



Pilgrimage Reflection



Francis' Pilgrimage to the Tomb of Saint Peter

One of your stops on the Franciscan Pilgrimage was the city of Rome and the tomb of Saint Peter. It was here, on his own pilgrimage some 800 years ago, that Francis sought a foundation for his rapidly evolving quest to live a Gospel life. Unsatisfied with those who only partially “walked the talk,” Francis yearned for a faith and life that was nothing short of what he knew of Jesus’ very Apostles. He went straight to the rock of Christianity.

Scripture

Matthew 16: 13-18

When Jesus went into the region of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.”

Early Writings

From Thomas of Celano’s *Second Life of Saint Francis*, “The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul”

Once on pilgrimage to Rome, out of love for poverty [Francis] took off his fine clothing and dressed himself in a poor man’s clothes. He happily settled among the poor in the square in front of the church of Saint Peter, a place where the poor are abundant. . . . When he approached the altar of the Prince of the Apostles, he was surprised that people gave such small gifts. He threw in a whole handful of money, showing that the one God honored above others should be honored by all in a special way.

Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann and William Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder*, Vol. II (New York: New City Press, 2000), 247.

Prayer

Gracious God, as I reflect on my own pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi, rekindle in me the reverence and awe I felt when standing before the tomb of Saint Peter. It was there that Francis found inspiration to continue acting on his intense yearning to serve the poor and to spread the Gospel message of your goodness. Strengthen in me, almighty God, that same desire to continue serving others and expressing your love through everything I say and do.