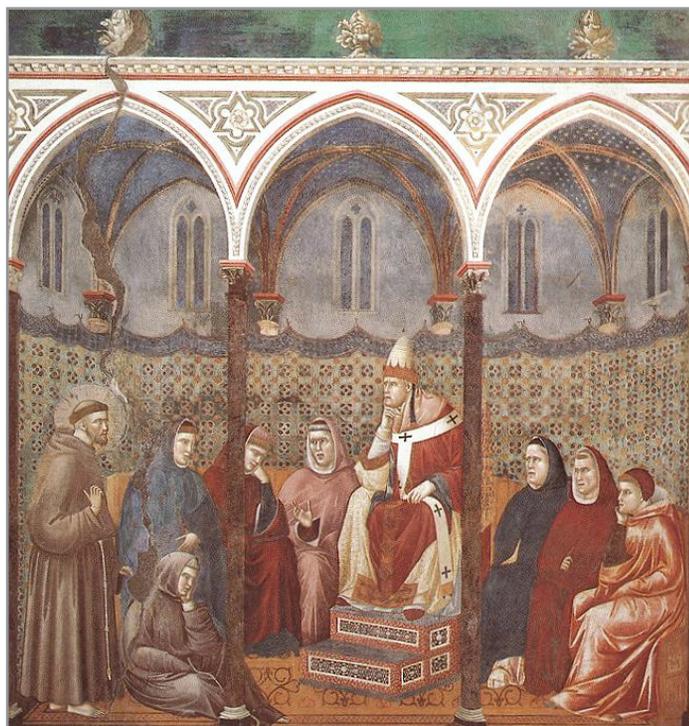


New Year's Resolutions



Studies show that the last week of January is when most people quit their New Year's resolutions. Resolutions to lose weight, eat healthier, quit bad habits, and form good ones instead fall to the wayside. Why is this? Most of the time, failed resolutions occur due to a lack of accountability and community—no one is walking the journey with us, so it is easy to quit when the going gets tough. How often this is true with our spiritual lives. When was the last time we thought to create a New Year's resolution to grow in our faith? St. Francis was deeply troubled by the spiritual lives of his contemporaries, and sought to breathe new life into the Church. He inspired his followers to cultivate within themselves a desire for spiritual renewal, but a renewal that required accountability and community. By living the

Christian life together, St. Francis and his followers were able to support and encourage one another, and through their spiritual growth, renew the Church. †



Early Writings

From A Book of the Praises of St. Francis

"In this way holy simplicity filled them, purity of life so possessed them, that they were totally ignorant of duplicity of heart. For just as there was in them one faith, so there was one spirit, one will, one charity, continual unity of spirit, harmony in living, cultivation of virtues, agreement of minds, and piety in action. These are the lessons of the devoted father by which he instructed his new sons not so much in words and speech, but in deed and in truth, and in which he renewed the purpose and zeal of an apostolic life."

Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann
& William Short, eds.

Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Prophet, Vol. III
(New York: New City Press, 2001), 41.

Scripture

Ezekiel 36:25-26

I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Prayer

At the start of this New Year, I come before You, Lord, ready for a new heart, a refreshed spirit, a Gospel-centered approach to my work, my relationships, and with You. Give me the grace to recognize and embrace the profound, foundational truths to which Francis continues to call us back.

Reflection Questions

- What might a model of a renewed spiritual life look like for me?
- What are some ways that I can incorporate prayer and spiritual reflection more seamlessly in my life?