

ST FRANCIS AND ST CLARE OF ASSISI

1) Peace and Nature

Canticle of Brother Sun

Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord,
Thine be the praises, the glory, and the honour and every blessing¹.
To Thee alone, Most High, do they belong
and no man is worthy to mention Thee.

May Thou be praised, my Lord, with all Thy creatures²,
especially mister brother sun,
of whom is the day, and Thou enlightens us through him.

And he is beautiful and radiant with a great splendour,
of Thee, Most High, does he convey the meaning

May Thou be praised, my Lord, for sister moon and the stars³,
in heaven Thou has made them clear and precious and beautiful

May Thou be praised, my Lord, for brother wind,
and for the air and the cloudy and the clear weather and every
weather⁴, through which to all Thy creatures Thou gives
sustenance⁵

May Thou be praised, my Lord, for sister water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste

May Thou be praised, my lord, for brother fire⁶,
through whom Thou illumines the night,

and he is handsome and jocund and robust and strong

May Thou be praised, my Lord, for our sister, mother earth⁷,
who sustains us and governs,

and produces various fruits with coloured flowers and green plants⁸

May Thou be praised, my Lord, for those who forgive for the sake of
Thy love⁹,

and endure infirmity and tribulation

Blessed those who endure them in peace¹⁰,

because by Thee, Most High, will they be crowned

¹ (cf. Apoc. 4:9.11)

² (cf. Tob. 8:7)

³ (cf. Ps. 148:3)

⁴ (cf. Dan 3:64-65)

⁵ (cf. Ps. 103:13-14)

⁶ (cf. Dan 3:66)

⁷ (cf. Dan 3:74)

⁸ (cf. Ps 103:13-14)

⁹ (cf. Mt 6:12)

¹⁰ (cf. Mt 5:10)

May Thou be praised, my Lord, for our sister, bodily death,
whom no man living can escape
Woe to those, who die in mortal sin¹¹:
blessed those whom she¹² will find in Thy most holy desires,
because the second death will do them no evil¹³
Praise and bless my Lord¹⁴,
and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility!

Prayer: Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

(attributed to St Francis of Assisi)

2) Privilege of Poverty

The encounter with the leper

Thus did the Lord grant to me, Friar Francis, to begin to do penance: that when I was exceedingly in (my) sins, to see the lepers seemed a bitter thing to me. • And the Lord Himself led¹⁵ me among them and I worked mercy with them. • And when I was fleeing from them, because that seemed to me a bitter thing, it was changed for me into sweetness of soul and body; and afterwards I

¹¹ (cf Jn 16:17)

¹² Sister, bodily death.

¹³ (cf. Apoc 2:11; 20:6)

¹⁴ (cf. Dan 3:85)

¹⁵ lit. *conduxit*, "to lead" by one's personal presence; hence St. Francis is confessing that the Lord led him by traveling with him among the lepers. Similarly the Latin phrase *cum illis* translated here as "with them," is not an ablative of means, but of accompaniment; hence St. Francis is confessing that without the lepers he could not have practiced mercy.

stayed for a little while and (then) I went forth from the world¹⁶ .
And the Lord granted me such faith in churches, that thus I would
pray simply and say: • We adore Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, and for all
Thy churches, which are in the whole world, we also bless Thee,
because by Thy Holy Cross Thou has redeemed the world.

Gospel:

Mt 10:5-13 - mission

These twelve Jesus sent out and gave them orders, saying, Do not
go among the Gentiles, or into any town of Samaria,
But go to the wandering sheep of the house of Israel,
And, on your way, say, The kingdom of heaven is near.
Make well those who are ill, give life to the dead, make lepers clean,
send evil spirits out of men; freely it has been given to you, freely
give.

Take no gold or silver or copper in your pockets;
Take no bag for your journey and do not take two coats or shoes or
a stick: for the workman has a right to his food.

And into whatever town or small place you go, make search there
for someone who is respected, and make his house your resting-
place till you go away.

And when you go in, say, May peace be on this house.

And if the house is good enough, let your peace come on it: but if
not, let your peace come back to you.

Mt 6:24-34 - the birds of heaven and the flowers of the field

No man is able to be a servant to two masters: for he will have hate
for the one and love for the other, or he will keep to one and have
no respect for the other. You may not be servants of God and of
wealth.

So I say to you, Take no thought for your life, about food or drink,
or about clothing for your body. Is not life more than food, and the
body more than its clothing?

See the birds of heaven; they do not put seeds in the earth, they do
not get in grain, or put it in store-houses; and your Father in

¹⁶ "To forsake the world" is an ancient Christian theme referring to the abandonment of the manner of living common among human society and the setting out to follow Christ as a religious, by observing the evangelical counsels; saeculum literally means "the time-span of a single generation," and thus denotes "a generation," as well as that indistinct period of time called "an age", or even "the world," in the sense of the contemporary human society. This term is used frequently in the New Testament to refer to corrupt human society (e.g. Lk 16:8; 20:34; Mt 13:22; Jn 4:4; 1 Cor 2:6,8; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Tm 6:7). Thus in the English translation of St. Francis writings, saeculum, is normally translated as "age," but sometimes the context requires another English word (i.e. "generation", "world").

heaven gives them food. Are you not of much more value than they?

And which of you by taking thought is able to make himself a cubit taller?

And why are you troubled about clothing? See the flowers of the field, how they come up; they do no work, they make no thread: But I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

But if God gives such clothing to the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is put into the oven, will he not much more give you clothing, O you of little faith?

Then do not be full of care, saying, What are we to have for food or drink? or, With what may we be clothed?

Because the Gentiles go in search of all these things: for your Father in heaven has knowledge that you have need of all these things:

But let your first care be for his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these other things will be given to you in addition.

Then have no care for tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself.

Take the trouble of the day as it comes.

Rule - chapter 4-6

Chapter 4 - That the brothers are not to receive money.

I firmly precept¹⁷ all the friars, that in no manner are they to receive¹⁸ coins or money through themselves or through an interposed person. • Nevertheless on behalf of the necessities of the infirm and the clothing¹⁹ of the other friars, let only the ministers and the custodes conduct a solicitous care, by means of spiritual friends, according to places and seasons and cold regions, as they have seen expedite necessity²⁰; • with this always preserved, that, as has been said, they do not receive coins nor money.

Chapter 5 - On the manner of working.

¹⁷ Christ, who condemned the love of money (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13-15), had Himself forbidden His Apostles the use and reception of money during their preaching (Mt. 10:9; Lk. 9:3); St. Peter and St. John continued this practice after the Resurrection (cf. Acts 3:6). The Apostles also warned against the love of money (cf. Acts 8:20; 1 Tm 3:8; 6:9-10; Jm 5:2-3).

¹⁸ The Latin word used here, recipere, "to receive" is to be distinguished from accipere "to accept;" the former signifies appropriation as a real act, whereas the latter signifies appropriation as a legal or moral act. Thus the Popes have explained the Rule of St. Francis as obliging not only the non-appropriation of money, but also the non-use of money.

¹⁹ in the sense of "to clothe the other friars."

²⁰ lit. sicut necessitati viderint expedire, that is in the manner in which past experience has taught them to make provision in time of need.

Let those friars, to whom the Lord has given the grace to work, work faithfully and devoutly • in such a way that, having excluded idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion²¹, which all other temporal things must serve zealously²² • Indeed concerning the wages of labor, let them receive on their (own) behalf and that of their brothers the things necessary for the body, excepting coins or money, and this humbly, • as befits the servants of God and the followers of most holy poverty.

Chapter 6 - That the friars are to appropriate nothing for themselves, and on the begging of alms, and on sick²³ friars.

Let the friars appropriate nothing for themselves, neither house nor place nor any thing. • And as pilgrims and exiles²⁴ in this age, as ones serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go about for alms confidently, nor is it proper that they be ashamed, • because the Lord made Himself poor in this world on our behalf²⁵. • This is that loftiness of the highest poverty, which has established you, my most dear friars, as heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, has made you poor in things, (and) has raised you high in virtues²⁶. • Let this be your "portion", which leads (you) through "to the land of the living"²⁷. • Cleaving totally to this, most beloved friars, may you want to have nothing else under heaven in perpetuity, on behalf of the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. • And, wherever the friars are and have come upon one another, let them mutually show themselves (to be) members of each other's family. • And let one without fear²⁸ manifest to the another his own need, since, if a mother nourishes and loves her own son²⁹ according to the flesh,

²¹ Here "prayer" means more exactly "praying." In this precept St. Francis obliges his friars to foster the virtue of devotion, which virtue disposes one to do what is good and just, with a holy joy. Christ infuses this virtue in those who practice mental prayer perseveringly each day.

²² lit. deservire, "to serve zealously," "to be a slave to."

²³ It should be noted that throughout his writings, St. Francis never uses the Latin word aegetus "sick" (one who suffers from a disease), but rather the Latin word infirmus "infirm" (one who is weak in body). In this he is making a distinction which fosters respect not only for those who are ill but also for the aged and poor in health, which distinction is vital in the government of a community of men who make a life-long promise. However, since in English the word "infirm" is used as a predicate adjective or a substantive, "sick" has been chosen to translate the other usages of infirmus.

²⁴ (cf. 1 Pt 2:11)

²⁵ (cf. 2 Cor 8:9)

²⁶ (cf. Jm 2:5)

²⁷ (cf. Ps 141,6)

²⁸ lit. secure, "without care or worry," just as brothers in a family do.

²⁹ (cf. 1 Th 2:7)

how much more diligently³⁰ ought he love and nourish his own spiritual brother? • And, if any of them has fallen into infirmity, the other friars ought to serve him, as they would want to be served themselves.

A Salutation to the Virtues

Hail, Queen Wisdom, the Lord salute thee with thy sister Holy-Pure Simplicity. • Lady Holy Poverty, the Lord salute thee with thy sister Holy Humility. • Lady Holy Charity, the Lord salute thee with thy sister Holy Obedience. • Most holy virtues, the Lord salute all of you, He from whom you come and proceed.

There is scarcely no man in the whole world, who can have one of you, before he dies. • He who has one and offends not the others, has all. • And he who offends one, has none and offends all³¹. And any one whatever confounds vices and sins.

Holy Wisdom confounds Satan and all his wickednesses. • Pure Holy Simplicity confounds all the wisdom of this world³² and the wisdom of the body³³. • Holy Poverty confounds cupidity and avarice and the cares of this age. • Holy Humility confounds pride and all the men, who are in the world, and likewise all the things, which are in the world. • Holy Charity confounds all the diabolic and carnal temptations and all carnal fears. • Holy Obedience confounds all things corporal, both carnal and one's own willings • and holds the body mortified in obedience of spirit and in obedience to one's brother • and is subject and submissive to all the men, who are in the world • and not to men alone, but even to all the beasts and wildlife, • so that they may do with him, whatever they will, as much as has been given them from above by the Lord³⁴.

³⁰ lit. diligentius, which literally means both "more diligently" and "more lovingly."

³¹ (cf. Jm 2:10)

³² (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6)

³³ (cf. Rm 8:7)

³⁴ (cf. Jn 19:11)