

## Reflecting on the Stigmata at National Chapter September 17-21, 2024

Initial/overarching reflection questions:

1. Francis received the stigmata as an outward sign of the sufferings he had endured in union with Christ's sufferings. Are there outward signs of our own sufferings for the Lord?
2. How is God calling each of us TODAY through our experience of suffering?

### Method for reflection:

Use the Lectio Divina format as adapted for groups.

- Read each reading slowly three times, pausing after each reading
- On the first reading, pay attention to what strikes you; on subsequent readings, go deeper into what God is saying to you with the reading.
- After the three readings, invite participants to share what struck them
- Invite answers to the reflection questions.
- For the third reflection, there are TWO readings. We used the second reading at the end of the reflection period (read only twice). It could also be used for a separate, fourth reflection.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Reflection: Francis as servant leader

Some (maybe even many) of Francis' sufferings that led to the stigmata came as a result of leading his brothers.

#### **The reading is an excerpt from The Anonymous of Perugia**

On Pentecost all the brothers used to gather for a chapter near the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. At the chapter they would discuss how they could better observe the Rule. They appointed brothers who would preach to the people throughout each of the provinces, and assigned brothers in their province.

Saint Francis used to give the brothers admonitions, corrections and precepts, as it seemed best to him, after consulting the Lord. Everything, however, that he said in word, he would first, with eagerness and affection, show them in deed. ...

He used to tell them: "As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts, thus no one will be provoked to anger or scandal because of you. Let everyone be drawn to peace and kindness through your peace and gentleness. For we have been called to this: to cure the wounded, to bind up the broken, and to recall the erring.

- How do we see Francis as relatable to our roles of leadership today?
- What speaks to you in what Francis did, and what Francis advised his brothers to do?

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### 2<sup>nd</sup> Reflection: What Francis learned about ministry/service

#### **The reading is an excerpt from Francis' *Letter to a Minister***

I speak to you, as best I can, about the state of your soul. You must consider as grace all that impedes you from loving the Lord God and whoever has become an impediment to you, whether

brothers or others, even if they lay hands on you. <sup>3</sup>And may you want it to be this way and not otherwise. <sup>4</sup>And let this be for you the true obedience of the Lord God and my true obedience, for I know with certitude that it is true obedience. <sup>5</sup>And love those who do those things to you <sup>6</sup>and do not wish anything different from them, unless it is something the Lord God shall have given you. <sup>7</sup>And love them in this and do not wish that they be better Christians. <sup>8</sup>And let this be more than a hermitage for you.

- Where do we see ourselves in the letter Francis wrote?
- Who do we think of when we hear the references to people the minister is dealing with?
- How can we put Francis' advice into action in our own lives?

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> reflection

**The readings are excerpts from the Assisi Compilation and the Later Admonition**

**Assisi Compilation [112] – to be used at the start of the reflection**

Noticing and hearing at one time that some brothers were giving a bad example...[and] moved inwardly with sorrow of heart... [Francis] said to the Lord in prayer: "Lord I give back to you the family You gave me..."

And it was said to him in spirit: "I did not choose you as a learned or eloquent man to be over my family, but I chose you, a simple man, so that you and the others may know that I will watch over my flock. But *I have placed you as a sign* to them, so that the works that I work in you, they should see in you, emulate, and do them. Those who walk in my way have me and will have me more abundantly. Those who refuse to walk in my way, that which they seem to have will be taken away from them. Therefore, I tell you, don't be so sad; do what you do, work as you work."

**Francis, *Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful)* – to be used at the end of the reflection**

We must never desire to be above others, but, instead, we must be servants and subject to *every human creature for God's sake*. And *the spirit of the Lord will rest* upon all those men and women who have done and persevered in these things, and it will make a home and *dwelling place in them*. And they will be the children of the Heavenly Father, whose works they do. And they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2LrF 47-50)

Who is in charge? We are servant leaders, but we are stewards of God's people.

We do our part, but it is God's order.

- How have our reflections on Francis' sufferings as a servant leader changed your view of your own role, responsibilities, and sufferings as a servant leader?

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Readings are from Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise from the Franciscan Federation. References to the original sources in [Francis of Assisi: Early Documents](#) are hyperlinked below. Login or creation of a free Franciscan Tradition account may be needed. (Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual-Spiritual Tradition)

1. Pentecost, morning praise, (p. 671), from “The Anonymous of Perugia” (AP 37, 38) – [Early Documents: The Founder, pp. 51-52.](#)
2. Lent Week 2, Friday evening ,(p.300), (LtMin 2-7) – [Early Documents: The Saint, pp. 97-98.](#)
3. Lent Week 5, Saturday morning, ( p. 378), from “The Assisi Compilation” [AC 112] – [Early Documents: The Founder, p. 219.](#) And Common of Married Couples, morning, (p. 1270), Second Letter to All the Faithful (2LtF 47-50) – [Early Documents: The Saint, pp. 48-49.](#)