

# Saint Francis of Assisi

1181-1226

*Founder* of the Franciscan Order, he is the Patron of Italy. Many are the edited biographies on the life of the Saint in which there are found numerous episodes which recount how frequently he was visited by both Angels and by demons.

Famous is the vision of Christ accompanied by the Blessed Mother and by a multitude of Angels which Francis had one night in 1216 in the little church of the Portiuncula.

On that occasion is when Francis made the request that “all those who are truly penitent and have confessed and come to visit this chapel will obtain full pardon for all their sins.” The Lord granted the request on the condition that the Pope would agree

and through divine revelation he could discern within the wings the image of a crucified man, with his hands and feet nailed to a cross. Two wings were stretched out covering his head, two wings were used for flight, and two wings veiled the body. That vision stupefied Francis intensely, while joy and sadness inundated his heart... He fixated, full of amazement, that mysterious vision, conscious that the infirmity of the Passion could not coexist with the natural



to it. Pope Honorius III gladly gave his assent and granted the indulgence which is still in effect. Each year on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the indulgence can be gained in any parish Church, any Franciscan Church, or at the Portiuncula on any day of the year.

Another occasion to be noted, in September of 1224, Francis was at Mt. Verna where he desired to spend, in silence and in solitude, 40 days of fasting, meditating on the Passion of Jesus as was his custom to do so four times in the year. During his intense and suffered prayer the Saint received the Stigmata:

In retrospect, St. Bonaventure, one of the major biographers of the Saint, recounts: “One morning, close to the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while Francis was deep in prayer at the foot of the mountain, Francis beheld the likeness of a Seraphim with six wings and shining with intense light, all aflame coming down from the Heavens. In a quick flight, the Seraphim hovered in the air nearby the man of God,

and spiritual nature of the Seraphim. But from here he understood, finally, through divine revelation, the reason for which divine providence had shown him that vision, which is that of having him know in anticipation that he, a friend of Christ, was to be transformed totally in the visible image of Jesus Christ crucified, not by way of martyrdom of the flesh, but by way of the fire of the Holy Spirit.” Jesus himself explained the miracle to Francis: “I have given you my wounds as signs of my Passion, so that you are to be my standard bearer. And, as on the day of my death I went to Limbo, and all of the souls that I found there entered into Heaven by virtue of these Stigmata of mine. And like that, I concede to you each year on the day of your death, you will go to purgatory and all of the souls from your three Orders and of the others very much devoted to you, those whom you will find, you can take with you in virtue of your Stigmata and transport them to the glory of Paradise. You are to resemble me in life and in death.”