

GOING FORTH RITUAL

(Francis' blessing of Assisi as he is carried to St. Mary of the Porziuncola.)

Liz: Francis, feeling that he was getting sicker by the day, had himself carried on a litter to the church of Saint Mary of the Porziuncola.

Bill: ...Raising himself up slightly on the litter, he blessed the city of Assisi. "Lord," he said, "as I believe that, at an earlier time, this city was the abode of wicked and evil people, with a bad reputation throughout all this region, so now, I realize that because of Your abundant mercy and in your own time, You have shown an abundance of mercies to it.

Dirk: Now it has become the abode of those who acknowledge You, give glory to Your name, offer the fragrance of good life, doctrine, and good reputation to the whole Christian people. I ask you, therefore, Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies, not to consider our ingratitude.

Judith: May it always be mindful of the abundant mercies which You have shown to it, that it always be an abode for those who acknowledge You and glorify Your name, blessed and glorious throughout the Ages. Amen."

Prayer: Our Father...

Ann: Go home to your family and make it clear to them how much God's mercy has done for you (Mk 5:19).

Bill: Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Ann: Go home to your family and make it clear to them how much God's mercy has done for you (Mk 5:19).

Bill: Bear with one another. Forgive as God has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect.

Dirk: Go home to your family and make it clear to them how much God's mercy has done for you (Mk 5:19).

Judith: Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body, you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness.

Dirk: Go home to your family and make it clear to them how much God's mercy has done for you (Mk 5:19).

Judith: Let the word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. In wisdom made perfect, instruct and admonish one another. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns, and inspired songs.

Liz: Go home to your family, and make it clear to them how much God's mercy has done for you (Mk 5:19).

Robert: Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Give thanks to God through him.

Liz: Go home to your family, and make it clear to them how much God's mercy has done for you (Mk 5:19).

Robert: The Tau has its roots as a symbol in the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly the book of Ezekiel: "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it" (Ez 9:4).

Ann: Moreover, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet represented the fulfillment of the entire revealed word of God.

Terry: Francis would have heard the Tau proclaimed as a symbol of "triple Passover renewal" in the church, by Innocent III, at the Fourth Lateran Council, encouraging all to become "champions of the Tau."

Robert: The Brothers of St. Anthony the Hermit, who cared for lepers, also wore this sign on their religious habit. So Francis adopted it as his own symbol for willingness to be in continuous conversion of heart. Francis told his brothers that their religious habit was in the same shape as the Tau, meaning, that they were called to be "walking crucifixes," models of a compassionate God, and examples of faithfulness until their dying days.

Prayer: Hail Mary...

POEM OF FAREWELL: CIAÒ FRANCESCO

(Poem composed by William Hart McNichols, OFS)

Ann: Ciao Francesco of Assisi
whose bloody footprints in winter
(like carnelians cast upon snow)
can still disrupt Assisi...

Bill: Ciao Francesco of the Porziuncola
that blessed door too narrow
for me to enter, but led by you
I asked three things...

Dirk: Ciao Francesco of San Damiano
who led me along that same
road of renunciation
(while the silver olive trees wept)
and showed me that we
leave all our father...

Judith: Ciao Francesco of the Carceri
whose food was to do the
will of God, and who I
saw this - too true - I ran
all the way down Mount Subasio...

Liz: Ciao Francesco of the Chiesa Nuova
your lively friar-son showed me
the prison where your father
tried to keep you and then
sensing my sins he let down
his cape for me to walk on

- this still hurts...

Robert: Ciao Francesco who fought the devils
and guarded my own room with
Leo's cherished blessing - while the
shutters rattled from the nightmare
howls, and dark dreams
threatened to turn me back...

Judith: Ciao Francesco of La Verna
(my dearest home)
you climbed those rocks
to bemoan your sins and
left that mountain so transfigured,
so holy, that in that place
I could scarcely breathe...

Liz: Ciao Francesco of the Basilica
your body is the Feast of Fools,
parades, endless masses, cameras, dances,
songs, candles, and those weeping
because they have put you so high,
we can't even touch you

for healing anymore...

Bill: Ciao Francesco wounded winter light
you are stricken with love
by God's smallest creatures...

Dirk: Ciao Francesco of the Via Crucis
winter in Assisi in more harsh, silent
and bitter than I ever imagined,
and as I complained and nagged you
for comfort, you walked with me,
(like Jesus at Emmaus, wounds aglow)
and taught me the grace of compassion...

Terry: Ciao Francesco of Assisi,
guide books, tapestries, and paintings
say you are dead,
but you still lead
the angels in song
at the Little Portion.

(Source: *Pilgrim's Companion to Franciscan Places,*
Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs)

Prayer: Glory be...