

The Spirit of Secular Franciscan Life

Newsletter for Secular Franciscans - Assumption BVM Province

April 2006 - No. 4



Francis's Easter Sunday

Some consider Francis's *Canticle of Brother Sun* as his moment of resurrection. A reason for this comes out of the setting that gave birth to the *Canticle*.

Many picture Francis of Assisi as a romantic wandering through nature, speaking to birds and drawing the elements close to him. We might also

have this image whenever we hear or pray the *Canticle*. In *The Assisi Compilation*, 83 (formerly *The Legend of Perugia*, 43), we find the context in which the *Canticle* was composed. The year was 1225. Francis was quite ill and the Brothers took him to San Damiano so Clare and the Sisters could care for him.

He stayed there for more than fifty days, and was unable to bear the light of the sun during the day or the light of a fire at night. In addition his eyes were filled with such pain that at night he could scarcely sleep or rest. There were also many mice in the house and in the little cell made of mats where he was lying; they were running around him, and even over him, and would not let him sleep. They even disturbed him greatly at the time of prayer and bothered him during the day, climbing up on his table when he ate.

One night as blessed Francis was reflecting on all these troubles he found himself in self-pity "Lord," he said, "make haste to help me in my illnesses, so that I can bear them patiently."

During that night Francis was visited by God and given the assurance that heaven awaited him, a treasure more precious than all the gold and gems of earth could provide. This vision gave Francis much comfort, consolation and joy.

The next morning on rising, he said to his companions, "For God's praise, for our consolation and for the edification of our neighbor, I want to write a new Praises of the Lord for his creatures, which we use every day, and without which we cannot live." The prayer that he composed he called *The Canticle of Brother Sun* who is more beautiful than all other creatures and can be most closely compared to God.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The above edited passage from *The Assisi Compilation* gives us the context out of which the *Canticle* was born. Note that Francis was lying on the floor, sick, blind, in a hut made of reeds so as to shut out light and wind, and be in darkness. When we consider that he could barely see, that fire, sun and light caused him severe head pains, that water made his wounds ache, that mice crawled all over him, that mother earth was not kind to his body; when we meditate on the fact that Francis was caught in self-pity, despair and pain, that he was experiencing severe doubt even at the end, even after the Stigmata; when we consider all this and that the *Canticle* was born from this setting, then we begin to wonder what the *Canticle* really means.

Obviously it was not the musings of a romanticist wandering among the beauties of creation, wholly taken up by what he saw. Francis was again drawn into the Passion of Jesus and from that he was given the assurance of the treasure of heaven awaiting him. The *Canticle* thus became a poem of reconciliation and new resurrected life.

ALLELUIA!
A Blessed Easter To All
ALLELUIA!



Francis and Sister Cricket

Canticle of Brother Sun

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing. To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no person is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day and through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord; through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night, and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.

[FRANCIS AND CLARE, THE COMPLETE WORKS, trans. and intro. by Regis Armstrong OFM Cap and Ignatius Brady OFM, pp. 38-39.]



Overlooking the Rieti Valley at Greccio

Franciscan Pilgrimage for SFO

A pilgrimage is a most awesome faith journey. New discoveries, deepening faith, meeting God...a treasure worth every penny. Thus, a Pilgrimage to Assisi and Rome is planned for Secular Franciscans. Solid historical and Franciscan spirituality input Minimum 15.

September 7 - 16, 2006 - 10 Days
Days 1-4 are in Rome - Days 5-10 are in Assisi

Tomb of St. Peter - Francis's pilgrimage of faith.

San Francesco a Ripa - Francis's home among the poor.

St. John Lateran - the baptistry of the Franciscan movement; Francis's relationship to the Church.

Greccio - the Franciscan Bethlehem, the Franciscan gift to the Christian world.

Piazza Comune - the heart of Assisi.

Chiesa Nuova - Paternal Home of Francis.

San Damiano - The famous crucifix that spoke to Francis; the home of St. Clare for 41 years.

Santa Maria Maggiore - Bishop Guido's residence where Francis stripped himself.

La Maddalena - the setting for the leper colony where Francis, and perhaps Clare, ministered.

Porziuncola - the heart of Francis's life and the heart for all Franciscans.

Carceri - the setting on Mount Sabasio where Francis and the brothers spent time in prayer.

La Verna - the mountain 90 miles north of Assisi where Francis received the stigmata.

Tomb and Basilica of St. Clare - New woman of the Spoleto Valley, key to the spirit of Francis.

Tomb and Basilica of St. Francis - a moment to consider Francis's legacy through art and spirituality.

COST from Chicago: \$2980 - \$2880 from New York. Includes everything: Round trip air (including \$240.00 in taxes), ground transportation, all meals (except four), all tips, offerings, books. Full service of staff, daily input, Eucharist, and prayer.

STAFF Frs. Roch Niemier OFM - Joachim Studwell OFM.

Register as soon as possible.

Send with \$200.00 refundable deposit to:

FRANCISCAN PILGRIMAGE PROGRAMS
P.O. BOX 321490 / FRANKLIN, WI 53132
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