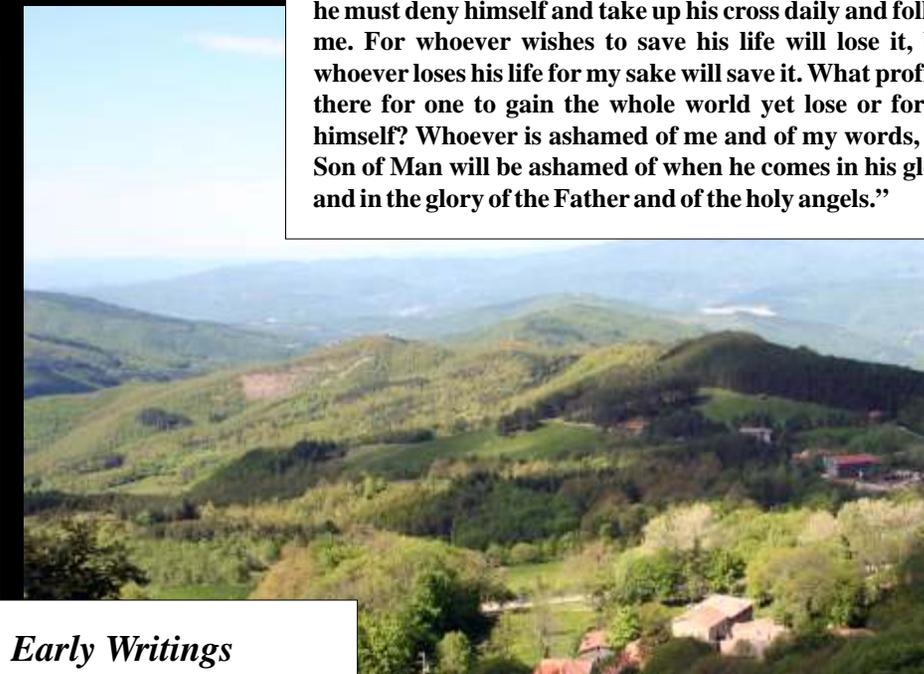


Pilgrimage Reflection

Francis Receives the Stigmata

Despite the beautiful chapel, restaurant and extensive gift shop, it's not difficult to imagine Francis' hideaway on Mount La Verna as it looked when he sought solitude there some 800 years ago. While rugged and somewhat foreboding, there is an awesome natural beauty on that steep, forested mountainside that calls one to stillness, silence and prayer. It's no wonder Francis had one of his most significant spiritual encounters with Christ on that mountain. "From the moment the image of Christ spoke to Francis from the crucifix at San Damiano until he was marked with the wounds of Jesus at La Verna, Celano tells us Francis burned with an unquenchable fire to know this Lord, to experience and know the wisdom that came from such love. Francis wanted not so much to know what this pain is, but what kind of love this is."*

* Roch Niemier, OFM, *In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006), 158.



Early Writings

From *The Legend of the Three Companions*

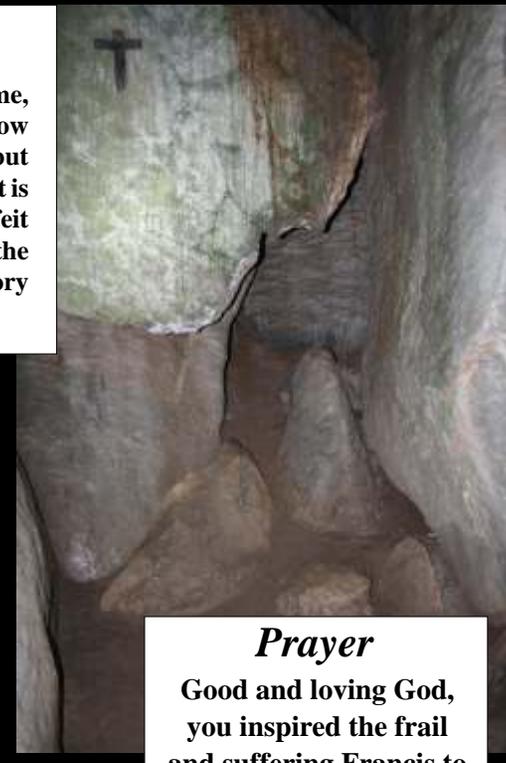
One morning, around the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while he was absorbed in prayer on a slope of Mount La Verna, two years before his death, a seraph with six wings appeared to him. Within its six wings there was the form of a very beautiful, crucified man, whose hands and feet were extended after the manner of a cross, and whose features were clearly those of the Lord Jesus. . . . When the vision disappeared, a marvelous glow of love remained in his soul, but, even more marvelous, an impression of the stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ appeared in his flesh.

Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann and William Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder*, Vol. II (New York: New City Press, 2000), 108

Scripture

Luke 9:23-26

Then [Jesus] said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."



Prayer

Good and loving God, you inspired the frail and suffering Francis to embrace his marks of crucifixion not as an increase of physical agony, but as a sacramental sign of limitless love. Help us, dear Lord, to look upon your passion as the ultimate expression of "doing for others," and allow us to accept the trials in our own lives as opportunities to feel your love and to bring your comfort and healing to all those we encounter today.

