



# Francis of Assisi as Artist of the Spiritual Life: An Object Relations Theory Perspective

*Andrew T. McCarthy*

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Francis of Assisi as Artist of the Spiritual Life applies modern psychological understanding to a historical person. While most such studies have sought a comprehensive personality profile, this work focuses on one aspect — Francis' imagination — and seeks greater insight into the imaginatively inspired spiritual vision of St. Francis. An analysis of Francis' writings builds on a survey of modern views of the imagination and the approach of ORT, or Object Relations Theory. ORT, with its contention that the imaginative creation of an infant's world develops out of the earliest interactions with the maternal caregiver, highlights the way Francis formed his way of visualizing the reality around him. While any study of a person 800 years in the grave is more dependent on what is plausible than on what is determinable, this study finds numerous examples where Francis' writings display an adept use of imagination and even encourages others in that use in a manner that corresponds to an ORT perspective on tutoring the imagination.

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