

EVANGELIZERS IN CHRIST

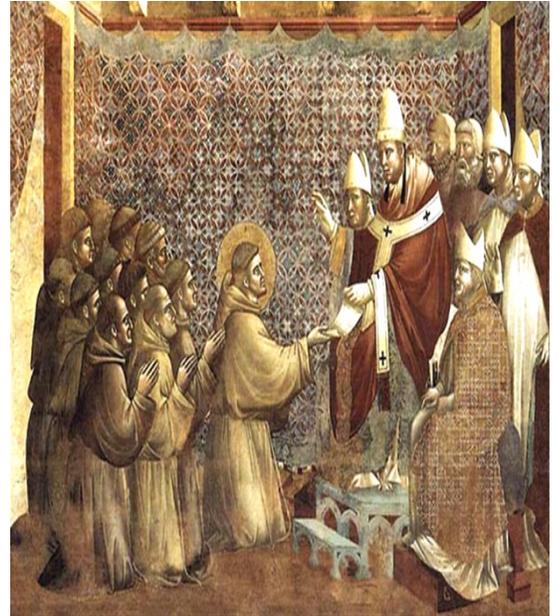
Have on hand: *O.F.S. Rule and*

Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Saint Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

We recall those challenging words of Christ in His invitation to St. Francis: “**go rebuild My house ...**”¹ Let’s spend a few minutes reflecting on Francis of Assisi and the San Damiano message.

Our Opening Prayer:

**O God, who have sent the power of the Gospel
like leaven into the world,
grant that your faithful,
whom you have called to live amid the world
and its affairs,
may be fervent with the Christian spirit
and, through the tasks they carry out in this present age,
may constantly build up your Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.**²



Giotto di Bondone: Confirmation of the Rule, ca. 1295

Participants should take turns reading the following
Articles from our *Rule*: #6; #10; and #14 – #19.

There can hardly be any doubt that Secular Franciscans are called to evangelize!

Celano writes: “As the teachings of the gospel had declined seriously in practice – not just in some cases but in general everywhere – this man [Francis] was sent from God so that everywhere, throughout the whole world, after the example of the Apostles, he might bear witness to the truth. And so it was, with the Christ leading, that his teaching showed clearly that all the wisdom of the world was foolish, and quickly, he turned all toward the true wisdom of God through the foolishness of his preaching.

“In these last times, a new Evangelist, like one of the rivers of Paradise, has poured out the streams of the gospel in a holy flood over the whole world. He preached the way of the Son of God and the teaching of truth in his deeds. In him and through him an unexpected joy and a holy newness came into the world. A shoot of the ancient religion suddenly renewed the old and decrepit. A new spirit was placed in the hearts of the elect and a holy anointing has been poured out in their midst. This holy servant of Christ, like one of the lights of heaven, shone from above with a new rite and new signs.”³

Bonaventure tells us: “For one day when Francis went out to meditate in the fields, he walked near the church of San Damiano which was threatening to collapse because of age. Impelled by the Spirit, he went inside to pray. Prostrate before an image of the Crucified, he was filled with no little consolation as he prayed. While his tear-filled eyes were gazing at the Lord’s cross, he heard with his bodily ears a voice coming from that cross, telling him three times: ‘Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is all being destroyed.’

“Trembling, Francis was stunned at the sound of such an astonishing voice, since he was alone in the church; and as he absorbed the power of the divine words into his heart, he fell into an ecstasy of mind. At last, coming back to himself, he prepared himself to obey and pulled himself together to carry out the command of repairing the material church, although the principal intention of the words referred to that which Christ purchased with his own blood, as the Holy Spirit taught him and as he himself later disclosed to the brothers.

“Then, after fortifying himself with the sign of the cross, he arose, and taking cloth to sell, he hurried off to a city called Foligno. ... Returning to Assisi, he reverently entered the church he had received the command to repair. When he found the poor priest there, he showed him fitting reverence, offered him money for the repair of the church and for the use of the poor, and humbly requested that he be allowed to stay with him for a time.”⁴



Artist unknown: San Damiano Cross/Crucifix, Byzantine style, 12th century

Q1. How did St. Francis take this San Damiano message?

Q2. What was Christ really asking St. Francis to do?

Q3. Do I take this San Damiano message as a message for ME? How?

We also read in Julian of Speyer’s *Life of Saint Francis*: “For even if, when he [Francis] thought he was prepared to say this or that, it happened that when he came to preach he forgot all those things he had thought out beforehand, and did not have anything at all to say, not even then was he ashamed to admit his failing in front of everyone, and thus, all of a sudden, he began to overflow with a miraculous eloquence. Continually dependent, in all hopefulness, on the generous Providence of the Lord alone, he had no confidence at all in his own works.”⁵

Q4. As a Secular Franciscan, how am I finding ways to spread the faith of Christ?

Q5. What are the means to accomplish this goal today? What pointed advice have the Popes given during the past 50 years?

Q6. Whom does the Church tell us to evangelize? (See especially the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Saint Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, “On Evangelization in the Modern World,” 1975.) How do I do it?

Q7. What do I know about this particular San Damiano Cross image which hung in this chapel we’re considering? Where is the original preserved now?

Check also: Francis visits the Sultan: FA:ED, *The Life of Saint Francis*, Vol. I, p. 231, Chapter XX; or FA:ED, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, Vol. II, pp. 596-604, Chapter Nine.

¹ FA:ED, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul: Second Book*, 1245-1247, Vol. II, p. 249, Chapter VI, v. 10

² *Roman Missal*, Masses and Prayers For Various Needs and Occasions, 10. *For The Laity*

³ FA:ED, *The Life of Saint Francis, Second Book*, 1228-1229, Vol. I, pp. 259-260, Chapter I, v. 89

⁴ FA:ED, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, 1260-1263, Vol. II, pp. 536-537 Chapter Two, v. 1

⁵ FA:ED, *Life of Saint Francis*, 1232-1235, Vol. I, pp. 408-409, Chapter XI, v. 58