

A Franciscan Reflects on Celano's Greccio 1223 Christmas

After reading Celano's account of St. Francis' vision for a Nativity scene for midnight Mass at Greccio, Italy in 1223, I had several questions. Why was the scene so bare? Where were the people, especially Mary & St. Joseph? A gentle voice spoke to my heart; it contains only the most important elements. *You/the heart* is the stable/animal shelter where Jesus wants to be born. I know you are far from perfect and will provide minimum shelter from the world outside but My original home was in a similar state. The openness of the animal shelter was important – it provided easy access between Me and the world – I wanted nothing to keep us apart. The *Ox* represents the everyday mundane burdens/chores of your life that you carry in your heart. The *Donkey*, because he carried Mary & Baby Jesus from Nazareth to Bethlehem & from there to Egypt, represents the spiritual/religious portion of your life carried in your heart. I want so much to be a part of your whole life – not just the spiritual/religious. The *straw/hay*, My original bed, provided food & bedding for the animals & stuffed mattresses and had other uses for the humans. *The bed is empty because* I await your invitation to enter. My great desire/My goal was, and still is, to provide for all the needs of people – the mundane, everyday “stuff” as well as the spiritual/religious portions of your life, and for the needs of all of creation.

Will you invite Me in – I can't enter without being invited?

Will you ask Me to stay with you every day for the rest of your life – for this I long?

Will you bring Me to others that I may provide for their needs, too?

Anonymous Franciscan