

Legend

of the

Three Companions

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being

Readings
on
St. Francis of Assisi

by

Leo, Rufino, Angelo
His Brothers, Who Knew Him

Legend of the Three Companions, by Brs. Leo, Rufino, and Angelo. Translated by E. G. Salter.

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Praise be to Christ the King!

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THESE BE certain things written by Three Companions of the Blessed Francis concerning his life and his conversation in the worldly state, and of his marvellous and perfect conversion, and of the perfection of the first beginning and of the foundation of the order, in himself and in the first brethren.

Letter of the Three Companions

TO THE reverend Father in Christ, Brother Crescentius, by the grace of God Minister-General, Brother Leo, Brother Rufino, and Brother Angelo, formerly companions, albeit unworthy, of the most blessed Father Francis, due reverence and devotion in the Lord.

Since the brethren are bound by command of the Chapter-General last past and your own to bring before your Fatherhood such signs and miracles of the most blessed Father Francis as can be known or discovered, it seemed good unto us who, albeit unworthy, held converse with him for some long time, to communicate, truth guiding us, unto Your Holiness a few of the many things that he wrought, that we saw with our own eyes, or were able to learn through other holy brethren, and chiefly through Brother Philip, the Visitor of the Poor Ladies, Brother Illuminato de Arce, Brother Masseo of Marignano, Brother John, the companion of the venerable Father Brother Giles (who heard most of these things from the same holy Brother Giles), and from Brother Bernard

of sacred memory, the first companion of the Blessed Francis; not content only to relate miracles, which do not constitute holiness, but do only make it manifest, but we desire further to show forth the tokens of his holy conversation, and the object of his holy purpose to the praise and glory of God Most High, and our most holy Father aforesaid, and to the edification of those that desire to follow his footsteps. Which things we nevertheless write not after the manner of a Legend, seeing that for some time Legends have been put together of his life and of the miracles that God wrought through him. But as it were from a pleasant meadow we pluck certain flowers that in our judgment are fairer than the rest, not following a continuous history, but leaving out much that would follow in due sequence, which hath been set in place in the Legends aforesaid in discourse both truthful and easy to understand. Among which you may make these few things that we have written to be inserted, if your discretion shall see fit. For we believe that, had these things been known unto those venerable men that put together the said Legends, they would by no means have passed them by, but would rather have eloquently related them for their own sake.

May your fatherhood ever be strong and whole in Our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom we humbly and faithfully commend unto Your Holiness ourselves, your faithful sons. Given in the place Greccio, the eleventh day of August, in the year of Our Lord 1246.

Prologue to the Legends of Our Blessed Father Francis

BRILLIANT LIKE THE light-bringer, and as the morning star; indeed, as the rising sun igniting, cleansing, and making fruitful the world, Francis seemed to have arisen like a certain new light. It is he who, by word, brought a world grown numb in a winter of cold, darkness, and sterility to the way of the sun, and in work, going all over like a radiant spark, shining in truth, igniting in charity, and renewing and adorning with the abundant fruit of his merits, and leading forth different fruitful lineages in the three orders founded by him in marvellous virtue; he has lead the whole world into the springtime.

I

Of his birth, and vanities, and
waywardness, and his prodigal ways, and
how from these he came unto largesse, and
charity toward the poor

THEREFORE THE blessed and Gospel-led man Francis had for a father Peter, son of Bernardone the merchant, who was completely given up to earthly profits; and a very honest mother, Pica by name, who was another Elizabeth, bearing her happy son in the absence of his father, who had gone to France for business, named her arriving son John. But on the same day on which the blessed little infant Francis was called John, a certain pilgrim came begging to the door of the house; to whom, when the maidservant of the house gave an alms, the same pilgrim said to the maidservant: "I ask thee, bring me this boy born here today, for I wish to see him." The maidservant, indeed, denied that she would do this. But he then stood his ground, that he would see, that he would never go back otherwise. She, indeed, sending him away with anger, went back inside. Therefore, the lady Pica, hearing this, wondering, commanded the maidservant that she show the boy to the same pilgrim. Therefore, when she had done so, the pilgrim, taking up the boy Francis as once Simeon took up the child Jesus, with joy and devotion, said, "Today in this village were born two boys; of whom one, certainly this one, will be among the better, and the other among the worse of the world." What many had claimed about the other, became

clear to the world about Francis.

His father, returning from France, rejoiced in his son; he named him Francis for France, from which he was coming. After he was grown up, and had become of a subtle wit, he did practise the art of his father, that is, trade; but much differently, for he was a merrier man than was his father, and more generous, given unto jests and songs, going round the city of Assisi day and night in company with his like, most free-handed in spending; insomuch as that he spent all his havings and his profits in banquets and other matters. Wherefore oftentimes he was rebuked by his parents, who told him he ran into so great expenses on himself and on others that he seemed to be no son of theirs, but rather of some mighty prince. Nevertheless, because his parents were rich and loved him most tenderly, they bore with him in such matters, not being minded to thwart him. Nay, his mother, when a talk arose among the neighbors as touching his prodigal ways, made answer: "What think ye of my son? He shall yet be the son of God by grace." But he himself was not only free-handed, or rather prodigal, in these alone, but even in his clothes he was beyond measure sumptuous, using stuffs more costly than it beseemed him to wear. So wayward was his fancy that at times on the same coat he would cause a right costly cloth to be matched with one of the meanest.

Yet he was as though by nature courteous, in manner and word after the purpose of his heart, never speaking a harmful or shameful word unto any. Nay, indeed,

though he were so gay and wanton a youth, yet of set purpose would he make no reply unto them that said shameful things unto him. And hence was his fame so spread abroad throughout the whole neighborhood that it was said by many who knew him that he would do something great. By which steps of godliness he did progress unto such grace that he would say in converse with himself: "Seeing that thou art bountiful and courteous toward men, from whom thou receivest naught save a passing and empty favor, it is just that, because of God, Who is most bountiful in repayment, thou shouldst be courteous and bountiful to the poor." Wherefore thenceforward did he look with goodwill upon the poor, bestowing alms upon them abundantly. And although he was a merchant, yet he was a most prodigal dispenser of this world's riches. One day, when he was standing in the warehouse wherein he sold goods, and was intent on business of the kind, a certain poor man came unto him asking an alms for the love of God; but since he was held back by the covetousness of wealth, and the cares of merchandise, he denied him the alms. But forthwith, being looked upon by the divine grace, he did rebuke himself of great churlishness, saying: "Had this poor man asked thee aught in the name of a great count or baron, assuredly thou wouldst have given him what he had asked. How much more oughtest thou to have done it for the King of Kings and Lord of all?" By reason whereof he thenceforth set it before himself in his heart never again to deny aught asked in the name of so great a Lord.

II

How he was made prisoner at Perugia, and
of two visions that he had when desiring to
become a knight

AT a certain time when war was being waged between Perugia and Assisi, Francis was taken prisoner with many of his fellow-citizens and held in captivity with them at Perugia. Yet for that he was a noble in his manners, he was imprisoned along with the knights. Now on a certain day his fellow-prisoners were sad, but he, being by nature joyous and merry, appeared not to be sad, but even in some sort to jest. Wherefore one of his companions rebuked him, saying it was like a madman to rejoice seeing that he were set in prison. Unto whom Francis made answer with a loud voice: "What think ye of me? I shall be adored through the whole world." And when one of the knights with whom he was conjoined had done an injury unto one of his fellow-prisoners, and on this account all the rest wished to hold aloof from him, Francis alone did not refuse to company with him, and furthermore exhorted the rest to do the same. Now when the year was ended and peace made once more between the cities aforesaid, Francis with his fellow-prisoners returned unto Assisi.

Then a few years later a certain noble of the city of Assisi provided himself with warlike gear to go into Apulia to increase his profit of money or renown. Upon hearing this, Francis did aspire to go with him, and to be made

knight by a certain count, Gentile by name; wherefore he made ready stuffs as costily as he could, poorer in riches than his fellow-citizen, but more profuse in largesse. One night then, when he had given all his thoughts toward bringing this to pass, and was fevered with desire for making the journey, he was visited by the Lord, Who draweth him as one eager for glory to the pinnacle of glory by a vision, and uplifteth him. For while sleeping that night one appeared unto him, calling him by name, and leading him unto the palace of a fair bride, very pleasant, and full of knightly armor, to wit, glittering shields, and other apparel hanging on the wall as it were waiting for knights to accoutre them therewithal. And while he, rejoicing greatly, marvelled silently within himself what this might be, he asked whose were these arms flashing with such splendor and this so pleasant palace? And answer was made him that the palace and all things therein were his own and his knights'. And thus awakening, with joyous heart he rose early, thinking in worldly wise—as do they that have not yet fully tasted of the Spirit of God—that here he should lord it right royally, and deeming the vision a presage of great good fortune, he bethinketh him of setting forth straightway on his journey into Apulia, that he might be made knight of the count aforesaid. And so much more cheerful than his wont did he seem that many wondered thereat, and asked whence had he such joy, unto whom he would reply: "I know that I shall be a great prince."

A certain foretokening of so great courtliness and

nobility had betided on the day immediately preceding the vision aforesaid, which is thought to have been in no small measure the occasion of the vision itself. For on that day he had given unto a poor knight all his clothes, that he had had newly made for himself, curiously fashioned and costly. When therefore he had gone unto Spoleto to set forth on his journey and go into Apulia, he began to ponder somewhat. Yet none the less anxious about his journey, when he had yielded unto sleep, he heard while half asleep one asking him whither he desired to proceed? And when Francis had revealed his whole purpose, he added: "Which can do the better for thee, the lord, or the servant?" And when he answered "the lord," that other said again unto him: "Wherefore then dost thou leave the lord for the servant, and a rich lord for a poor?" And Francis said: "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" "Return," saith He, "unto thine own country, and it shall be told unto thee what thou shalt do, for thou must understand the vision that thou hast seen in a different way." Then, waking, he began earnestly to ponder this vision. And just as in the first vision he had been as it were quite carried out of himself for his great joy, coveting worldly good fortune, so in this vision he withdrew within himself entirely, wondering at its might, and meditating so earnestly that he could sleep no more that night. And so, at early morn, he returned toward Assisi in haste and with gladness and joy exceeding, awaiting the will of the Lord, Who had shown him this thing, and to be told concerning his salvation from Himself. Changed in his mind is he

now, and, refusing to go into Apulia, seeketh to mould himself unto the divine will.

III

How the Lord at first visited his heart with wondrous sweetness, in virtue whereof he began to make profitable progress by contempt of himself, and of all vanities, as well as by prayer, and almsgiving, and love of poverty

NOW not many days after that he was returned unto Assisi, he was chosen on a certain evening by his comrades as their master of the revels to spend the money collected from the company after his own fancy. So then he made a sumptuous banquet be made ready, as he had oftentimes done before. And when they came forth of the house, and his comrades together went before him, going through the city singing while he carried a wand in his hand as their master—he was walking a little behind them, not singing, but meditating very earnestly. And lo! on a sudden he is visited of the Lord, and his heart is filled with such sweetness as that he can neither speak nor move, nor is he able to feel and hear aught save that sweetness only, which did so estrange him from carnal sense that—as he himself afterward said—had he then been pricked as with knives all over at once, he could not have moved from the spot. But when his comrades looked back, and saw him thus far off from them, they returned unto him in fear, staring upon him as one already changed into another man. And they questioned him, saying: “Whereon wast thou thinking,

that thou camest not after us? Perchance thou wast thinking of taking a wife?" To whom he replied with a loud voice: "Truly have ye spoken, for that I thought of taking unto me a bride nobler and richer and fairer than ever ye have seen." And they mocked at him. But this he said not of himself, but inspired of God, for the bride herself was true religion, whom he took unto him, nobler, richer and fairer than others in her poverty.

Thus from that hour began he to wax worthless in his own eyes, and to despise those things he had formerly loved, albeit not utterly so as yet, for not yet was he wholly freed from the vanity of the world. Nevertheless, withdrawing himself little by little from the tumult of the world, he made it his study to treasure up Jesus Christ in his inner man, and, hiding from the eyes of mockers the pearl that he would fain buy at the price of selling his all, he went oftentimes, and as it were in secret, daily unto prayer, being urged thereto by the foretaste of that sweetness that had visited him more and more often, and did compel him to come from the streets and other public places, unto prayer. Although he had long done good unto the poor, yet from this time forth he determined yet more firmly in his heart never again to deny alms unto any poor man that did ask it for the love of God, but to give alms more willingly and bountifully than had been his wont. Whenever therefore any poor man asked of him an alms out of doors, he would supply him with money, if he could; had he no ready money, he would give him his cap or girdle rather than send the poor man empty away. And

if it were that he had naught of this kind, he would go unto some hidden place, and strip off his shirt, and send the poor man thither that he might take it unto himself, for the sake of God. He also would buy vessels appertaining unto the adornment of churches, and would send them over in all secrecy unto poor priests.

And once when, in his father's absence, he was abiding in the house, although only his mother and he were eating in the house, he covered the table with loaves, as though he were preparing for the whole household, and when his mother asked wherefore he placed so much bread on the table, he made answer that he did it as alms to be given unto the poor, for that he was minded to give alms unto every man that did ask it for God's sake. But his mother, loving him beyond her other sons, bore with him in such things, taking note of what he did, and marveling greatly thereat in her heart. For, just as he had been wont to set his heart on going after his comrades, when he was invited by them, and had so greatly delighted in their fellowship that oftentimes he would rise from table having eaten but little, leaving his parents sore troubled by reason of so untimely a departure—even so now his heart was set entirely on seeing or hearing poor folk unto whom he might give alms.

So changed then was he by divine grace, albeit still in the secular habit, that he desired to be in some city where he might, as one unknown, strip off his own clothes, and exchange them for those of some beggar, so that he might wear his instead and make trial of himself by asking alms

for the love of God. Now it chanced that at that time he had gone unto Rome on a pilgrimage. And entering into the church of S. Peter, he meditated on the offerings of certain folk, seeing that they were small, and spoke within himself: "Since the prince of the Apostles should of right be magnificently honored, why do these folk make such sorry offerings in the church wherein his body rests?" And so in great fervency he put his hand into his purse and drew it forth full of money, and flung it through the grating of the altar with such a crash that all they who were standing by did marvel greatly at so splendid an oblation. Then going forth in front of the doors of the church, where many beggars were gathered to ask alms, he secretly makes shift to borrow the rags of one among the neediest and dons them, laying aside his own. Then, standing on the church steps with the other beggars, he asked an alms in French, for he loved to speak the French tongue, although he spoke it not aright. Thereafter, putting off the said rags, and again taking his own clothes, he returned unto Assisi, and began to pray the Lord to direct his way. For he revealed unto none his secret, nor took counsel of any in this matter, save only of God, Who had begun to direct his way, and at times of the bishop of Assisi. For at that time was no true Poverty to be found among any, and her it was that he desired above all things of this world, wishing to live, and indeed to die, in her.

IV

How he began through the lepers to conquer himself, and to feel pleasure in those things that previously had been bitter unto him

NOW when on a certain day he was praying fervently unto the Lord, answer was made unto him: "Francis, all those things that thou hast loved after the flesh, and hast desired to have, thou must needs despise and hate, if thou wouldst do My will, and after that thou shalt have begun to do this, the things that previously seemed sweet unto thee and delightsome shall be unbearable unto thee and bitter, and from those that previously thou didst loathe thou shalt drink great sweetness and delight unmeasured." Rejoicing, therefore, at these words, and consoled in the Lord, when he had ridden nigh unto Assisi, he met one that was a leper. And for that he had been wont greatly to loathe lepers, he did violence unto himself, and dismounted from his horse, and gave him money, kissing his hand. And receiving from him the kiss of peace, he remounted his horse, and continued his journey. Thenceforth began he more and more to despise himself, until by the grace of God he had attained unto perfect mastery over himself.

A few days later, he took much money, and went unto the hospital of the lepers, and, gathering all together, did give unto each an alms, kissing his hand. Then as he departed, in very truth that which had previously been bitter unto him, to wit, the sight and touch of lepers,

was now changed into sweetness. For, as he confessed, the sight of lepers had been so grievous unto him that he had been minded to avoid not only seeing them, but even going nigh their dwellings. And if at any time he chanced to pass their abodes, or to see them, albeit he were moved by compassion to do them an alms through another person, yet always would he turn aside his face, stopping his nostrils with his hand. But through the grace of God he became so intimate a friend of the lepers that, even as he recorded in his will, he did sojourn with them and did humbly serve them.

But after his visitation of the lepers, when he became all changed for good, he took with him a comrade whom he dearly loved unto lonely places, saying unto him that he had found a certain great and rich treasure. This man rejoiced not a little, and gladly went with him whensoever he was bidden. Him Francis would take unto a cave underground hard by Assisi, entering it himself alone, and leaving without his comrade anxious to possess the treasure, while he, penetrated by a new and wondrous spirit, would pray unto his Father in secret, desiring that none should know that which he did within save the Lord only, of Whom he earnestly inquired concerning the possession of the heavenly treasure. When the enemy of mankind perceived this, he strove to withdraw him from the good courses whereon he had entered, smiting him with fear and trembling. For there was at Assisi a certain woman hump-backed and misshapen, whom the devil, appearing unto the man of God, brought back unto his remem-

brance, threatening to set upon his back the hump of that woman unles he would withdraw from the purpose he had conceived. But this right valiant soldier of Christ, heeding naught these threats of the devil, prayed within the cave that God would direct his path. Howbeit, he did endure sore anguish and trouble of mind, unable to rest until the work should be done that he had conceived in his mind to do; divers thoughts followed one another in turn, the relentlessness of which did full sorely trouble him. For he glowed within with fire divine, nor was he able to hide outwardly the glow then kindled in his heart. It repented him to have sinned so grievously, and now neither his past evil ways delighted him, nor his present, nor had he as yet received assurance of abstaining from them in future. Moreover, when he would come forth from the cave unto his comrade, he seemed changed into another man.

V

Of the first speech of the Crucified unto him, and how thenceforth he did bear in his heart the Passion of Christ until his death

NOW on a day when he was ardently beseeching the mercy of God, the Lord showed him that it should soon be told unto him what he ought to do. And thenceforward he was filled with such joy that he could not contain himself for gladness, albeit he took heed lest he should blab aught of this secret in the ears of men. Cautiously, nevertheless, and speaking as in riddles, he said he was minded not to go into Apulia, but to do noble and mighty deeds in his own country. But when his comrades saw him thus changed—though in truth he had long been estranged from them in spirit, even while associating with them from time to time in bodily presence—they again ask him as in jest: “Francis, art thou minded to take a wife?” Unto whom he made answer by a sort of riddle as before was told. Now after a few days he was walking near the church of S. Damian when it was told him in the spirit that he should enter to pray therein. And when he had come in, he began to pray right instantly before a certain image of the Crucified, which spoke unto him in holy and gracious wise, saying: “Francis, seest thou not that My House is being destroyed? Go therefore, and repair it for Me.” And trembling and astonished he saith: “Gladly will I do it, O Lord.” For he understood the saying to be of that church, which

through its exceeding great age seemed like soon to fall. And by that speech thus made unto him he was so filled with joy and so illumined of light that in his soul he felt in very truth that it had been Christ Crucified Who had spoken unto him. Then departing from the church he found the priest sitting hard by, and setting his hand to his purse, he handed him a certain amount of money, saying: "I beseech thee, lord, that thou buy oil and make to burn continuously a lamp before that Crucifix, and when this money shall have been spent on that work, I will again offer unto thee so much as then shall be occasion."

Wherefore from that hour was his heart pierced and melted by the remembrance of the Lord's Passion, for that ever while he lived he did bear in his heart the stigmata of the Lord Jesus, even as thereafter did most evidently appear from the renewal of those same stigmata in his body, miraculously wrought and most clearly set forth. Thenceforward he did afflict himself with so great mortification of the body as that, well or ill, he was ever exceeding austere toward his body, and was minded seldom if ever to spare himself. Wherefore when the day of his death was at hand, he confessed that he had sinned much against Brother Body. Now on a time he was walking alone near the church of S. Mary of the Little Portion, weeping, and wailing with a loud voice. And a devout man hearing him thought he was suffering from some sickness or grief. And, moved by pity toward him, he asked him wherefore he wept. But he said: "I weep for the Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, for Whom I ought not to be ashamed to

go mourning aloud throughout the whole world.” Then that other began likewise to weep with him aloud. And often when he rose from prayer, his eyes seemed full of blood, so much and so bitterly was he wont to weep. But not with tears alone did he mortify himself, but also with abstinence from food and drink, in memory of the Lord’s Passion.

Wherefore when at times he was sitting to eat with laymen, and there were set before him divers dainty meats pleasant unto his body, he would taste but little of them, making some show of excuse, that he might not appear to have sent them away on account of fasting. And when he was eating with the brethren, he would often strew ashes on the food that he ate, saying unto the brethren as a cloak for his abstinence: “Brother Ash is pure.” And once when he had sat down to eat, a Brother said how the Blessed Virgin at the hour of meal-time was so miserably poor that she had naught to give her Son to eat. Hearing this, the man of God sighed with heavy grief, and, leaving the table, ate his bread on the bare ground. Ofttimes in truth when he had sat down to eat, a little while after the beginning of the meal, he would sit neither eating nor drinking, uplifted in consideration of heavenly things. At such times, he would fain be hindered by no speech, breathing forth deep sighs from the bottom of his heart. For he would say unto the brethren that always when they heard him sighing thus, they should praise God, and pray for him faithfully. These things concerning his tears and his abstinence we have told incidentally, that we might

show him to have been, after the said vision and speech of the image of the Crucified, ever conformed unto the Passion of Christ until his death.

VI

How at first he fled from the persecution of his father and kindred, tarrying with the priest of S. Damian, in whose window he had thrown the money

AND so, rejoicing at the said vision and speech of the Crucified, he rose, fortifying himself with the sign of the Cross, and, mounting his horse, he took stuffs of divers colours and came unto the city called Foligno. There he sold his horse and all the goods that he had carried, and returned forthwith unto the church of S. Damian. Finding there the poor priest, with great faith and devotion he kissed his hands, and gave him the money that he was carrying, and told him his purpose from beginning to end. The priest, astonished, and marvelling at his sudden conversion, refused to believe this, and, thinking he was being mocked, would not keep the money in his dwelling. But Francis tenaciously persisted, striving to make him put faith in his words, and besought the priest yet more strenuously to let him tarry with him. At length the priest yielded to his sojourn there, but would not receive the money for fear of his parents. Wherefore the true despiser of monies flung the same in at a certain window, valuing it no more than dust. Then, while he was sojourning in the place aforesaid, his father, like a careful scout that maketh reconnaissance, went round about seeking what had become of his son. And when he heard that he was thus changed and was now sojourning

in such wise in the place already spoken of, he was stricken with inward grief, and, perplexed as to the sudden turn that things had taken, called his friends and neighbors together, and ran with all speed unto the place. But Francis himself, for that he was but a new soldier of Christ, when he heard the threats of them that followed him and perceived their coming, gave way before his father's anger, and betook him unto a hidden cavern that he had made ready for himself unto this end, and there for a whole month he lay hidden. Which cavern was known unto one alone of his father's household, and here he ate the food brought unto him at times in secret, praying continually with a flood of tears that the Lord would deliver him from harmful persecution, and would fulfil his holy vows by His gracious favor.

And when in fasting and weeping he had thus waxed fervent, and had besought the Lord continuously, distrusting his own valor and perseverance, he cast his hope wholly upon the Lord, Who had poured forth upon him, albeit abiding in darkness, a gladness unspeakable, and had enlightened him with wondrous illumination. And with such a glow was he all kindled withal that he left his shelter, and started on the way unto Assisi, ever hastening forward steadfast and joyful. Safeguarded by the armor of trust in Christ, glowing with divine fervor, and reproaching himself with his sloth and empty fear, he openly gave himself up unto the hands and blows of them that persecuted him. When they saw him, his former acquaintance upbraided him with contempt, crying out on him as a

madman and one beside himself, and flung the mud of the streets and stones at him. For, perceiving him thus changed from his former ways, and worn out by mortification of the flesh, they imputed everything he did to want of food and madness. Nevertheless, the soldier of Christ passed on through it all even as one deaf, neither broken down nor changed by any injury done him, but giving God thanks. And when such a report of him had arisen in the places and streets of the city, at last it reached his father. But he, when he heard that such things were being done unto his son by his fellow-citizens, rose up forthwith to seek him, not that he might set him free, but rather that he might destroy him. For, setting no measure on his wrath, he ran upon him even as a wolf toward a sheep, with cruel eye and crafty countenance, and so laid hands in unfatherly wise upon him, dragging him into the house, where for many days he shut him up in a dark prison, endeavoring with words and stripes to bend back his mind unto the vanities of this world.

Nevertheless Francis was neither moved by words, nor wearied out by stripes, bearing all patiently, and only rendered thereby yet more eager for his holy purpose, and stronger to pursue it. For when his father left home on a call of pressing need, his mother, who alone abode with him, misliking her husband's treatment of him, spoke unto her son with gentle entreaty. And for that she could not withdraw him from his holy purpose, yet did the bowels of her pity so yearn toward him that she broke his bonds, and let him go forth free. He then, giving thanks

unto Almighty God, returned unto the place where he had been before, and, making use of a larger freedom, as he that had been proven by the temptations of devils and had learned his lesson by the trial, took heart of grace, and stepped forward the freer and the nobler from the wrongs he had suffered. In the meanwhile his father returned, and, not finding his son, heaped sin on sin by flinging his reproaches at his wife.

Then he ran unto the palace of the community, complaining of his son before the consuls of the city, demanding that they should cause to be restored unto him the money that Francis had carried off, taking with him all there was in the house. And the consuls, seeing him thus vexed, called or summoned Francis by an apparitor to appear before them. But he made answer unto the apparitor that through the grace of God he had now become free, and was no longer bound by the consuls, for that he was the servant of God Most High alone. Then the consuls, not minded to use force with him, said unto his father: "From the time he entered the service of God, he hath gone out of our jurisdiction." His father then, seeing that from the consuls he would gain naught, laid the same complaint before the bishop of the city. The bishop, a wise and discreet man, summoned Francis in manner due to appear and make answer unto his father's complaint. And he made answer unto the messenger: "Unto the lord bishop will I come, for he is the father and lord of souls." He came therefore unto the bishop, and was received by him with great joy. And unto him the bishop saith: "Thy

father is sore vexed against thee and offended. Now therefore, if thou desirest to be the servant of God, give back unto him what money thou hast, which, since perchance it were ill-gotten, God desireth not that thou shouldst use in the work of the church, by reason of the sin of thy father, whose anger will abate when he hath it again. Have thou then faith in the Lord, my son, and play the man, and fear not, for Himself will be thy helper, and will give thee in abundance whatsoever is needful for the work of His church.”

Thereupon the man of God rose up, gladdened and consoled by the words of the bishop, and brought the money before him, saying unto him: “My lord, I will give back unto him with a light heart not only the money that belongeth unto him, but my clothes also.” And going into the bishop’s chamber, he did off all his clothes, and laid them with the money before the bishop and the other bystanders, and went forth naked, saying: “Hear all ye, and understand: until now have I called Peter Bernardone my father, but, for that I purpose to serve the Lord, I give back unto him the money, over which he was vexed, and all the clothes that I have had of him, desiring to say only, ‘Our Father, Which art in Heaven,’ not ‘my father, Peter Bernardone.’” Then was the man of God seen to have a hair-shirt next to his skin under his bright-coloured garments. Then his father rose up, hot with grief and wrath, and took the money, and all the clothes. And as he carried them home, they that had witnessed the spectacle were moved to indignation against him for that he left

not one of the clothes unto his son. And moved with compassion toward Francis, they began to weep bitterly. The bishop, moreover, regarding his courage and fervor of devotion, and greatly marvelling at his constancy, put his arms round him and covered him with his pall. For he perceived right clearly that his deed had been of divine inspiration, and knew that the things he had seen held promise of no small import. Wherefore from thenceforward he became his helper, exhorting and cherishing him, and guiding and embracing him in the bonds of love.

VII

Of his exceeding great toil and pains in repairing the church of S. Damian, and how he began to conquer himself by going for alms

THEREFORE Francis, the servant of God, stripped of all worldly goods, giveth himself up unto the divine justice, and despiseth his own life so as to yield himself up unto the service of God in all ways he may. Returning unto the church of S. Damian, glad and fervent in spirit, he took unto himself as it were a hermit's habit, and comforted the priest of that church with the same words wherewith he had been himself comforted by the bishop. Then rising up, he went into the city, and began to praise the Lord aloud, as one drunk with the Spirit, through the places and the streets. Then when he had ended his praising of the Lord after this sort, he turned him to the gaining of stones for the repairing of the said church, and said: "He that shall give me one stone, shall have one reward, but he that shall give two, shall have two rewards, yea, and he that giveth three, shall have three rewards." These and many other simple words would he say in the fervor of his spirit, for as a foolish and simple man, chosen by God, did he speak, not in learned words of human wisdom, but behaving him in all things as a simple man. Many, indeed, would laugh him to scorn, thinking him mad, but others, stirred by compassion, were moved to tears, seeing him to have come so quickly

from such wantonness and worldly vanity as it were into a very intoxication of the divine love. But he, scorning all derision, did ever give God thanks in fervor of spirit. How great his toil in the work aforesaid it were long and hard to tell. For he that had been so dainty in his father's home did carry the stones on his own shoulders, afflicting himself with manifold burdens in the service of God.

But the priest aforesaid, thinking on the toil that he had taken on him so fervently, beyond his strength, in his divine obedience, was fain to purvey him, poor though he were, some fare beyond the common. For he knew that he had lived delicately in the world. And truly, as the man of God did himself afterward confess, he did oftentimes provide him of rich honeys and confections, and did shun distasteful meats. But when on a certain day the priest told him that which he had been doing for him, he said unto himself: "Wilt thou find this priest, wherever thou mayst go, to show thee such courtesy? This is not the life of a poor man, which thou didst desire to choose, but, even as the poor man goeth from door to door carrying his beggar's dish in his hand, and so as need doth compel, gathereth together a medley of various victuals, thus of thine own free will oughtest thou to live, for the love of Him Who was born poor and did most poorly live in this world, and remained naked and poor upon the Cross, and was buried in another's sepulchre." Therefore on a certain day he took a dish, and came into the city, going from door to door asking an alms. And when he had set divers victuals in his bowl, many marvelled, that

knew him to have lived so delicately, beholding him thus wondrously changed into such contempt of himself. But when he would have eaten that medley of various meats, at first he shrank back, for that he had never been used willingly even to see, much less to eat, such scraps. At length, conquering himself, he began to eat, and it seemed unto him that in eating no rich honey had he ever tasted aught so delightsome. Thenceforward so did his heart exult in the Lord that his flesh, albeit feeble and afflicted, was strengthened to bear gladly all things harsh and bitter for the Lord's sake. Moreover he gave God thanks, for that He had changed bitter into sweet for him, and had consoled him in many ways. So he bade that priest from that time purvey no food for him, or cause to be purveyed.

Then his father, seeing him set in such poor estate, was filled with sorrow exceeding. For by reason that he had loved him much, he felt shamed, and did so grieve over him, seeing his flesh as it were dead from exceeding mortification and cold, that, wheresoever he chanced on him, he would curse him. But the man of God, having regard unto the curses of his father, took unto him a little poor and despised man to be his father. And he saith unto him: "Come with me, and I will give thee of the alms which shall be given me. And when thou shalt see my father curse me, I for my part will say unto thee, 'Bless me, my father,' and thou shalt make the sign of the Cross over me and bless me in his stead." So then, when that poor man blessed him, the man of God would say unto his father: "Thinkest thou not that God can give me a

father to bless me, to set against thy curses?" Moreover, many of them that mocked him, seeing that although he were mocked, he bore all thus patiently, marvelled with exceeding amazement. Once in winter time when he had risen betimes to pray, clad in wretchedly poor clothes, his brother after the flesh passed by him, and said unto one of his fellow-citizens tauntingly: "Bid Francis sell thee at least one penny-worth of his sweat." Which hearing, the man of God, filled with salutary joy, in the fervor of his spirit made answer in French: "I," saith he, "will sell right dear that sweat unto my Lord."

But while he was toiling diligently in the work of the church whereof we have spoken, being minded that in that church lamps should burn continually, he would go through the city to beg oil; but once when he had come unto a certain house, seeing sundry men assembled there for a game, he was ashamed in their presence to ask an alms, and withdrew. Then, communing with himself, he reproached himself with having sinned, and running unto the place where the game was being played, he told his sin in the presence of all the bystanders—that he had been ashamed to ask alms because of them. And with a fervent spirit he drew nigh unto that house, and in French asked an alms for the love of God, for the lamps of the church aforesaid. And continuing with other fellow-laborers in the said task, he would cry with a loud voice in the joy of the Spirit unto the inhabitants, saying unto them in French: "Come, and help me in the work of the church of S. Damian, which shall be the convent of Ladies, by

whose good report and life our Heavenly Father shall be glorified in the universal Church.” Behold how he was filled with the spirit of prophecy, insomuch as that he truly foretold what was to be! For this is that holy place wherein the famous religion and most illustrious Order of the Poor Ladies and holy virgins took its rise, scarce six years after the conversion of the Blessed Francis, by means of the same Blessed Francis. And their wondrous life and famous rule was more fully confirmed by the lord Pope Gregory IX of saintly memory, at that time bishop of Ostia, with the authority of the Apostolic See.

VIII

How by hearing and understanding the monitions of Christ in the Gospel, he did at once change his outer garb, and did put on a new garb of perfection both within and without

Now the Blessed Francis, at the time when the work of the church of S. Damian was finished, was wearing the habit of a hermit, carrying a staff in his hand, and walked with his feet shod with sandals, girt with a leather belt. But hearing on a certain day at the celebration of Mass those words that Christ spoke unto His disciples when He sent them forth to preach, that they should carry on their journey neither gold nor silver, nor wallet, nor staff, nor have sandals nor two coats, and understanding these words more clearly afterward from that same priest, he was filled with joy unspeakable; "This," saith he, "is that which I wish with all my might to fulfil." Wherefore, committing unto memory all that he had heard, he strove joyfully to fulfil the same, casting aside without delay whatsoever he had two of; from thenceforward he used neither staff, sandals, purse, nor wallet; but, making for himself a right sorry and rough tunic, he threw aside his leather belt, and took for a girdle a rope. Moreover, applying all the anxious endeavor of his heart unto the words of this new grace, by what means he might persevere in that work, he began by divine intuition to be the herald of Gospel perfection, and to preach

repentance in a simple way in public. Nor were his words empty, nor meet for laughter, but full of the might of the Holy Spirit, piercing unto the marrow of the heart, insomuch as that his hearers were rapt in amazement as they listened.

Now as he afterward himself bore witness, this was the manner of his salutation, that the Lord had revealed unto him: "The Lord give thee peace." Wherefore in all his preaching, he would salute the people at the outset by proclaiming peace. And a marvellous thing it is, and not to be accounted for but by miracle, that he had before his conversion a forerunner in making known this salutation, even one that oftentimes went throughout Assisi giving salutation in this wise: "Peace and good." From which we must firmly believe that, even as John the forerunner of Christ did decrease when Christ began to preach, so this man too, like unto another John, had been a forerunner of the Blessed Francis in proclaiming peace. He too, after the coming of the other, did not show himself as before. Thus straightway Francis, the man of God, following on the heels of his said herald, filled with the spirit of the prophets, in words like unto theirs, did proclaim peace, and preach salvation, and many by his salutary monitions became allies of the true peace, who had been aliens from Christ, far from salvation.

Now when the truth of this so simple teaching of the Blessed Francis and of his life no less simple became manifest unto many, certain men, two years after his conversion, began by his example to turn their minds unto

repentance, and, laying aside all things, to join themselves with him in the same habit and life. First of these was Brother Bernard of saintly memory, who, beholding the endurance and fervor of the Blessed Francis in the divine service—how, to wit, with much toil he did repair ruined churches, and did lead an austere life, whereas he knew that he had lived delicately in the world—purposed in his heart to bestow all that he had upon the poor, and to cleave fast unto that other in life and habit. So on a certain day he went secretly unto the man of God and made known unto him his purpose, and agreed with him that on such an evening he should come unto his house. Upon hearing this, the Blessed Francis, giving God thanks, rejoiced exceedingly, seeing that he had as yet no companion, and in especial for that Messer Bernard was a man of great edification.

So the Blessed Francis did come unto his house on the evening appointed, with great uplifting of heart, and tarried with him that whole night. And among other things Messer Bernard said unto him: “If a man had received from his lord many or few things, and had kept them for many years, and were minded no longer to keep them, what could he do with them for the best?” The Blessed Francis made answer that he ought to return them unto his lord from whom he had received them. And Messer Bernard saith: “Therefore, Brother, all my worldly goods I wish to bestow, for the love of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave them unto me, in such fashion as shall seem best unto thee.” To whom said the holy man:

“At earliest dawn will we go to church, and by the book of the Gospels we shall learn in what way the Lord taught His disciples.” Rising therefore early, with another, by name Peter, who also was minded to become a brother, they came unto the church of S. Nicholas, hard by the market-place of Assisi, and, entering therein to pray, for that they were unlettered, and knew not where to find the word of the Gospel as to renunciation of the world, they prayed the Lord devoutly that in the first opening of the book He would deign to show unto them His will.

When their prayers were at an end, the Blessed Francis, taking the shut book, and bowing before the altar, did open the same, and at the first opening thereof was discovered that counsel of the Lord: “If thou wouldst be perfect, go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” At this opening, the Blessed Francis rejoiced greatly, and gave God thanks, but, for that he was a true worshipper of the Trinity, he desired it to be confirmed by thrice-repeated witness, and opened the book a second and a third time. And in the second opening was discovered that passage beginning: “Take nothing with you on your journey.” And in the third, that other beginning: “He that will come after Me let him deny himself.” Thereupon the Blessed Francis, at each opening of the book, gave God thanks for the confirmation of his own purpose and long-conceived desire, thrice divinely declared and manifested unto him, and said unto his companions aforesaid, to wit, unto Bernard and Peter: “My brothers, this is our life and rule, and that

of all who shall wish to join our company. Go therefore, and fulfil that ye have heard." So Messer Bernard, who was rich exceedingly, went and sold all that he had, and, collecting much money, gave it all among the poor of the city. Peter also according unto his power fulfilled the divine counsel. Then, having parted with all their goods, they twain at the same time put on the habit that the holy man had taken not long before, after he did give up the hermit's habit, and from that hour they lived together with him after the manner of the Holy Gospel shown unto them by the Lord. And thus the Blessed Francis said in his will: "The Lord Himself revealed unto me that I ought to live after the manner of the Holy Gospel."

IX

Of the manner of the vocation of Brother Silvester, and of the vision that he had before entering the Order.

NOW while, as hath been said, Messer Bernard was giving his goods in largesse unto the poor, the Blessed Francis was present, beholding the efficacy of the Lord's working, and magnifying that Lord in his heart, and praising Him aloud. But there came by a priest, by name Silvester, of whom the Blessed Francis had bought stones for the repairing of the church of S. Damian; whereupon, seeing that so great a sum of money was being spent under the advice of the man of God, the flame of coveteousness was kindled in him, and he said unto him: "Francis, thou hast not paid me in full for the stones that thou didst buy of me." Hearing him thus unjustly complain, the despiser of avarice went unto Messer Bernard, and, placing his hand in his cloak, where was the money, with great fervor of spirit he drew it forth full of coins, and gave them unto the priest that did complain. And again a second time filling his hands, he said unto him: "Hast thou now thy payment in full, sir priest?" And he replieth: "I have it in full, Brother," and in joy he returneth home with the money thus received.

But after a few days the same priest, inspired of the Lord, began to ponder those things that the Blessed Francis had wrought, and said within himself: "Am not I a wretched man, who in mine old age do greedily covet

worldly goods, while this youth, for the love of God, despiseth and escheweth them?" And the night following, he saw in a dream an immeasurable Cross, whereof the top touched the sky, and the foot was set in the mouth of Francis, and its arms were stretched from the one side of the world unto the other. Then the priest, awakening, did acknowledge and believe of a certainty that Francis was the true friend and servant of Christ, and that the religion he had begun would presently spread throughout the whole world. Wherefore he began to fear God, and to do penance in his house. Then at last after a brief space he entered the order then already begun, and therein did full worthily live and gloriously end his days.

Now Francis the man of God, joined by two brethren, as hath been said, for that he had no hostel wherein he might sojourn with them, betook him together with them unto a poor little forsaken church that was called S. Mary of the Little Portion. And they made there one little cell, wherein they abode together for a while. Now after some days, a man of Assisi, Giles by name, did come unto them, and with great reverence and devotion, on bended knees, did beseech the man of God that he would receive him into his fellowship. Him the man of God perceived to be most faithful and devout, and for that he had obtained much grace of God, as afterward appeared from the result, did right gladly receive him. Then these four were joined together in exceeding gladness, and in the joy of the Holy Spirit, and did separate themselves for a greater enterprise after this fashion.

The Blessed Francis taking with him Brother Giles went into the March of Ancona, while the other twain betook them unto another province. They then, going into the March, did exult mightily in the Lord, and the holy man, singing praises in French with a voice loud and clear, would bless and magnify the goodness of the Most High. Even such gladness was in them as though they had found a great treasure in the Gospel field of the Lady Poverty, for love of whom they had freely and gladly despised all worldly goods as dung. For the holy man said unto Brother Giles: "Our religion is like unto a fisherman that casteth his nets into the water, catching a plentiful multitude of fishes, and, leaving the small ones in the water, chooseth out the large ones for his basket." In this wise did he prophesy the spread of the order. But albeit the man of God did not as yet preach fully unto the people, yet whensoever he was passing through the cities and castles, he would admonish all that they should love and fear God, and do penance for their sins. Brother Giles on his part would exhort them that heard to believe him, for that none could give them better counsel.

And they that heard would say: "Who are these men, and what manner of words are these that they speak?" For at that time the love and fear of God were everywhere extinct, and the way of penitence was utterly unknown, nay, was held to be foolishness. For so mightily had prevailed the lusts of the flesh, the covetousness of the world, and the pride of life, that the whole world seemed utterly given up unto these three malignant influences. Therefore

opinion was diverse as to these men of Gospel life. For some would say they were fools, or drunken, while others would protest that such words came not forth from foolishness. And one that heard them said: "Either they have cleaved unto the Lord for the sake of attaining unto the highest perfection, or assuredly they are mad, for their way of life seemeth intolerable, seeing that their fare is scanty, they walk barefoot, and are clad in the meanest of garments." Nevertheless, albeit that some were smitten with apprehension when they beheld the manner of their conversation, not as yet did any follow after them; rather did the younger women, seeing them afar off, flee in terror, lest perchance they should be led away by their foolishness or madness. Now when they had journeyed round that province, they returned unto the said place of S. Mary.

And after that a few days were passed, there came unto them yet other three men of Assisi, to wit, Sabbatino, Morico, and John de Cappella, beseeching the Blessed Francis that he would receive them among the brethren, and he did receive them humbly and graciously. But when they were asking an alms through the city, scarce any man would give unto them, but upbraided them, saying that they had given up their own goods to the end that they might devour those of other men, and thus did they endure the uttermost penury. Their parents also, and kindred, persecuted them. And others of the city made a mock of them as though they had lost their wits, and were fools, for at that time was no man wont to give up

his goods that he might ask alms from door to door. Then the bishop of the city of Assisi, unto whom the man of God would oftentimes go for counsel, receiving him graciously, said unto him: "Hard and harsh seemeth unto me your life, to wit, to possess naught in this world." To him saith the holy man: "My lord, if we should have possessions, we should need arms to protect ourselves. For thence arise disputes, and law-suits, and for this cause the love of God and of our neighbor is wont oftentimes to be hindered; therefore we be minded to possess naught of worldly goods in this world." And the bishop was much pleased with the answer of the man of God, who despised all transitory things, and money in especial so utterly that in all his rules he praised most chiefly poverty, and would fain have all the brethren zealous to eschew money—for he made divers rules, and tested them, before he made that which at the last he left unto the brethren. Wherefore in one of them he said, as to the abhorrence of money: "Let us take heed, who have given up all, lest for so slight a thing we lose the kingdom of heaven. And if we find money in any place, let us care for it no more than for the dust that we tread under foot."

X

How he foretold unto his six companions all things that should come upon them as they went through the world

S. Francis, for that he was now enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, calling unto him the said six brethren, foretold them those things that were to come. “Dearest brethren,” saith he, “let us consider our vocation, unto which God hath mercifully called us, not so much for our own salvation, as for that of the many, that we might go through the world, admonishing all peoples more by example than by word to do penance for their sins, and to be mindful of the commands of God. Fear ye not, that ye are small and beginning, but untroubled proclaim penance simply, trusting in God, Who hath overcome the world, for that by His Spirit He speaketh through you, and in you, to admonish all men that they do turn unto Him, and keep His commandments. Ye will find some men that be faithful, gentle, and gracious, who will receive you and your words with joy, and others, more, that be faithless; blaspheming, they will resist you, and those things which you will say. Be it set therefore in your hearts to bear all things patiently and humbly.” And when the brethren heard these things, they were seized by fear. The holy man said to them: “Fear ye not, for many wise and noble men will come to you after not much time, and they will be with you, preaching to kings, and to princes, and to many peoples; in truth, many will

be converted to the Lord, Who will multiply and increase His family throughout the whole world.”

And when he had told them these things, and blessed them, the men of God went away, devoutly observing his behests. When they came on a church, or a cross, they would bow in prayer and say devoutly: “We adore Thee, O Christ, and bless Thee, in all Thy churches that be in the whole world, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.” For he was persuaded that it was always a place of the Lord wheresoever they found a cross or a church. And all that saw them marvelled exceedingly, for that in habit and way of life they were unlike all others, and seemed like wild men. Wheresoever they entered in, were it city, or castle, or farm, or house, they brought the message of peace, consoling all, and bidding them fear and love the Maker of heaven and earth, and keep His commandments. Some heard them gladly; others, on the contrary, mocked them, and by many they were asked whence they came, and of what order they were. To whom, albeit it were toilsome to make answer unto so many enquiries, they nevertheless simply confessed that they were penitents, natives of the city of Assisi—for as yet their order was not called a religion.

Many thought them deceivers, or foolish, nor were minded to receive them into their houses, lest they might prove to be thieves who would carry off their goods by stealth. Wherefore in many places, after many injuries had been done unto them, they would shelter in the porches of churches or of houses.

About this time two of them were at Florence, and they went through the city seeking a lodging yet could find none. But when they came unto a certain house that had an oven in the porch, they said the one unto the other: "Here we may take shelter." Accordingly they asked the mistress of the house to receive them within the house, and, upon her refusal to do this, they said humbly that perchance she would allow them for that night at least to rest near the oven. This she granted, but her husband, when that he came and found them in the porch, called his wife and said unto her: "Wherefore hast thou granted these ribalds shelter in our porch?" She made answer that she had refused to receive them into the house, but had granted them to lie without the porch, where they could steal naught save the wood. So her husband would not allow that any shelter should be given unto them, albeit the cold was great, for that he thought them to be ribalds and thieves. That night, therefore, until morn they lay near the oven, sleeping but lightly, warmed only by the divine glow, and covered only by the shelter of the Lady Poverty, and then went unto a church hard by to hear matins.

When morning came, the woman went unto that same church, and seeing there those brethren continuing devoutly in prayer, she said within herself: "Were these men ribalds and thieves, as said my husband, they would not thus continue reverently in prayer." While she was pondering these things inwardly, behold, a man named Guido was bestowing alms on the poor that were waiting

in that church, and when he had come unto the brethren, and would fain have given unto each of them money, as he was giving unto the rest, they refused his money, and would not take it. But he said unto them: "Wherefore do ye, being poor, not take money as do the rest?" Replied Brother Bernard: "True is it that we be poor, but poverty is not a hard thing unto us, as unto the other poor, for by the grace of God, Whose counsel we have fulfilled, of our own accord have we made ourselves poor." At this the man marvelled, and, asking them if they had ever had possessions, he learned from them that they had had great possessions, but for the love of God had given all unto the poor. For he that thus made answer was that Brother Bernard, the second to the Blessed Francis, whom today we truly hold as our most holy father; he was the first to embrace the message of peace and repentance, and did run to follow the holy man of God, and, selling all that he had, and giving it unto the poor according unto the counsel of Gospel perfection, did continue unto the end in most holy poverty. Wherefore the said woman, taking thought upon this, that the brethren would have none of the money, went unto them and said that gladly would she receive them into her house, if they would come thither for the sake of being her guests. To whom they humbly made answer: "The Lord repay thee for thy goodwill." But the man aforesaid, hearing that the brethren had not been able to find a lodging, brought them into his house, saying: "Behold a lodging made ready for you of the Lord, abide therein according unto your good pleasure." And

they, giving God thanks, abode with him for some days, edifying him both by example and by word in the fear of the Lord, so that thereafter he bestowed much of his wealth on the poor.

And although they were drawn kindly by this, before others they were nevertheless held to be so exceedingly worthless that many, small and great, reviled and injured them, at times taking away from them even those garments which they had. And when the servants of God were left naked, they would not ask that what had been taken away be restored unto them. If indeed someone, moved by piety, wanted to return what had been taken away, they received it gladly. Some would throw mud upon them; others, placing dice in their hands, asked them if they wanted to play. Others, seizing their hoods from behind, would carry them on their backs as though they were hanged. These and such outrages did they unto them, thinking them so despicable that they did boldly torment them as they wished. Even more, they endured immense distresses and straits in hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness; bearing all of which firmly and patiently, they were neither saddened nor troubled, nor did they curse those bearing evil to them; but as perfect and Gospel-led men, they even exulted exceedingly, placed in the great profit in the Lord, esteeming everything a joy, when they fell into temptations and troubles of this type, and according to the word of the Gospel they prayed anxiously and fervently for their persecutors.

XI

Of the reception of four other brethren, and of the most glowing love that the first brethren had toward one another, and of their zeal for work, and for prayer, and of their perfect obedience

NOW when men saw that the brethren amid their trials were uplifted, and that they continued zealously and devoutly in prayer, and did neither accept money, nor carry any, and that they had the greatest love toward one another, by the which they were known of a truth to be disciples of the Lord, many were pricked to the heart, and came unto them, beseeching pardon for the wrongs that they had inflicted upon them. And the brethren did forgive them from their heart, saying: "The Lord pardon you," and exhorted them concerning their salvation in salutary wise. Some there were moreover that asked those brethren to receive them into their fellowship, and, for that all they six had been granted license from the Blessed Francis to receive men into the order, by reason of the fewness of brethren, they did receive divers others into their fellowship, and with them that they thus received, at the time appointed, they one and all returned unto S. Mary of the Little Portion. And when they beheld one another again, they were filled with such gladness and rejoicing as that naught was had in remembrance by them of the things that they had suffered from evil men, They were zealous each day in prayer, and in working with their

hands, that they might put to flight from themselves all inward slothfulness, the enemy of the soul. They would rise at midnight in their zeal, and pray most devoutly with measureless weeping and sighing. They cherished one another with a right inward love, and served each the other, and nourished him, even as a mother doth her only and well-beloved son. Such a charity did burn within them that it seemed easy unto them to yield their bodies unto death, not for the love of Christ alone, but also for the salvation of the soul, nay, even of the body of their brethren.

Thus, for instance, on a certain day when two of these brethren were walking together, they chanced upon a fool, that took up stones to cast at them. Whereupon one of them, seeing that stones were cast at the other, did forthwith plant himself in the way to ward off the blows of the stones, being minded rather that himself should be stricken than his brother, by reason of the mutual charity wherewith they were fired, yea, thus were they ready one for the other to lay down his life. For in humility and in charity were they founded, and so rooted therein that one would reverence another as his father and lord, and they that did excel by reason of an office of precedence or some other grace, seemed humbler and lowlier than the rest. Moreover, they did all yield them utterly unto obedience; always preparing themselves to the will of the one commanding, they did not distinguish between the just and unjust command; for whatever was being commanded, they thought to be according to the will of God,

and therefore it was easy and sweet for them to fulfil the command. But from the lusts of the flesh they did abstain, anxiously passing judgment upon themselves, and taking heed moreover lest one should offend another in any way.

If at any time it betided that one spoke unto another a word that might vex him, so much did his conscience prick him that he could not rest until he had told his fault, prostrating himself humbly on the ground, that he might make the foot of the brother he had vexed be laid on his own mouth. And if the brother that had been vexed did not want to lay his foot on his mouth, then if he that had vexed him were in authority, he would command the brother to lay his foot on his mouth; if he were one subject unto him, he would make him be commanded to do so by one that was superior. In this wise would they endeavor to put far from them all bitterness and malice, and to preserve ever among them a perfect loving-kindness, striving with all their might to set over against any special vice some special virtue, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ working with them and preventing them in all their ways. Nor did they claim aught as belonging unto any one of them, but the books and other things granted unto them they had in common, according unto the manner handed down and observed from the Apostles. But since there was true poverty among them, yet were they free-handed and generous with all granted unto them for the sake of the Lord, giving freely of the alms bestowed on them, for the love of Him, unto all that asked, and in especial unto the poor.

Whensoever on their journeys they did find by the way beggars asking aught from them for the love of God, and they had naught else to offer, they would give them some part of their clothes, sorry as these were. Sometimes they gave their hood, dividing the tunic itself; sometimes the sleeve, sometimes another part, ripping apart the tunic itself, that they might fulfil the Gospel: "Give unto him that asketh of thee." Once on a certain day a beggar came unto the church of S. Mary of the Little Portion, wherein the brethren were sojourning for a time, and asked an alms. There was a cloak there, which had belonged unto a lay brother, who, when the Blessed Francis bade him give it unto that beggar, gladly and speedily gave it him. And that very moment, by reason of the reverence and devotion which that brother showed in giving the cloak unto the beggar, it seemed unto him that his alms had gone up into heaven, and he felt himself filled up with a new joy.

Whensoever rich men of this world did turn aside to them, they received them eagerly and kindly, striving to recall them from evil, and to stir them up unto repentance. Zealously moreover did they seek not to be sent unto the land of their birth, that they might shun familiarity and friendship with their own kindred, and thus observe the saying of the prophet: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children." In poverty they did rejoice exceedingly, for that they were not greedy after riches, but despised all transitory things such as might be greedily desired by the lovers of this

world. Money in especial they would tread under foot as dust, and, even as they had been taught by the holy man, would weigh it at the same price as an ass's dung. They rejoiced in the Lord continually, having naught within them or without that could in any wise make them sad. For the further they were sundered from the world, so much the nearer were they joined unto the Lord. Walking in the way of the Cross, and in the paths of justice, they did remove stumbling-blocks from the narrow way of repentance and of Gospel observance, so that the path of them that followed after might be made even and sure.

XII

How the Blessed Francis with eleben companions went unto the Curia of the pope, that he might notify unto him his purpose, and make be confirmed the Rule that he had written

Now the Blessed Francis, perceiving that his brethren were increasing in merit and in number, for that now they were twelve most perfect men, all of a like mind, spoke unto those eleven, himself the twelfth, saying: "I perceive, brethren, that the Lord wishes mercifully to increase our fellowship. Let us go therefore unto our Mother, the Holy Roman Church, and notify the supreme pontiff that which the Lord hath begun to work through us, that by his good pleasure and command we may carry on that which we have begun." Then since the words of the Father seemed good unto the other brethren, together with him they took their journey unto the Curia, whereupon the Blessed Francis said unto them: "Let us make one of our number our leader, and let us hold him as the vicar of Jesus Christ, so that according unto his will, whither he goeth we shall go, and where he lodgeth there also will we lodge." And they chose Brother Bernard, the first after the Blessed Francis, and as the Father had said so did they. Thus rejoicing they went on their way, and did speak the words of the Lord, not venturing to speak aught save that which pertained unto the praise and glory of God, and unto the profit of the soul,

and oftentimes they gave themselves up unto prayer. And the Lord ever made ready a lodging for them, causing all needful things to be ministered unto them.

When they had come unto Rome, they found there the bishop of the city of Assisi, and were received by him with exceeding joy, for he did reverence the Blessed Francis and all the brethren with especial favor. Nevertheless, being ignorant of the reason of their coming, he began to be troubled, fearing lest they were minded to leave their own province, wherein the Lord had begun through them to work marvels. For he rejoiced greatly to have such men in his bishopric, men whose life and conversation he took to be of passing great promise; but when he had heard the reason, and understood their intent, he rejoiced much, offering them unto this end counsel and help. This same bishop was known unto the cardinal of S. Sabina, by name the lord John of S. Paul, a man truly full of the grace of God, loving beyond all other the servants of God. To him the said bishop had made known the life of the Blessed Francis, and of his brethren, wherefore he himself was fain to behold the man of God, and some of his brethren. Hearing that they were in the City, he sent for them, and received them with great reverence and love.

Tarrying with him for a few days, they so edified him by their holy discourse and example that, seeing how manifestly that which he had heard concerning them did shine forth in their work, he commended himself unto their prayers humbly and devoutly, furthermore beseeching as of especial grace that from thenceforward he might be

counted as one of the brethren. At last, asking the Blessed Francis wherefore he had come, and hearing from him all his purpose and intent, he offered himself to be his advocate with the Curia. Wherefore the said cardinal went unto the Curia, and said unto the lord Pope Innocent III: "I have found a man of most perfect life, that is minded to live conformably with the Holy Gospel, and to observe in all things Gospel perfection: through whom, as I believe, the Lord is minded to reform throughout the whole world the faith of Holy Church." Which hearing, the lord pope marvelled much, and bade the cardinal bring the Blessed Francis unto him.

So upon the day following the man of God was presented by the said cardinal before the pope, unto whom he laid bare all his holy purpose. The pope himself, for that he was gifted in especial wise with discernment, assented after the wonted manner unto the petition of the holy man, and gave him his blessing, saying: "Go with the Lord, brethren, and even as the Lord shall deign to inspire you, do ye preach repentance unto all. But when God Almighty shall have multiplied you with a greater fellowship, and grace, bring word unto us, and we will grant more unto you than this, and will commit unto you greater powers with more assurance." Howbeit, for that the lord pope was minded to know whether the things granted or to be granted were in accordinace with the will of God, before the holy man left his presence, he said unto him and his companions: "Little children mine, this life of yours seemeth unto us too hard and rough, for

although we believe your fervency to be such as that it would ill become us to doubt you, nevertheless must we have regard unto them that shall follow after you, lest this way shall seem too harsh for them." Yet when he had seen the constancy of their faith, and that their anchor of hope was most firmly fixed in Christ, insomuch as that they would not be turned aside from their fervency of spirit, he said unto the Blessed Francis: "Go, my son, and pray God that He reveal unto thee whether what ye seek cometh of His will, so that we, being assured of the Lord's will, may accede unto thy desire."

While therefore the holy man of God was praying, even as the lord pope had proposed unto him, the Lord spoke unto him in spirit by a parable, saying: "A certain woman, poor but comely, abode in a wilderness, and a great King, marvelling at her beauty, did desire greatly to take her to wife, thinking she would bear him fair sons. And after that they had been betrothed and wedded, many sons were born unto them and nurtured, unto whom the mother spoke after this wise: 'My sons, be not ashamed, seeing that ye be King's sons. Wherefore go unto his Court, and he himself will minister unto you all things needful.' So when they had come unto the King, the King marvelled at their beauty, seeing moreover in them his own likeness, and he said unto them: 'Whose sons be ye?' Unto whom they made answer that they were the sons of a poor woman sojourning in the wilderness, and therewithal the King did embrace them with great joy, saying: 'Fear not, for ye are my sons; for if from my

table strangers are fed, how much more shall ye be, that be my lawful sons?’ Therefore the King bade the woman aforesaid send all the sons born of her unto his Court to be brought up and nurtured.” So when these things had been shown in a vision unto the Blessed Francis as he prayed, the holy man did understand that himself was intended under the figure of that poor woman.

And his prayer ended, he presented himself again before the supreme pontiff, and related unto him in order the parable which the Lord had showed unto him, and said: “I, my lord, am that poor woman, whom the loving Lord adorned with His own cleanliness, and from whom it hath pleased Him to beget unto Himself lawful sons. And the King of Kings hath said unto me that all the sons that shall be born of me He will nourish, for that if He nourish strangers, of right ought He to nourish His lawful sons. For if the Lord giveth unto sinners worldly goods by reason of His love unto His sons that have need of nurture, much more shall He bestow in largesse unto men that live after the Gospel, unto whom it is owing as of desert.” Upon hearing this, the lord pope was amazed beyond measure, for that before the coming of the Blessed Francis he had seen in a vision the church of S. John Lateran like to fall, and a certain Religious, small of stature and despised, holding it up by setting his own back thereunder. He awoke, astonished and adread, yet, for that he was a discreet man and a wise, bethought him what import this vision might have for him. But when after a few days the Blessed Francis did come unto him, and

revealed unto him his purpose, that he said and asked that the pope confirm for him the rule, which he had written with simple words, using the words of the Holy Gospel, unto whose perfection he did aspire to the uttermost, and when the lord pope beheld him thus glowing with the love of God, and was speaking with him of his vision, and of the said parable shown unto the man of God, he began to say within himself: "Truly this is that Religious and holy man by whom the Church of God shall be uplifted and upheld." For which cause he did embrace him and did approve the rule that he had written.

These privileges granted, the Blessed Francis gave God thanks, and on bended knees humbly and devoutly promised the lord pope obedience and reverence. In like wise also, by injunction of the lord pope, the other brethren did promise obedience and reverence unto the Blessed Francis. Then after receiving the pope's blessing, and visiting the thresholds of the Apostles, the tonsure was given unto the blessed Francis and the other eleven brethren according as the said cardinal had provided, for he was minded that they all twelve should be clerics.

Departing from the City, the man of God set forth into the world with the said brethren, marvelling greatly that his desire had been thus easily accomplished, and growing daily in hope and in the faith of the Saviour, Who by His holy revelations had beforehand shown unto him that which came to pass. For, before that he had gained the aforesaid privileges, one night in sleep it seemed unto him that he was walking along a road whereby was a right

tall tree, fair to look on, strong and big. And when he drew nigh thereunto, and stood beneath it, marvelling at its height and comeliness, lo! he himself became of a sudden so tall as that he did touch the top of the tree, and bent it down unto the earth right easily. And of a truth this did so befall, when the lord Pope Innocent, the tallest and comeliest and strongest tree in the world, bent himself so graciously unto his petition and will.

XIII

Of the efficacy of his preaching, and of the first place that he had, and how the brethren abode therein, and in what sort they departed thence

THENCEFORTH the Blessed Francis, going round among cities and castled villages, began everywhere to faithfully preach more fully and perfectly, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, not in the plausible words of human wisdom, but in the teaching and might of the Holy Spirit. For he was a truthful preacher, confirmed by Apostolic authority, making use of no flatteries, and abhorring the blandishments of speech, for that whatsoever he preached in words unto others, of that he had first convinced himself in deed, that he might in full confidence declare the truth. Men marvelled at the power of his discourses, and their truth, which man had not taught; yea, even the lettered and the educated hastened most eagerly to see and hear him, as a man of another age. Thenceforward much folk, nobles and commons, clerics and laymen, began under the influence of divine inspiration to tread in the footsteps of the Blessed Francis, and secular cares and pomps being cast aside, to live under his discipline.

Now as yet the Father was dwelling with the others in a certain place near Assisi, which is called Rivo Torto, where he had a certain cottage abandoned by men, which place was thus so narrow that they could scarcely sit or rest

there. There full often for lack of bread they ate naught but turnips, that they would beg here and there in their straits. The man of God wrote the names of the brethren on the beams of the cottage, so that he that was minded to rest, or to pray, might know his own place, and that in their huddling together for the straitness of the room, no unseemly noise might disturb the silence of the mind. But on a certain day, while the brethren were abiding in this place, it chanced that a countryman came thither with his ass, desiring to take shelter with his ass in the cottage, who, that he might not be repulsed by the brethren, spoke unto his ass as he entered: "Get in with you, for we shall do well in this place." Which hearing, and perceiving the words and purport of the countryman, the holy Father was moved in spirit, in especial over the man, for that he had made a great disturbance with his ass, disquieting the brethren who were one and all giving themselves up unto silence and prayer. Wherefore the man of God said unto the brethren: "I know, brethren, that God hath not called us apart to provide stabling for an ass, nor an inn-parlor for men, but that whenever preaching to men the way of salvation, presenting saving advice, we might first persevere in prayers and thanksgivings." They therefore left the said cottage for the use of poor lepers, betaking themselves unto the church of S. Mary of the Little Portion, nigh which they had sojourned for a while in a little cell, before they obtained of the church itself.

And after a time the Blessed Francis, under the guidance of the will and inspiration of God, did humbly ac-

quire that church from the abbot of S. Benedict of Monte Subasio near Assisi, which the holy man himself commended with singular affection unto the Minister-General and all the brethren, as a place beyond all other places of this world beloved of the glorious Virgin. And toward assuring the commendation and love of this place much was wrought by a vision that a brother yet living in the world saw, one that the Blessed Francis did love with an especial tenderness, manifesting toward him as long as he was with him his chiefest familiarity. This man, then, desiring to serve God, even as thereafter he did faithfully serve Him in the religion, saw in a vision that all the men of this world were blind, and were gathered on bended knees around S. Mary of the Little Portion, and with clasped hands and faces uplifted toward heaven were beseeching the Lord with a voice loud and pitiful that of His mercy He would deign to enlighten them. To whom thus praying, it appeared that a great radiance broke forth from the sky, and falling upon them enlightened them all with saving light. And that other, awaking, steadfastly purposed to serve God, and a little thereafter did leave this evil world and its vain shows far behind, and entered the religion, wherein he abode in the service of God, humbly and devoutly.

XIV

Of the Chapter that was held twice a year in the place of S. Mary of the Little Portion

NOW after the aforesaid place of S. Mary was acquired from the said abbot, the Blessed Francis did ordain that a Chapter should be held there twice a year, to wit, at Whitsuntide and at Michaelmas. At Whitsuntide, all the brethren assembled unto S. Mary and consulted how best they might observe the rule; they did also allot brethren unto the various provinces, who should preach unto the people, and distribute the brethren throughout their provinces. Moreover S. Francis gave unto them admonitions, rebukes, and precepts, according as seemed good unto him by the counsel of the Lord. And all the words that he preached unto them he did show forth in practice with tenderness and zeal. He paid reverence unto the prelates and priests of the holy Church, and did honor unto the elders, nobles, and rich men; the poor also he loved inwardly, yearning toward them with the bowels of compassion, and presented himself as subject unto all. And although he were raised above all the brethren, yet did he ordain one of the brethren that abode with him to be his warden and lord, unto whom, that he might banish from himself all occasion for pride, he would humbly and devoutly pay obedience. For he did humble his head among all even unto the ground, that among the saints and the elect of God he might hereafter

deserve to be exalted in the divine sight. He exhorted the brethren earnestly that they should steadfastly observe the Holy Gospel, and the rule that they had vowed, and in especial that they should show reverence and devotion as touching the divine offices, and the ordinances of the church, and should devoutly hear Mass, and most devoutly adore the Body of the Lord. Priests, moreover, who do handle the reverend and highest Sacraments, he wished to be in especial wise honored by the brethren, insomuch as that wherever they might find them, they were to bow the head before them, and to kiss their hands, but even the feet of their horses, should they be riding on them, because of the reverence of their power.

Moreover he exhorted the brethren that they should judge no man, nor think scorn of them that live delicately, and are dressed excessively, for that our God is their Lord also, able to call them unto Himself, and having called, to justify them. He would say that he desired the brethren should reverence such as brothers, and their lords, for that they were brothers, being created by the one Creator, and lords, in as much as they did help the good to do penance by ministering unto them the things needful for the body. This furthermore he would say: "The conversation of the brethren in the world ought to be after such a sort as that whoever doth see or hear them shall glorify our Heavenly Father, and shall devoutly praise Him." For his chief desire was that himself no less than the brethren should abound in works for which the Lord would be praised thereby. And he would say unto them: "Even as

ye with your mouth do proclaim peace, in like manner take heed that ye have it yet more fully in your hearts. Let none through you be stirred up unto wrath or scandal, but let all men be stirred up through your gentleness unto peace, kindness, and harmony. For unto this have we been called, even that we may heal the wounded, bind up the broken, and recall the erring. For many seem unto us to be members of the devil, that shall yet be disciples of Christ."

Moreover, the loving father did rebuke those of his brethren that were too austere unto themselves, laboring overmuch in vigils and fasts, and toils of the body. For certain of them did mortify themselves so severely in order that they might repress in themselves the lusts of the flesh, as that they did seem to hate their very selves. These the man of God forbade, exhorting them in kindly wise, and reproving them according unto reason, and binding up their wounds with the bands of salutary precepts. And among the brethren that attended the Chapter was none dared tell of worldly affairs, but they spoke concerning the lives of the holy fathers, and how they might better and more perfectly find the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. If one of the brethren that had come unto the Chapter had suffered any temptation or tribulation, by hearing the Blessed Francis discourse thus sweetly and fervently, and by beholding his penitence, they were delivered from their temptations, and were marvellously sustained in their trials. For in his compassion he spoke unto them not as a judge, but as a merciful father unto his

sons, and as a good physician unto the sick, knowing to be weak with the weak, and to be afflicted with the troubled. Yet nevertheless he did rebuke sinners after their deserts, and with due reprimand constrain the obstinate and rebellious. When the Chapter was at an end, he gave his blessing unto all the brethren, and sent them forth each unto the province allotted unto him. Whosoever among them had the spirit of God, and eloquence apt for preaching, whether he were cleric or layman, unto him he gave authority to preach. They, when they had received his blessing, with great rejoicing of spirit went through the world as pilgrims and strangers, carrying naught on their journey, save only the books wherein they might recite their Hours. Wherever they met a priest, were he rich or poor, good or bad, they bowed themselves humbly and did him reverence. And when they had need to lodge them, they did more gladly abide with priests than with worldly laymen.

But when it was not possible for them to find a lodging with priests, they would seek first for more spiritual men, fearing God, with whom they might more reputably sojourn, until in all the cities and castled villages that the brethren were fain to visit, the Lord should inspire some of those who feared God to make ready a lodging for them, whilst places were being built for them in cities and castled villages. And the Lord gave them the word, and the spirit to speak, according as opportunity offered, words exceeding sharp, piercing the hearts of young men and old, who, leaving father and mother and all their pos-

sessions, followed after the brethren, taking upon them the habit of their religion. Verily then the sword of separation was sent into the land, when the young came into the religion, leaving their parents in the slough of their sins. Yet they brought those whom the brethren received into the order unto the Blessed Francis, that they might humbly and devoutly receive the habit of the religion from him. Nor were men only thus converted unto the order, but many women also, virgins and widows, pricked to the heart at their preaching, did in accordance with their counsel betake them unto convents ordained in sundry cities and castled villages, that they might do penance, and for these one of the brethren was appointed visitor and confessor. In like manner also wifed men and husbanded women, not doing well to depart from the law of matrimony, by the saving counsel of the brethren did in their own homes commit themselves unto stricter penitence. And thus, through the Blessed Francis, that perfect worshipper of the Holy Trinity, the Church of God is renewed in the three orders, even as the foregoing restoration of the three churches did typify. Each of the orders in its own time was confirmed by the pope.

XV

Of the death of the lord John, their first
Protector, and how the lord Ugolino,
bishop of Ostia, was taken as Father and
Protector of the Order

Now the venerable father, the lord John of S. Paul, the cardinal whereof we have made mention, he that oftentimes afforded unto the Blessed Francis counsel and protection, was wont to commend the life and deeds of the holy man and of his brethren unto all the other cardinals, whose minds were moved to cherish the man of God and his brethren, insomuch as that each one of them was fain to have in his own Curia some of those brethren, not by reason of any service they might render, but by reason of the holiness of the brethren, and of the devotion that glowed in themselves toward them. Therefore on the death of the lord John of S. Paul, the Lord put it into the heart of one of the cardinals, by name Ugolino, at that time bishop of Ostia, to intimately love the Blessed Francis and his brethren, and to protect and cherish them. He of a truth behaved himself toward them with a singular zeal of affection, as though he had been the father of them all, nay, more than the love of a father after the flesh extendeth naturally unto his sons after the flesh, did the love of this man spiritually boil up for the man of God and his brethren. Now that man, receiving them with joy, said to them: "I offer myself unto you, ready to afford you help, counsel, and protection." Then

the Blessed Francis, giving thanks to God, said to the same lord cardinal: "I joyfully wish, lord, to have you as a father and the protector of our religion; and I wish that all the brethren should always have you remembered in their prayers." Afterwards the Blessed Francis asked him to see fit to be present at the chapter of the brethren at Pentecost; he immediately kindly agreed, and from then on he was present at their chapter every year. When he came unto the chapter, all the brethren assembled for the chapter did go forth in procession to meet him. But he, as the brethren came up, dismounted from his horse, and went on foot with them unto the church of S. Mary, and afterward did preach unto them, and celebrate a Mass, wherein the man of God, Francis, chanted the Gospel.

XVI

Of the election of the first Ministers, and how they were sent forth into the world

NOW when eleven years from the founding of the religion were fulfilled, and the brethren had increased in numbers and in merit, Ministers were elected and sent forth with divers brethren throughout all the provinces, as it were, of the whole world, wherein the Catholic faith is held and observed. They were received in certain provinces, but were not permitted to build dwelling-places. From other provinces, however, they were expelled, in the fear that they might prove to be infidels, for that, although the said lord Innocent III had sanctioned their order and rule, yet had he not confirmed it by his letters, for which reason the brethren endured many trials from clerics and laymen. Wherefore the brethren were compelled to flee from divers provinces, and thus straitened and afflicted, sometimes even robbed and beaten by thieves, they returned with great bitterness unto the Blessed Francis. These things they suffered in all parts beyond the mountains, such as in Germany, Hungary, and many other lands. And when this was brought unto the notice of the said lord cardinal, he called unto him the Blessed Francis, and brought him unto the lord Pope Honorius—the lord Innocent being dead—and he caused another rule that had been drawn up by the Blessed Francis to be solemnly confirmed with a seal hanging therefrom. In this rule, the term betwixt Chapter and

Chapter was lengthened, for the lessening the labor of the brethren that dwelt in distant parts.

Now the Blessed Francis purposed to ask from the said lord Pope Honorius that one of the cardinals of the Roman Church might be as it were the Father of his order, to wit, that same lord bishop of Ostia, unto whom the brethren might resort for help with their affairs. The Blessed Francis had seen a vision, that had availed to lead him to ask the cardinal, and to commend his order unto the Roman Church. For he beheld as it were a little hen that was black and had feathered legs with feet like a tame dove, and she had so many chicks that she was not able to gather them under her own wings, but they went about in a circle round the hen, beyond her wings. Then, waking from sleep, he began to think upon this vision, and forthwith perceived by the Holy Spirit that he himself was intended under the parable of the hen. And he saith: "I am that hen, small of stature, and by nature black, that ought to be simple as a dove, and on winged affection of the virtues to fly toward heaven. And the Lord gave His mercy to me, and will give many sons, whom I shall not be able to protect by my own strength. Whence behoveth me to commend them unto Holy Church, which under the shadow of her wings shall protect and govern them."

Therefore when a few years had passed after the said vision he came unto Rome, and visited the lord bishop of Ostia, who bade the Blessed Francis go with him on the following morning unto the Curia, for that he was minded he should preach before the lord pope and the

cardinals, and should devoutly and lovingly commend his religion unto them. And although the Blessed Francis excused himself in this, saying he was a simple fool, yet needs must he go with him unto the Curia. And when the Blessed Francis had entered the presence of the lord pope and of the cardinals, he was beheld by them with great gladness, and, rising up, he did preach unto them, as he had been inspired beforehand by the anointing of the Holy Spirit alone. When his preaching ended, he did commend his religion unto the lord pope and the whole body of cardinals. And by his preaching the lord pope and the lords cardinal were very greatly edified, and their hearts were moved yet more tenderly to love the religion.

Thereafter the Blessed Francis said unto the pope: "My lord, I have pity for you, by reason of the anxiety and perpetual toil wherewith you must needs keep watch on behalf of the Church of God, and I am sore ashamed that you should have such care and anxiety for us, Brothers Minor. For while many nobles, and rich men, and very many religious cannot enter into your presence, great awe and shamefastness ought there to be in us, that are poorer and more despised than the other religious, not only in entering your presence, but even in standing before your threshold and daring to knock at the Tabernacle of Christendom. Wherefore I do humbly and devoutly beseech Your Holiness that you will deign to grant this lord bishop of Ostia to be our Father, that in time of need the brethren may resort unto him, saving always the dignity of your pre-eminence." And this request seemed good unto

the lord pope, and he granted unto the Blessed Francis the aforesaid lord bishop of Ostia, appointing him as the most worthy protector of his religion.

He, receiving the command of the lord pope, like unto a good shepherd and protector stretched forth his hand to defend the brethren, writing unto many prelates that had persecuted the brethren that they should oppose them no longer, but should rather give unto them counsel and help for dwelling in their provinces, and even more for preaching, as unto good men and holy religious approved by the authority of the Apostolic See. In like manner did many other cardinals give them letters unto their own provinces with the same intent. Therefore at the chapter next following, license being given by the Blessed Francis unto the Ministers to receive brethren into the order, he sent them forth into the provinces aforesaid, bearing the letters of the cardinals, together with the rule, confirmed by the Apostolic Seal. All which things when the prelates aforesaid saw, and recognised the credentials shown by the brethren, they did freely grant them leave to build, to dwell, and to preach in those provinces. Wherefore while the brethren did thus abide and preach in those provinces, many folk seeing their humble and holy conversation, and hearing their words that were right sweet, stirring and kindling hearts unto the love of God and the work of repentance, did come unto them, and take upon them the habit of holy religion with fervency and humility.

And the Blessed Francis, seeing the trust and affection

that the said lord bishop of Oſtia had for the brethren, did himſelf love him in like manner from the bottom of his heart. And knowing from prior revelation of God that he would be the pope, he always heralded this to him in letters which he wrote to him, calling him the father of the whole world; for thus he wrote to him: “Unto the venerable Father in Chriſt of the whole world,”—and ſo forth. In ſooth, after a ſhort time, on the death of the lord Pope Honorius III, that very lord biſhop of Oſtia was elected unto the papacy and called Gregory IX, who unto the end of his life was conſpicuous as a chief benefactor and protector both of the brethren and of other Religious, and in eſpecial of the poor men of Chriſt; whence it is believed, not without reaſon, that he himſelf is joined unto the company of the ſaints.

XVII

Of the most holy death of the Blessed Francis, and how two years earlier he had received the Stigmata of the Lord Jesus

TWENTY years after the time wherein he began most perfectly to cleave unto Christ, following the life and footsteps of the Apostles, that Apostolic man, Francis, in the year 1226 of Our Lord's Incarnation, on the 4th day of October, a Sunday, did depart most happily unto Christ, after his many toils attaining eternal rest, and worthily entering the presence of his Lord. Whose soul one of his disciples that was noted for his holiness did see like unto a star of the bigness of the moon, and beaming with the brightness of the sun, borne above many waters in a shining white cloudlet, ascending forthright into heaven by a straight path. For much had he labored in the vineyard of the Lord, zealous and fervent in prayer, in fasting, in vigils, in preaching, and in saving journeys; in the care and compassion of his neighbors, and in the rejection of himself, even from the beginning of his conversion until his passing over unto Christ, Whom he had loved with his whole heart, keeping remembrance of Him continually in his mind, praising Him aloud with his mouth, and magnifying Him in fruitful works. For so fervently and in his very heart did he love God that whensoever he heard His Name, he was all melted within, and burst forth into outward utterance, saying: "Heaven and earth should be bowed at the Name

of the Lord.”

And since he did bear in his heart this fervor of love and continual remembrance of Christ's Passion, the Lord Himself wishing to show the same unto all the world, did miraculously adorn him while yet living in the flesh with the special, wonderful privilege of a singular distinction. For whilst in seraphic ardour of desire he was uplifted toward God, he who exceedingly wished to be crucified in charity, was transfigured by the sweetness of compassion on a certain morning about the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, when he was praying on the side of the mountain which is called Alverna, about two years before his death; a Seraphim appeared to him, having six wings, and bearing between the wings the form of a most beautiful man crucified, hands and feet stretched out, having the form of a cross, and the showing forth most clearly the image of the Lord Jesus. And with two wings it was covering its head, and with two others the remainder of its body even to the feet, and two were stretched out for flying. When this vision disappeared, a wondrous flame of love abode in his heart, but on his flesh yet more wondrously appeared the mark of the stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which the man of God hid, if he was able, even unto his death, not wishing to make public the sacred mystery of the Lord; nevertheless, he could not so entirely hide it but that it were known at least unto his closest companions.

But after his most blessed departure, all the brethren that were present, and very many seculars, did behold his

body most evidently adorned with the stigmata of Christ. For they beheld in his hands and his feet, not only the holes wrought by the nails, but also the very nails themselves, formed of his flesh, and of the same substance as the flesh, presenting moreover the blackness of iron; while his right side was as though pierced by a lance, seamed with the ruddy scar of a most real and evident wound, whence, while he lived, the sacred blood did often flow. Of which stigmata the unbreakable truth was not only in his lifetime and at his death by sight and touch most openly and clearly apparent, but furthermore after his death, when the truth had been manifested by many miracles in divers parts of the world, the Lord revealed this truth more clearly. By which miracles the hearts of many that had not rightly conceived of the man of God, and had doubted concerning his stigmata, were changed into such a certitude of faith as that they who had at first been his detractors, by the efficacy of God's goodness and the force of the truth itself, did become his praisers and most faithful preachers.

XVIII

Of his canonization

NOW since in divers parts of the world he was already famous in this new light of miracles, and from all sides unto his sacred body did flock the folk that had experienced the greatest and most singular favors of the Lord through his merits, the aforesaid lord Pope Gregory, by the advice of the cardinals and of many other prelates, having read aloud and confirmed the miracles that the Lord had wrought through him, did enter him in the calendar of the saints, decreeing that his Feast should be solemnly observed on the day of his death. These things were done in the city of Assisi in the presence of many prelates and of a great assembly of princes, and barons, and of countless persons from divers parts of the world, whom the lord pope had made be convoked for that solemn occasion, in the year of Our Lord 1228, the second year of his pontificate.

The supreme pontiff himself honored the said saint, whom in his life he had so tenderly loved, not alone by thus canonizing him so marvellously, but furthermore by building in his honor a church, in the foundation whereof the lord pope himself did lay the first stone, and did enrich it with holy gifts and precious ornaments. Whereunto two years after his canonization his most holy body was with honor translated from the place where at the first it had been buried. And unto this church the pope sent a golden cross adorned with precious stones, wherein

was enclosed wood from the Lord's own Cross, likewise ornaments and many vessels pertaining unto the service of the altar, with many costly vestments for solemn things. Moreover he freed it from all lesser jurisdiction, and did appoint it by the authority of the Apostolic See to be the Head and Mother Church of the whole Order of Brothers Minor, as is set forth in the Privilege, published and sealed, whereunto the cardinals did in a body subscribe.

Moreover of a truth, for that it were a light thing that the holy man of God should be honored of senseless things, were it not that through himself, dead in body, yet his spirit living in glory, the Lord might convert very many folk and might heal them—after his death not only were many of the common people of either sex converted by his merits unto the Lord, but furthermore many great men and others of noble birth, together with their sons, took upon them the habit of his order, secluding their wives and daughters in the Convents of the Poor Ladies. In like manner many learned men, and those most deeply versed in letters, both seculars and beneficed clergy, spurning the lusts of the flesh, and foreswearing inwardly impiety and worldly desires, did enter the aforesaid Order of the Brothers Minor, in all things according unto the measure of the divine grace conforming themselves unto the poverty of Christ, and unto His footsteps, and those of His servant the most Blessed Francis. Whence of him may not undeservedly be said that which is written of Samson, to wit, that certainly he who lives always in the life of glory, slew many more by dying than before he had slain in life.

Unto which glory, through the merits of our most holy Father Francis, may He bring us at the last, Who liveth and reigneth from everlasting unto everlasting. Amen.

Finis.

Appendix

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE various biographies of St. Francis of Assisi may be helpful, and particularly a few about the one that the reader currently holds in his hands. The great saint was already quite venerated even in the world at the time of his death, and his companions were often asked to record what they could recall about him, often in writing. So it is helpful to know something about the writings thus produced.

First in time is, of course, the *Mirror of Perfection*, written by Brother Leo, who also had a hand in this volume. Written only a year after St. Francis's death, it is often considered the most reliable of his biographies, though why others should be considered unreliable is beyond your present editor.

Next is Thomas of Celano's first *Life of St. Francis*, written two years after his death at the command of Pope Gregory IX. The second *Life* which Thomas wrote was much later, around 1246, when he was ordered to produce it by Crescentius, the minister-general of the Order of Friars Minor.

This volume was written in 1246, as the text itself indicates, by three of those who knew St. Francis personally; the aforementioned Brother Leo, as well as Brothers Rufino and Angelo. They produced it, like Celano did his second *Life*, because minister-general Crescentius told them to do so.

So while this biography is later than either the *Mir-*

ror or the first *Life*, it is largely first-hand, and it thus very reliable (though again, the others also seem perfectly reliable to your present editor).

The work was written, of course, in Latin. The text is easily available in a number of places; your editor has employed the *Legenda S. Francisci Assisiensis a Bb. Leone, Rufino, Angelo, ejus sociis, scripta* from the Codex Bibliothecæ Vaticanæ, n. 7359, printed at Pisa in 1831.

The translation in the reader's hand is mostly that of E. G. Salter, published originally in 1942 by J. M. Dent and Co., London. However, in reviewing this translation, the language was often (in your editor's view) excessively archaic, even obtuse. Words like "aforesaid", use of the definite article with relative pronouns (e.g., "the which"), and many other constructions seemed unnecessarily convoluted. Furthermore, your editor found some significant variations between the Latin text he had access to and Salter's translation. He can only assume these discrepancies are due to Salter's use of a different Latin original, and for the most part the differences were predominantly cosmetic. However, in a few points they were important; e.g., Salter's version did not contain the prologue at all, and Chapter I did not include the story of the pilgrim John coming to see Francis at his birth.

Because of these issues, the translation was modified, sometimes very heavily. Missing parts were inserted, newly translated by your editor, and archaic language was replaced with more modern constructions. Not to say, of course, that the translation is in contemporary lan-

guage; a certain degree of archaism is very suitable for this subject, and it ensures more fidelity to the Latin original. But where the archaism was needlessly obtuse, it has been streamlined. In some places, the translation is really a new work, but these places are few. Salter truly deserves the credit for this work as well as for the edition he himself produced in 1942.

This said, we pray that this work has been useful for all who read it, and serves to increase knowledge and devotion to this truly epochal saint.

Praise be to Christ the King!

Colophon

This text was assembled from many sources, more specifically enumerated on the copyright page, and carefully proofread for correctness. It is set in EB Garamond 10/12 in the body, with headings and lettrines in Yannis Haralambous's Gothic fonts. The whole is processed by a variety of interlocking Unix scripts, managed by `make` and utilizing utilities such as `sh`, `sed`, and `tr`, before being compiled with the Lua^AT_EX document preparation system. All tools used are free software.