Understanding Franciscan Theology/Spirituality

BOB FITZSIMMONS, OFS
NATIONAL FORMATION COMMISSION
For Up to Now

FUN MANUAL
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

Creation → Fall → Redemption

“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 Aterni 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

Creation                          Fall                       Redemption
very good                      sin                           Incarnation
St. Augustine
St. Anselm
Doctrine of Atonement
“Cur Deus Homo”

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dominican Tradition</th>
<th>Franciscan Tradition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Aquinas</td>
<td>Francis &amp; Clare</td>
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<td>1225-1274</td>
<td>1221-1274</td>
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- Soteriological
- Sin & atonement
- Jesus – expiation
- work at worthiness
- Jesus – no
- Pope Leo XIII
- *1879 Aterni Patris*
- Primary view
- Juridical

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

**Bonaventure**, 1221-1274

- Jesus – Yes – Christocentric
- **Alternate view**
- Incarnation is original plan
- Creation supports Incarnation

**Scotus** 1265-1308

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Franciscan Tradition
Francis & Clare

Bonaventure, 1221-1274

Scotus 1265-1308

- Jesus – Yes – Christocentric
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Creation

Fall

Redemption

very good

sin

Incarnation

Necessity of Incarnation

Jesus

Creation

Fall

Incarnation/Redemption

Design

preparation

execution - completes creation

God’s Plan  Prepare for Christ

focus on God’s initial intention not reaction to sin
Standard view is ascent to achieve spiritual union.

Our journey toward God is upward (ascent).

Escape the world and rise about the material world our human nature.

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 – Material world, sin

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
Heritage & Roots -- Legacy

- 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

  \[\text{[self-communication/expression]} \rightarrow \text{revelation}\]

- Fountain fullness – constantly outpouring, overflowing
- Fullness & emptiness
- Relationship of unbounded & uncontainable love

“\text{bonum est sui diffusivum}”

\text{pax et bonum}

\text{goodness is diffusive by its very nature}

\text{foundation of Franciscan Theology}
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
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 then 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.**

Father Joe Schwab OFM, Executive Director, Franciscan Renewal Center, The Casa Scottsdale, Arizona
Sharing - discussion

- Question -- Do you approach God as ABBA?

- Question – Do you grasp being God’s beloved?