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# **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY**

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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Participants will

- ✘ Familiarize themselves with the origins and history of the Franciscan family
- ✘ Clearly define who belongs to the First, Second, and Third Orders
- ✘ Recognize characteristics of the medieval culture and penitential movement out of which the Franciscan movement sprung



# OPENING PRAYER

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Begin with reflective music, suggest a version of Francis' Prayer before the Crucifix

Reading: 1 Cel 22

When on a certain day the Gospel was read in that Church, how the Lord sent his disciples out to preach, Francis, assisting there, understood somewhat the words of the Gospel; after Mass, he humbly asked the priest to explain the Gospel to him more fully. When he set forth for Francis all these things, the holy man Francis, hearing that the disciples of Christ should not possess gold or silver; nor carry along the way script, or wallet, or bread, or a staff; that they should not have shoes, or two tunics; but that they should preach the Kingdom of God and penance, immediately cried out exultantly, "This is what I want, this is what I long to do with all my heart!"

# PROCESS

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- ✖ It is expected that participants engaging in this module will have first studied the lives of Francis and Clare
- ✖ Participants could read through the slides independently or someone familiar with the content could do a presentation for a group
- ✖ Some participants may choose to read further by choosing one of the books listed at the end of the powerpoint



# QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ✘ What prompts you to say like Francis, “This is what I want! This is what I long to do with all my heart?”
- ✘ Do you have any personal knowledge or experience of members of these three branches of the Franciscan family? What kind of work do they do? How do they model Francis and Clare?
- ✘ Discuss the differences between joining an official branch of the family like the Secular Franciscans and becoming an associate of a particular congregation.



# CHARACTERISTICS OF MEDIEVAL CULTURE

## 1. Political world

--the Holy Roman Empire was often at war with the papal states (Assisi was faithful to papal rule; Perugia to the Roman Empire; thus the conflict Francis fought in before his conversion when he was captured and imprisoned)

--Crusades were in full force with Christians fighting Muslims over possession of the Holy Land (think ahead to when Francis will speak with Sultan)

## 2. Social milieu

- towns were emerging with tradesmen, artisans, and shopkeepers (in contrast to a purely agricultural society)
- distinctive social classes were evolving:  
*majores* 10%, *minores* 90% (Clare would be born into noble class)
- merchant class developing (into which Francis would be born)



### 3. Church

- average lay person had little knowledge of faith and no catechism (Francis would get a “grade school” education at parish church, learning some scripture, psalms mostly and a small amount of Latin)
- faith was passed on orally, books were not available, scripture had to be memorized
- preaching was reserved to bishops as even priests had no theology background
- many heretical groups around



#### 4. Religious Life

- monks (Benedictines) separated from the world in monasteries, linked to social status as required a dowry to be admitted
- canons regular (Augustinians) attached mainly to cathedral churches
- hermits less clearly defined, individual persons separate from the world
- women's groups included beguines, recluses, or anchoresses

## 5. Fourth Lateran Council 1215

- large reform movement
- prescribed education and regulation of preachers
- proclaimed transubstantiation of Eucharist
- forbade the development of new religious rules (Francis' oral approval in 1209 will allow Franciscans to develop distinctive rule)

# EARLY PENITENTIAL MOVEMENT

- ✕ Understanding of penance: biblical sense of metanoia/ conversion—a turning away from self and toward God
- ✕ Early penitents: a voluntary choice by some to “seek perfection”
  - + Recognized as a special class in the church, exempt from bearing arms
  - + Prayer and fasting
  - + Alms to the poor
  - + Simple dress
  - + Restored churches
  - + Dedicated to charitable works



# FRANCIS' EARLY LIFE AND CONVERSION

- ✘ Likely lived among penitents and embraced elements of their spirituality
- ✘ During the day deliberately chose to work among people, evenings chose a “hermits distance” to give perspective

# FIRST ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

## ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

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- ✘ Read Francis' conversion story: the brotherhood began with an insight into the gospel
- ✘ Initial group of about 12 men including Bernard of Quintavalle, Peter, Giles, Sylvester, Leo, Angelo, Rufino
- ✘ Primitive brotherhood: no fixed structures, were itinerant and wandering, went out by two to preach as in gospel and gathered once a year in chapter; made a living working among people; would celebrate mass and liturgy of the hours in parishes, had a recognizable common style of dress



# VALUES OF FRANCISCAN STYLE OF LIVING

- ✘ Fraternity: life together was the place they encountered God; their community was open to all and all members were equal
- ✘ Minority: concerned their status in the world, how they saw themselves in relation to others; lived as servants; acknowledgement that all comes from God as gift
- ✘ Poverty: “with nothing of their own” implied insecurity, living day to day, working or begging, renounced all ownership



# VALUES

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- ✘ Humility: rejected all power and privilege; recognition of all as gift, those in authority seen as servant
- ✘ Prayer: strong eremetical tradition; recognition of need for continual conversion
- ✘ Mission: went into the world as heralds of peace and penance

# RAPID GROWTH OF BROTHERS

- ✘ 1209 approval of Rule: allowed brothers to preach outside of Assisi and even outside Italy
- ✘ Explosive growth in numbers: 3000 by 1221, 30,000 by 1260; men joined outside of Italy who never met Francis
- ✘ More educated men were joining and they began a movement toward learning and clericalization
- ✘ By 1220 a year of novitiate was required and men took solemn vows; began to settle in residences and a structure of common life evolves
- ✘ 1228-1247 were years of further expansion and institutionalization



# DIVISIONS

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- ✗ Division occurred in years to come as members had varying opinions as to how to live Franciscan life
  - + Conventuals resided in urban convents and study centers, were heavily committed to parochial ministry, used concessions granted by popes to “relax” the rule
  - + Reform movements calling members back to original spirit and dream of Francis (Zealots, Spirituals, Observants)
  - + In 1517 Pope Leo X officially separated order into two branches



# CAPUCHIN REFORM

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- ✘ A group of observant friars wished to live an even deeper reform life—seeking a primitive life of itinerant preaching, literal observance of the Rule and to wear a habit like Francis (a cone shaped hood attached to tunic)
- ✘ 1528 gained legal existence and protection, granted permission to accept novices and transfers; wrote their own constitutions centered on prayer, poverty, and penance
- ✘ 1619 recognized as independent branch within order

# TODAY

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- ✕ Order of Friars Minor (brought together all observant groups under one General Minister)
- ✕ Order of Friars Minor Conventual
- ✕ Order of Friars Minor Capuchin

# THE SECOND ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS ORDER OF POOR CLARES

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- ✘ Clare 12 years younger than Francis
- ✘ Early life of penance in home with prayer, almsgiving, fasting and dedication as virgin even before meeting Francis
- ✘ Joins Palm Sunday 1212 and settles at San Damiano
- ✘ Clare sees her life mirroring Francis'—one movement



# EARLY LIFE

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- ✘ Clare and her sisters join the brothers in works of mercy, likely working with lepers
- ✘ Meanwhile, Cardinal Hugolino forms federation of women's monasteries that were previously scattered throughout Italy (around 1219) and requires cloister and imposes a Benedictine rule
- ✘ Clare appears able to resist until after Francis' death

# UNDER BENEDICTINE RULE

- ✗ 1228 appears to accept Hugolino's rule; she is given an exception in the Privilege of Poverty
- ✗ Clare becomes head of "Order of San Damiano" (other monasteries retain right to hold property)
- ✗ Movement grows throughout Italy and Spain
- ✗ Innocent IV writes a rule for all these monasteries in 1247

# AGNES OF PRAGUE

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- ✖ Born 1211, daughter of the king, well educated
- ✖ Impressed by friars who arrived in Prague 1225 (then Bohemia, now Czech republic)
- ✖ 1231 founded a hospital and built a monastery for women
- ✖ Letters from Clare 1234, 1235, 1238 and 1253



# CLARE'S RULE OF LIFE

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- ✘ Strong parallels to friar's rule
- ✘ Desires form of life as given by Francis but as 35 years lived experience behind her
- ✘ Approved 1253 just two days before her death
- ✘ Approval is for San Damiano only; remaining monasteries continue to follow 1219 or 1247 rules

# URBAN IV 1263

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- ✘ Calls all houses Sisters of St. Clare for uniformity
- ✘ Writes a new rule to replace all previous rules except those granted permission to follow Clare's rule (probably Prague, Foligno and San Damiano)
- ✘ Will not be until 1400s that monasteries go back to roots and look at Clare's rule and life for all houses



# COLETTE OF CORBIE

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- ✘ Colette lived 1381-1447
- ✘ Receives permission 1409 to begin own monastery
- ✘ Resurrected the Rule of Clare and interpreted it strictly: fasting, abstinence, barefoot, reliance on alms, no servants or social ranks
- ✘ Today groups following her reforms are called Colletine Poor Clares

# GROWTH OF POOR CLARES

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- ✕ No single history as each monastery was independent
- ✕ First permanent US foundation in 1875

# THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

## THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE

- ✘ Persons chose to follow a penitential spirituality, but remain in their own homes
- ✘ Both men and women followed the spirit of Francis and Clare
- ✘ Early examples: Lady Jacopa (3 Cel 37-39) and Praxedes (3 Cel 181)
- ✘ Other prominent early figures: Elizabeth of Hungary 1207-1231; Rose of Viterbo 1234-1253; Margaret of Cortona 1247-1297; Angela of Foligno 1248-1309



# WAY OF LIFE

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- ✘ Early Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (First Letter to the Faithful) 1209-1215: exhorted radical metanoia, penance as Jesus lived, love of God and neighbor, Eucharistic devotion, worthy fruits of penance (a noticeable response) and consequences for not doing penance
- ✘ Later Exhortation (1220-21): describes greater focus on way of life as penitents; underlying theology seen in emphasis on Incarnation, Passion and Eucharist; demands a spirit of prayer to maintain a place for God, love of neighbor, charity and almsgiving

# MEMORIALE PROPOSITI

- ✘ Written by Cardinal Hugolino 1221-1228 with influence from Francis' 1221 letter, but in more juridical format (can be found in Omnibus p. 1068)
- ✘ Prescribed a “way of life for those living in their own homes”: humility in dress, abstention from drinking and entertainment, fasting and abstinence, prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments, religious instruction, charitable works, did not bear arms
- ✘ Placed penitents under jurisdiction of bishop rather than state (could not be pressed into civil service, oath taking or bearing arms)



# RULE OF NICHOLAS IV 1289

- ✘ Considered uniform canonical document for all brothers and sisters of penance
- ✘ Placed under close juridical supervision of First Order
- ✘ Way of life: loyal Catholics who resist heresy, continues to include separation from world in dress, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, reception of sacraments, and charity
- ✘ Rule remains in place until 1521 for TOR and 1883 for SFO



## SECULAR PENITENT FRATERNITIES 1289-1521

- ✖ Remain largely confined to southern Europe
- ✖ Continue to play public role in towns, i.e. distribution of food to poor, hospice
- ✖ Increasing trend toward growth in community, especially among women's groups—lived in common and shared ministry

# ANGELINE OF MONTEGIOVE

- ✘ Considered to be foundress of Third Order Regular community
- ✘ Lived at Santa Anna in Foligno a life in community with combined emphasis on service to poor and prayer in an open, unenclosed monastery
- ✘ 1428 received papal permission to become minister general over six houses

# THIRD ORDER REGULAR

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- ✘ 1521 Rule of Leo X: short and simple, it seeks uniformity of all TOR communities, has close connection with OFMs
- ✘ First men's TOR community founded 1447
- ✘ 1563 Council of Trent demands cloister for all women's communities
- ✘ By 1700s vocations to "active" communities increase; the church "tolerates" them



# TOR

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- ✘ Throughout 1800s bishops looked the other way because active communities met the needs of society
- ✘ 1835 papal decree acknowledging “communities of common life”
- ✘ 1849 first community to settle in US
- ✘ 1900 final recognition by church as “religious”
- ✘ 1927 Rule of Pius XI
- ✘ 1982 Rule approved by Pope John Paul II; written by own members, prologue is Exhortation to Brothers and Sisters of Penance

# SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF DUBUQUE

- ✘ Founded in 1864 by Mother Xavier Termehr in Germany, the Sisters emigrated to Iowa in 1875 and settled in Dubuque in 1878. Sisters currently minister as educators, health care workers, retreat ministers, pastoral ministers, peace and justice advocates, artists and musicians.
- ✘ Men and women are welcome to become Associates of the Sisters, embracing the charism as they live the gospel in their daily lives. Associates bond with the Sisters through faith sharing, prayer, study, service, and congregational celebrations.



# THIRD ORDER SECULAR

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- ✘ Gradually moved away from being an “order”
- ✘ Became more devotional in nature; 1516 no longer exempt from civil courts; 1700s gave up distinctive dress; continued involvement in charitable activities
- ✘ 1883 Pope Leo XIII adapts rule to modern conditions
- ✘ 1978 Pope Paul VI approves new rule written with its own members; prologue is Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance



# THIRD ORDER TODAY

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- ✘ In 2000, there were approximately 100 congregations of Third Order Regular men and women in the United States, most belonging to the Franciscan Federation
- ✘ The Secular Franciscans are now guided by a national minister and council (NAFRA) and are organized into 30 regions, 700 fraternities with 14,500 members (2010)

# RESOURCES

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