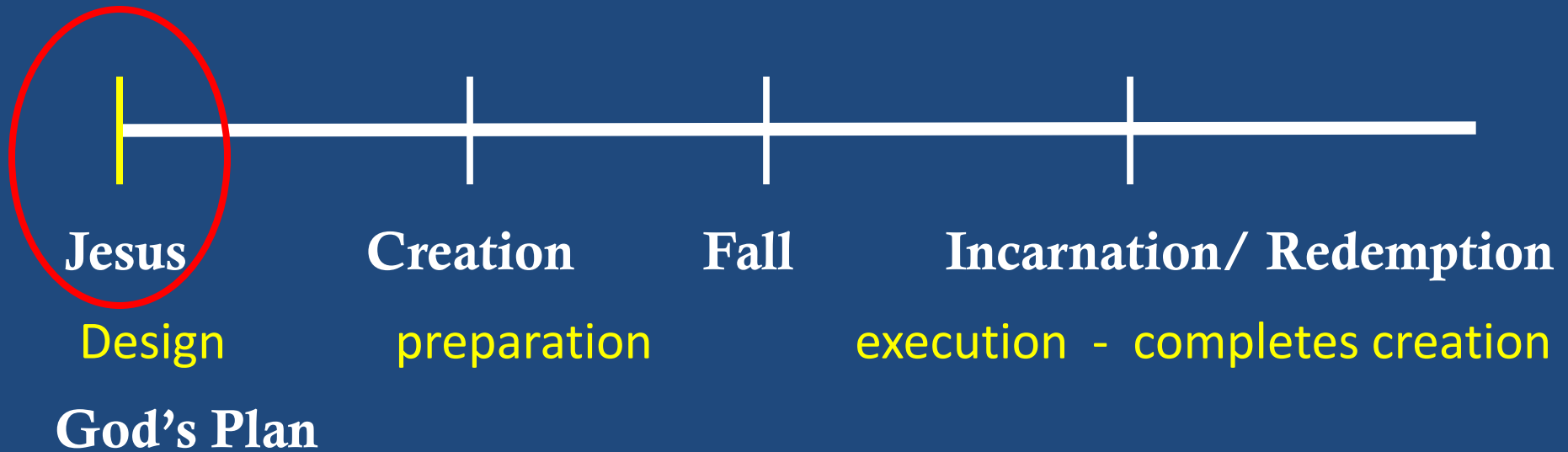
- **Alternate view**

- **Incarnation is original plan**

- **Creation supports Incarnation**



Necessity of Incarnation



God's Plan

Prepare for Christ

**focus on God's initial intention
not reaction to sin**

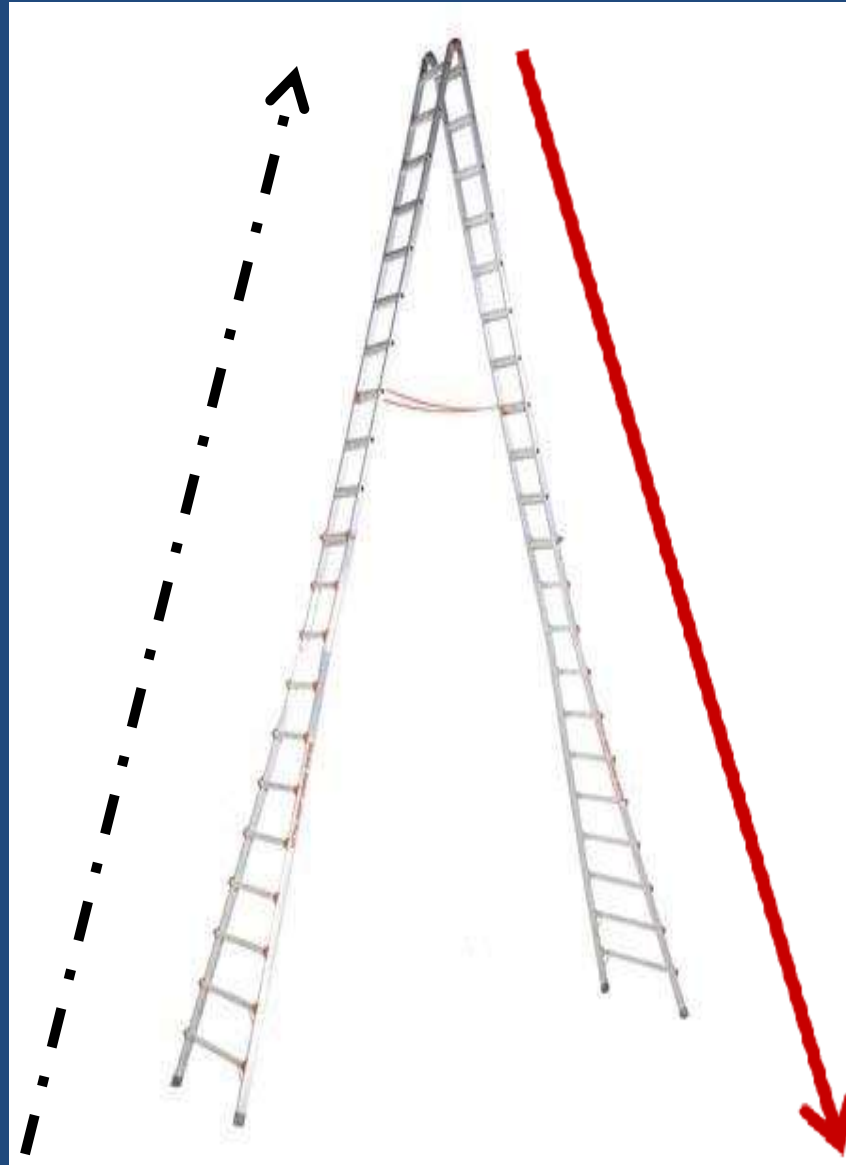
GOD

Standard view is ascent to achieve spiritual union

Our journey toward God is upward (ascent)

Escape the world and rise above the material world our human nature

Us – Creation – Material world, sin



God's movement toward all creation is down (descent)

God is found at the bottom in the poorest sisters and brothers.

The Incarnation transforms and unites material & spiritual in Christ

All is good

All is holy

Us - Creation

Francis & Clare

Co-founders of the Franciscan Movement

- Vision is based on God's goodness, manifested by
 - The Incarnation – gift of self
 - The Cross – depth of love
 - The Eucharist - love, poverty, humility

▣ Insight from Francis

- Goodness of God = always diffusive = gifted worthiness
- all creation is good & is gift = familial relatedness
- becoming like Jesus – beloved Son & ultimate gift
- Poverty (*sine proprio or living without grasping*)
- Contingency – We are not God -- everything is given as gift
- Mutual relationship of gift (Trinitarian - fraternity)

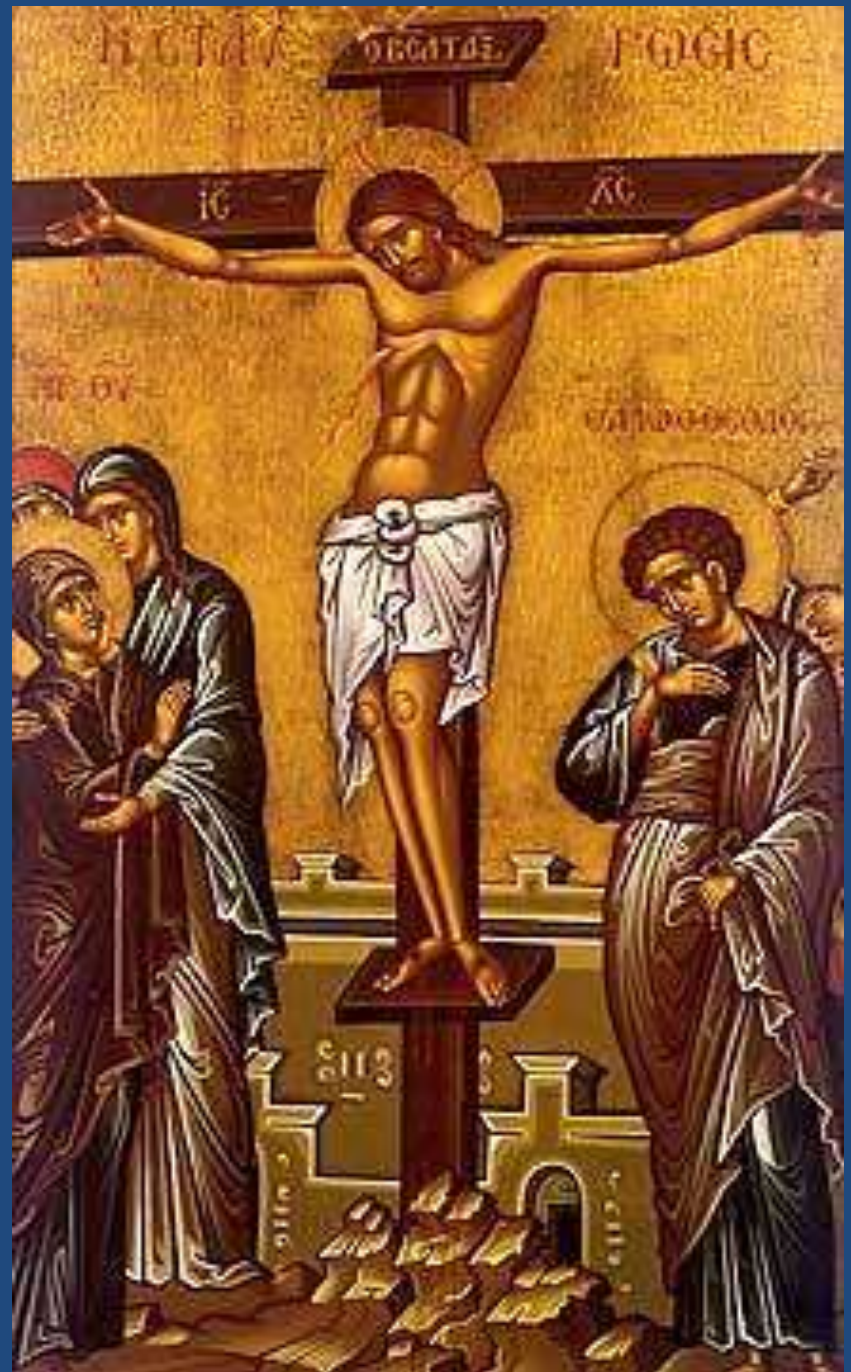
Journey determines arrival summary

- **Standard Theology** emphasizes sin, fear, atonement, suffering and earning redemption
 - sin, original & actual (personal)
 - fear, Image of a God who demands reparation
 - atonement,
 - suffering and
 - earning redemption/salvation
- ? What image of God does this view promote?

Most Christian
Spirituality
Points
to the events
Of Holy Week

Emphasis on
redemptive suffering

Salvation



Journey determines arrival

- **Alternate - Franciscan Theology** emphasizes the beloved, a God who desires us!
 - Love, (not sin)
 - Poverty, (Incarnation)
 - Humility (turns to us - relationship)
 - Everything belongs, everything is gift, everything is good because GOD IS GOOD

? What might this view of God look like?

To be loved by the
Father as a son,
Francis points
us to the Trinity
and in particular to
Jesus

A Table Fellowship
which is
Christo-centric but
always pointing us
to the Father

Sanctification



What is needed for the Journey:

- **Desire** – our response to God's Desire
- **Prayer** – vehicle to spirituality
- **Solitude** - entering the cave of the Heart to find the God dwelling in us
- **Community - relationship**

This is what I want!

Francis of Assisi

Q – What is your image of God?

Q – What do you want?

Bonaventure
&
John Duns Scotus

Bonaventure

Trinity

- humility, poverty, giving-ness are essential aspects of God's nature
[self-communication/expression] - revelation
- Fountain fullness – constantly outpouring, overflowing
- Fullness & emptiness
- Relationship of unbounded & uncontainable love

“bonum est sui diffusivum”

pax et bonum

goodness is diffusive by its very nature

foundation of Franciscan Theology



FOTOFSEARCH

Bonaventure

- God is Love by nature, total, unconditional, self emptying/giving (*kenosis*). **Poverty**
- God turns to us completely and can only give all to everyone. **Humility**
- Maintains standard view - Incarnation as sin remedy

Foundation of Franciscan Life

- **Poverty of God** – Perfect love requires the lover to hold nothing back from the beloved! God freely, by choice empties Himself for the good of the other (self-communication or total self-giving-- kenosis)
- **Humility of God** – God turns toward Jesus completely (**God's full self-expression in one other than Himself**) and through Jesus, The Father turns toward us (**finite self-expression of Jesus**) and all creation.

Incarnation in terms of humility

God comes down (Path of Descent)

**God bends down to embrace us in Love,
to lift up our nature and all of creation
to invite us into the Life of the Trinity**

If God bends down in love for us through the Word Incarnate, then we who are “little words**” must bend down in love for one another and for all creation if the universe is to find its fullness in Christ**

John Scotus

- **Trinity**
 - life of the Trinity exemplifies mutuality, equality, freedom and communal relationship.
- **Primacy of Christ – Incarnation**
 - primary motive for Incarnation is love, not sin.
 - Question is shifted from God's reaction to sin to God's original intent.
- **Haecceitas (thisness)**
 - each being is unique and worthy of attention

Thisness [*haecceitas*]

Thisness applied to the human person invests each individual with a unique value as one single individual wanted and loved by God, apart from any trait, attribute, accomplishment, similarity to others or any contribution to society.

Of the infinity possibilities for a “you” the specific, unique “you” is the one wanted & loved by God and called into being.

Each of us is a unique, customized one of a kind, personal gift from God

Each is God’s beloved!

Names

- Jesus reveals to us God's name

ABBA

- The Father reveals Jesus name

BELOVED SON

Holy Spirit

Only being filled with the Holy Spirit of God, can we:

- Imitate Jesus
- And become one with the Father

Summary

- 1. God is absolute love, being and creativity. Creation is dependent upon God to exist.**
- 2. God has freely chosen incarnation (taking on human form) before the human choice for sin.**
- 3. Christmas is of primary importance to us.**
- 4. Christ is the perfect image of who God is for creation.**
- 5. Every creature is unique, gifted, and living in relationship.**
- 6. Nothing humans have the ability to do has the capacity to make God do something.**
- 7. Mercy, forgiveness and justification are God's actions.**

Fr. Joe Schwab, OFM Executive Director, Franciscan Renewal
Center The Casa, Scottsdale AZ



Sharing - discussion

- Question -- Do you approach God as ABBA?
- Question – Do you grasp being God's beloved?