

## Origins of Christian Spirituality: Assignment

1. Give an example of a modern-day spirituality and the modern-day needs it addresses. In order to do this, it may be helpful to first identify a person who responded to some modern-day need, and then developed what can be called a modern-day spirituality.
2. The monk's vow of stability meant that he accepted his community, the place in which he lived and the people with whom he lived, as his way to God. In pronouncing that vow, he said, in effect, that his contentment and fulfillment did not consist in constant change and that his true happiness could not be found anywhere other than in that place and with those people. How might such sentiments be applicable to you living the life you are now living?
3. The monk's vows of "conversatio morum," an ongoing conversion of one's way of life, expresses his continual openness to God and to God's direction and guidance in his life. Moreover, it also rejects any desire for coziness and security. How might such sentiments be applicable to you living the life you are currently living?
4. The goal of monastic silence is respect for others, a sense of place, a spirit of peace. It does not call for absolute silence; it calls for thoughtful talk. What does this say to you?
5. Francis of Assisi was drawn to absolute poverty and utter dependence on God. Utter dependence on God is an admirable goal for any sincere Christian, but absolute poverty seems to be another matter. Simplicity, on the other hand, seems to be an admirable goal for a sincere Christian. How would you define such simplicity?

## Francis of Assisi: Books

Paul Sabatier, *The Road to Assisi: The Essential Biography of St. Francis* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2003): Paul Sabatier, a French Protestant (1858-1928) and the first modern biographer of St. Francis of Assisi, was motivated to write about the saint out of love for his unusual and creative life.

Jon M. Sweeney, *When Saint Francis Saved the Church: How a Converted Troubadour Created a Spiritual Vision for the Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2014): In the tradition of Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, Sweeney reveals how the saint became a hinge in the history of the Christian faith and shows how in just fourteen years – from 1205 to 1219 – the unconventional and stumbling wisdom of a converted troubadour changed the Church. Sweeney outlines Francis's revolutionary approach to friendship; people at the margins; poverty; spirituality; care for people, creatures, and the natural world, and death.

Augustine Thompson, *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). The author, a Dominican priest and church historian, based his biography solidly on material that can be verified historically. He sought the historical Francis, not the Francis of legend, and in this task he succeeded admirably. The first part is a well-written, straightforward biography. In the second part, he discusses in some detail the sources for Francis's life and the criteria he used to weigh one source against another, to judge the work of previous biographers, and to distinguish practices instituted by Francis himself from those instituted later. (excerpted from *Library Journal*)