

## EXPERIENCING THE GOODNESS OF GOD THROUGH THE FRANCISCAN VALUES FRANCISCAN SIMPLICITY

**Topic:** Simplicity

**Goal:** To begin to explore the Franciscan Value of Simplicity

**Level:** Beginning

**Time:** 1 Hour

**Introduction:** Simplicity is an attitude of the heart that urges us to live honestly with a deep gratitude for the gifts, skills, possessions and abilities that we share. Through the respectful use of our many gifts we are able to fulfill the purpose for which the many gifts have been given to us – serving others.

**Opening Prayer:**

Most high and glorious God,  
enlighten the darkness of my heart,  
and give me, Lord  
a correct faith  
certain hope,  
a perfect charity,  
sense and knowledge,  
so that I may carry out Your holy and true command.  
(St. Francis)

**Reflection:** The gift of simplicity frees us from obsession with things. In the Gospels, Jesus often challenges others to live out this reality: he tells the disciples to travel lightly (Mark 6:8), the young man was asked to give away his possessions (Matthew 19:21/ Mark 10:11), his followers are reminded that they cannot “serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24) and the rich man who stored his bags of grain in ever bigger barns was called a fool for getting his priorities wrong (Luke 12:16). Francis took the words of Jesus to heart. He inspired people to give away all that they possessed, to live as vagabonds and to beg their bread from door to door. He took money and clothes from his father and distributed them to the poor, he divested himself from his own rich clothing and put on the simple clothes of the poor, he turned from the table of rich and lavish food and began begging for food from the rich. We, too, as followers of Francis are called to make choices that will lead us to live more simply and fully. By so doing we can be freed to accept ourselves as we really are and allow us to see others as we see ourselves. Living simply can free us to extend ourselves to others equally and freely. The many gifts that we have been given are ours only to share.

I had made plans for when change happened.  
I had calculated ways of engaging familiar  
nourishment for a reflective life.  
I had plotted bike paths, bus routes to  
wooded beauty hidden in the cityscape.  
I thought I can surrender this car,  
this piece of easy independence.  
I could once again let go  
if I held on to other aspects of routine.  
I could surrender comfort for the common good.  
All too quickly, almost like death,  
the moment came of parting, mourning,  
implementation of holding on

Only to discover all is changed  
There are new nooks of beauty,  
wilderness and green expanse  
New vistas I had not known.

Plans and plotting allow for letting go.  
But open up beyond the tears  
beyond control, beyond the death  
to life, beauty revealed beyond the loss.

(Simone Campbell)

**Reflection Questions:**

1. What are my biggest challenges to living the simple life?
2. What am I clinging to that is impeding my journey to lead a life of simplicity?
3. What gifts have I been given that are waiting to be shared with others?
4. What steps have I already taken to living more simply? What steps do I still need to take?

**Closing Prayer:**

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,  
grant us in our need the grace  
to do for you alone  
what we know You want us to do,  
and always to desire what pleases You.

Thus inwardly cleansed.  
interiorly enlightened,  
and inflamed by the Holy Spirit,  
may we 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 reign  
in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,  
and are glorified,  
God all-powerful, forever and ever. Amen  
(St. Francis)

**Resources:**

Francis – The Journey and the Dream by Murray Bodo  
St. Anthony Press 1988

Living Like Francis Today by Marci Blum  
Good Ground Press 2005

Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis  
VI Life in Poverty

St. Francis and the Foolishness of God by Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, OFM Cynthia Moe-  
Lobeda, Stuart Taylor  
Orbis Books 1993