



Martín Carbajo Núñez

Being a Franciscan in the Digital Age

New Challenges, New Life



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Life

MARTÍN CARBAJO NÚÑEZ

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To my brothers Vicente and Mari, with
whom I learned to take care of the common house,
and to all the followers of Francis of Assisi,
who testify to the relevance of his charism in the Digital Age.

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Abbreviations

1. Biblical books

1Cor	1 Corinthians
2Cor	2 Corinthians
1Kgs	1 Kings
2Pe	2 Peter
Col	Colossians
Dan	Daniel
Dt	Deuteronomy
Eph	Ephesians
Ex	Exodus
Gn	Genesis
Hos	Hosea
Is	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Jn	John
Lk	Luke
Lv	Leviticus
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Ps	Psalms
Qoh	Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)
Rev	Revelation or Apocalypse
Rom	Romans

2. Magisterium sources

AG	SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, <i>Ad Gentes divinitus</i> . Decree
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AL	FRANCIS, <i>Amoris Laetitia</i> . Exhortation
APar	PAUL VI, <i>Alma parens</i> Apostolic letter
CA	JOHN PAUL II, <i>Centesimus annus</i> . Encyclical
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CELAM	General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops
CIC	Code of Canon Law
CICL	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and societies of Apostolic Life
CSDC	PCJP, <i>Compendium of CST</i>
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
CV	BENEDICT XVI, <i>Caritas in veritate</i> . Encyclical
DA	CELAM, V General Conference, <i>Aparecida Document</i>
DCE	BENEDICT XVI, <i>Deus caritas est</i> . Encyclical
DSo	BENEDICT XVI, Message to bishop Domenico Sorrentino
DV	SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, <i>Dei Verbum</i> . Constitution
ECS	PCSC, <i>Ethics in communications</i>
EG	FRANCIS, <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> . Exhortation
EN	PAUL VI, <i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i> . Exhortation
EV	JOHN PAUL II, <i>Evangelium Vitae</i> . Encyclical
EVC	USG, <i>Economy and mission in consecrated life today</i>
GE	FRANCIS, <i>Gaudete et Exsultate</i> . Apostolic exhortation
GS	SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, <i>Gaudium et spes</i> . Constitution
IM	SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, <i>Inter mirifica</i> . Decree
InsB16	Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI (Benedict XVI)
InsFco	Insegnamenti di Francesco (Pope Francis)
InsJP2	Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II (John Paul II)
WCP	World Day of Peace
LF	FRANCIS, <i>Lumen fidei</i> . Encyclical
LG	SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, <i>Lumen Gentium</i> . Constitution
LS	FRANCIS, <i>Laudato si'</i> . Encyclical
NA	SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, <i>Nostra aetate</i> . Declaration
PCID	Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue
PCJP	Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Abbreviations

PCO	Plenary Council of the Order
PCSC	Pontifical Council for Social Communications
PF	BENEDICT XVI, <i>Porta fidei</i> . Apostolic letter
RM	JOHN PAUL II, <i>Redemptoris misio</i> . Encyclical
S16dp	SYNOD OF BISHOPS (2016), <i>Preparatory document</i>
S19df	SYNOD OF BISHOPS (2019), <i>Final document</i>
S19dp	SYNOD OF BISHOPS (2019), <i>Preparatory document</i>
S19il	SYNOD OF BISHOPS (2019), <i>Working document (Instrumentum laboris)</i>
SCa	BENEDICT XVI, <i>Sacramentum caritatis</i> . Exhortation
SS	BENEDICT XVI, <i>Spe Salvi</i> . Encyclical
USG	Union of Superiors General
VC	JOHN PAUL II, <i>Vita consecrata</i> . Exhortation
VFC	CICL, <i>Fraternal life in community</i> . Instruction
VG	FRANCIS, <i>Veritatis Gaudium</i> . Apostolic Constitution
WCD	World Communications Day
WCP	World Day of Peace

3. Writings of St. Francis

Adm	The Admonitions
CtC	The Canticle of the Creatures
ER	The Earlier Rule (<i>Regula non bullata</i>)
LR	The Later Rule (<i>Regula bullata</i>)
LtAnt	A Letter a Brother Anthony of Padua
LtL	A Letter to Brother Leo
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister
LtO	A Letter to the Entire Order
OfP	The Office of the Passion
OrSD	The Prayer before the Crucifix
PrsG	The Praises of God
SalV	A Salutation on Virtues
Test	The Testament

4. Franciscan Sources and Authors

1Cel	CELANO, <i>The Life of St. Francis</i>
1Sent	BONAVENTURE, <i>Commentaria in I librum</i>

Sententiarum

2Cel	CELANO, <i>The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul</i>
2Sent	BONAVENTURE, <i>Commentaria in II librum</i> <i>Sententiarum</i>
AF	Analecta Franciscana
AFE	OFM, <i>Franciscan Management of Finances</i>
AOFM	Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum
Brevil	BONAVENTURE, <i>Breviloquium</i>
C15	GENERAL CURIA OFM, <i>Going to the peripheries with the joy of the Gospel</i> , Gen. Chapter 2015
C15il	GENERAL CURIA OFM, <i>Instrumentum laboris</i> for the General Chapter OFM 2015
CCGG	GENERAL CURIA OFM, <i>General Constitutions</i>
CCGG Cap	GENERAL CURIA OFM Cap, <i>Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor</i>
CCGG Conv	GENERAL CURIA OFM Conv, <i>Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual</i>
FAED	AMSTRONG R.J – HERMANN J.A.W. – SHORT W.J. (ed.), <i>Francis of Assisi: Early Documents</i>
Hex	BONAVENTURE, <i>Collationes in Hexaëmeron</i>
ILChap	<i>Instrumentum laboris</i> . General Chapter OFM 2015
Itin	BONAVENTURE, <i>Itinerarium mentis in Deum</i>
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions
LFI	The Little Flowers of Saint Francis
LM	BONAVENTURE, <i>The Major Legend</i>
Lm	BONAVENTURE, <i>The Minor Legend</i>
Lp	<i>The Assisi Compilation</i> (The legend of Perugia)
OFM	Ordo Fratrum Minorum
OFMcap	Ordo Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum
OFMconv	Ordo Fratrum Minorum Conventualium
Ord	DUNS SCOTUS, <i>Ordinatio (Opus Oxoniense)</i>
PCO	Plenary Council of the Order
Quaracchi	BONAVENTURE, <i>Opera omnia</i> , Collegii S. Bona- venturae, Quaracchi 1882-1902
SC	Sacrum commercium
Vat	DUNS SCOTUS, <i>Opera omnia</i> , ed. Comm. Scotisticae, Vatican City 1950ss.

5. Bibliographical and common

a.	Articulus
AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
BAC	Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos
c.	Chapter
cf.	Confer, see, compare
cit.	Cited, quoted
d.	Distinctio, distinctiones
ed.	Editor, publisher, coordinator, coordinators, editorial
EDB	Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna
Ibid	Ibidem
Id	Idem, the same
LEV	Libreria Editrice Vaticana
n.	Number, numbers
OR	L'Osservatore Romano
p.	Pars, page, pages
prol.	Prologus
q.	Quaestio, quaestiones
MSC	Media of Social Communication
RTM	Rivista di teologia morale
SelFran	Selecciones de Franciscanismo
S.Th	THOMAS AQUINAS, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>
Trad.	My translation
un.	Unicus, unica
UP	University Press
Univ.	Universidad, University
Vol.	Volume, volumes
PG	Migne, <i>Patrologia graeca</i>
PL	Migne, <i>Patrologia latina</i>

Introduction

This book focus on how Franciscans can live their charism in the Digital Age. The new social context presents new challenges and, therefore, it requires a new life. How to face the current socio-environmental and communicative challenges?

The Franciscan perspective fits well with the kind of horizontal, intuitive, and interactive communication that prevails in the Digital Age. Francis of Assisi is also universally valued as a model of dialogue and integral ecology. This has been recognized by the post-conciliar Catholic Magisterium, which has proclaimed him patron saint “of those who promote ecology” (*oecologicae cultorum*)¹ and has highlighted his contemplative outlook (*EV* 83). Indeed, “he communed with all creation” and “every creature was a sister, united to him by bonds of affection” (*LS* 11).

Standing out against the technocratic paradigm and the colonization of information, this book invites all to assume the motivations that arise from Franciscan spirituality “to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world” (*LS* 216) and to reestablish an authentic human communication. The encyclical *Laudato si'* has highlighted the importance of St. Francis in these areas.

We will try to avoid the risk of misrepresenting the features of the historical Francis. Some authors of the past have fallen into this trap and have offered clearly distorted visions of Francis of Assisi, to the point of considering him a heretic in defiant confrontation with the Catholic Church (Lynn White). In

¹ *LS* 10. JOHN PAUL II, «*Inter sanctos*. Apostolic letter» (Sep. 29, 1979), in *AAS* 71/2 (1979) 1509-1510. The English translation of the Pontifical Magisterium's documents will be taken from www.vatican.va

addition, E. Rénan and P. Sabatier questioned the biographical sources that refer to him, thus initiating the “Franciscan Question,” but they themselves distorted his image, uncritically applying to him the traits of Romanticism.

The fascination of the Franciscan utopia can cloud our vision. We need to be aware that the idea of giving an updated image of Francis can become a subtle way of talking about ourselves, while pretending to be talking about him.² However, the updating effort is necessary so that the message does not remain something theoretical, which does not appeal to the heart of people in the Digital Era.

This updating effort is a fundamental objective of this book. We could formulate it in this way: today the authentic living experience of the Franciscan charism cannot be reduced to repeating activities and forms that have been effective in the past, but now have lost their relevance and significance. We need to discern, in the light of the Spirit, the core of Francis' experience in order to reincarnate it today in a creative and relevant way.

We have already studied the Franciscan roots of integral ecology in our publication “Sister Mother Earth”³ and we have extended this analysis to the communicative sphere in the volume: “Everything is Connected.”⁴ We invite the reader to see those books for a more complete vision of what we affirm here on these topics.

The present volume recalls the past in order to illuminate the present and open it to a future of hope. In this sense, the Church

² “Actualiser François, comme on le fait souvent, n’est qu’une façon déguisée de parler de nous-mêmes en faisant semblant de parler d’un autre. Cherchons donc d’abord à le replacer dans son temps, sans nourrir l’illusion de retrouver le François d’Assise qui parcourait avec quelques compagnons dépenaillés les chemins de l’Ombrie e dont le vécu nous échappera toujours.” VAUCHEZ A., *François d’Assise entre histoire et mémoire*, Pluriel, Paris 2009, 18.

³ CARBAJO NÚÑEZ M., *Sister Mother Earth. Franciscan Roots of the Laudato Si’*, TAU, Phoenix (AZ) 2017.

⁴ CARBAJO NÚÑEZ M., *Everything is Connected. Integral ecology my in the Digital Age*, Media House, Delhi 2020.

has joyfully reminded us that consecrated persons “have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished!” (*VC* 110). Pope Francis has told the Consecrated that the memory of their glorious past should not lead them to nostalgia, but to hope: “Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things” (*Ibid.*).

Distribution and content

The book is divided into two parts, each one with five chapters. The first part focuses on the surprising relevance of the Franciscan perspective today and invites all “to remember and to recount” some significant milestones of its “glorious history.” By remembering and being aware of their history and identity, the followers of St. Francis will find easier to make a significant contribution to a future of hope for all humanity. The second part shows some of the basic attitudes that Franciscans must assume in the Digital Age.

The first chapter serves as a framework for the entire subsequent discourse, as it presents the need to renew consecrated life through processes of transformation. Instead of clinging to what they have always done, religious persons must be open to a future of novelty and change, continually assuming the core of their own charism.

The second chapter focuses on Franciscan charism and shows some of its nuclear aspects; more specifically, it reflects on the deep motivations that led St. Francis to initiate his way of life and on how Franciscans can revive it today in order to be faithful to their ideal. Above all, Francis of Assisi was a man of faith, a mystic, and a pilgrim. His radical experience of divine gratuitousness reconciled him with all people, with himself, and with creation. Therein lies the timeliness of his message and of his way of evangelizing (c. 3).

Drawing inspiration from St. Francis, the Pope affirms that evangelization is closeness (*EG* 199), joyful witness, ever new,

of an experience that has transformed one's own life. St. Francis, in fact, always meditated on the humility of the Incarnate Word and discovered Christ present in all creatures. Inspired by him, the Franciscans have always been affectionately close to the people of God, trying to help those in need, even in the economic and scientific fields (c. 4). Their charism and reflections continue to enjoy a surprising relevance, as has been recognized by the post-conciliar ecclesiastical magisterium (c. 5).

The second part of the book, entitled: "A great history still to be accomplished!" presents some basic Christian attitudes that the Franciscans must assume in order to continue to be "the friars of the people;" that is, to be faithful to their foundational charism. We will focus on these five: listening, contemplation, discernment, dialogue, and administration of goods in the logic of gift. These are basic human attitudes that the Church has again explicitly proposed in the final document of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region. This document affirms the need to "strengthen a culture of dialogue, reciprocal listening, spiritual discernment, consensus and communion" (*SI9df88*).

Responding to the challenges of the current socio-environmental crisis, the Franciscans, with their lives, must testify to the need to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, opening the ears of the heart (c. 6) and developing the capacity to discern in the midst of our hyper-connected and hyper-accelerated society (c. 8). In addition to listening and discerning, they should also assume the mysticism of open eyes, which will allow them to see and contemplate the faces of God in all that surrounds them, especially in the poor and in sister mother earth (c. 7). Poverty and minority will help them to testify to the importance of human relationships and of dialogue in the Spirit of Assisi (c. 9). This inward and outward poverty, as an expression of trust in the divine Providence, will also allow them to administer responsibly the gifts they have received, living joyfully from their own work (c. 10).

Some conceptual clarifications

We will use the concept of communication as an expression of self-giving, always oriented to improve our four fundamental relationships: with God, with oneself, with others, and with creation. It should not be reduced to a simple two-way transmission of information. To communicate is to donate oneself. The Franciscans defend this logic of gift that nourishes fraternal relationships in the free and generous search for the common good.

Communication, communion, and community go always together. Communication will be authentic if it creates communion and community. Indeed, “communication is part of God’s plan for us and an essential way to experience fellowship” (*WCD* 2018), restoring the four levels of the ecological balance: “within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God” (*LS* 210).

The concept of integral ecology “is based on the recognition of being-in-relationships as a fundamental human category.”⁵ Therefore, “the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts” (*LS* 141). The encyclical *Laudato si’* describes integral ecology with these words:

“Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources. There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm” (111).

The technocratic paradigm has provoked the current anthropological and socio-environmental crisis. We need a radical change in our lifestyles. “Today we are not only living in a time

⁵ *SI9il* 47. “This means that we develop as human beings on the basis of our relationships with ourselves, with others, with society in general, with nature/environment, and with God.” *Ibid.*

of changes but are experiencing a true epochal shift,” that calls for “changing the models of global development” and “redefining our notion of progress” (*VG* 3) in order to assume a more relational paradigm.

Criticism of the technocratic paradigm does not imply an undervaluation of scientific and technical progress. In line with the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, the recent Magisterium recognizes the importance of science and technology (*LS* 102). The human being is both natural and cultural. God calls him “to cultivate and care” for the earth (Gen 2:15); that is, not only to adapt himself to the environment, but also to transform it creatively in tune with God’s plan, so as to make it more habitable.

“Human creativity cannot be suppressed. If an artist cannot be stopped from using his or her creativity, neither should those who possess particular gifts for the advancement of science and technology be prevented from using their God-given talents for the service of others “ (*LS* 131).

The encyclical *Laudato si’* affirms the need to overcome the misguided anthropocentrism that has provoked the current crisis, but it does not say that nature must be sacralized (biocentrism). The Catholic Church has repeatedly manifested its appreciation for the scientific knowledge of natural laws, the use of technology, and the transforming action of human beings on nature. Humans must continue to apply “their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility” (118), but always in an ethical way (78); that is to say, moved by the logic of gift and in perennial listening to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

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