

Francis of Assisi 4 October
Friar, 1226 — Memorial

Today we celebrate Francis of Assisi, the thirteenth-century Italian whose greatest honour was to be known as *il Poverello*, "the little poor one of Christ."

He grew up in a very wealthy family and seemed to have not a care in the world until he was twenty years old, when a chance encounter with a leper left him appalled by his own uselessness. Soon afterwards he heard Jesus speaking to him from a painting of the crucifixion over the altar of a local church. He threw away his wardrobe and renounced his father's wealth in order to care for the poor and the crippled. In 1208 he heard the commission which the risen Lord gave to his apostles, "Go, make all nations my disciples," and knew that it was also addressed to him. Francis began to train his followers for the task of making Jesus truly known and loved among the ordinary people of Italy. Out of this movement developed the Order of the Lesser Brethren, commonly called the Franciscans.

Francis cared deeply for his new Order, but he also grew restless as it became an established institution of the Church. He distanced himself from its day-to-day life and eventually went his own way as he strove to imitate Christ's total obedience to God. Two years before his death he was granted a sign which manifested this desire. One September day in 1224, he had a vision of the Crucified borne on the wings of a seraph. As the vision withdrew, the wounds of Jesus appeared in Francis's own flesh — the scars like nail-wounds on his hands and feet, and in his right side a scar like a spear-wound. These marks, called the *stigmata*, remained on Francis's body until his death two years later.

See Readings, page 675.

Sentence

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, as I to the world. *Galatians 6.14*

Collect

Grant us, Almighty God,
after the example of your holy servant Francis,
to do what you would have us do,
and always to desire what is pleasing in your sight,
that cleansed by your love,
enlightened by your truth,
and kindled with the fire of your Holy Spirit,
we may follow in the footsteps of your beloved Son
and make our way to you, O God most High;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Galatians 6.14–18 Psalm 148.7–14
Refrain The Name of the Lord only is exalted.
Matthew 11.25–30

Prayer over the Gifts

Loving God,
join our offering to the sacrifice of your only Son,
that our service may be stamped with his humility
and bear the image of his obedience;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of a Saint

Prayer after Communion

God of all goodness,
who gave to your servant Francis
a will to be the servant of all,
grant us in our service of your gospel
to hold back nothing of ourselves for ourselves,
that Christ may receive the whole of our lives
into the habitations of light and glory;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.