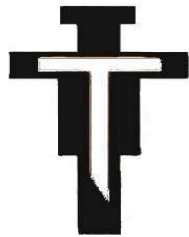


SandalPrints

Issue # 158 ... Francis and the Cross ... 2015AD

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FRANCIS' DEVOTION TO THE CROSS AND HIS USE OF THE TAU

The early biographies of Francis tell us that he used the Tau very often as an expression of his devotion to the Cross of Jesus. We have copies of some of his letters in which he made the sign of the Tau in his own hand. On the wall of the little chapel of St. Mary Magdalen at Fonte Colombo the usual design used by the Poverello traced in red is to be found.

See: 3 Cel. 3: 828; 3 Cel. 159: 900; LM 2,9: 1347; Fior: 1907

The source of Francis' devotion to this sign can be traced to the Bible, especially in Ezechiel 9:4 "Go through the city trace the sign of the Tau.. " This passage, often commented upon by the Fathers and a familiar theme of medieval preaching was well known to the faithful. St. Bonaventure in his *Legenda Major* 4-9:1079 sees the connection between this text from the prophet Ezechiel and the mission of Francis: "...according to the text of the prophet, in signing the *Tau* on those men who cry and weep as a sign of their sincere conversion to Christ."

St. Francis adopted the sign of the Tau especially because the very shape of the letter is the same as that of the Cross and so was a reminder to him of his Crucified Lord. Whereas the Catari or Albigensians refused to use the sign of the Cross considering this material symbol as unworthy to represent the redemptive work of God, Francis honored and embraced it as representing God's love for us.

Another connection of Francis with the sign of the Tau is his service to the lepers and the Brothers of St. Anthony the Hermit who administered the lazzaretos. Their patron is often pictured as having a staff surmounted by a Tau and on their habit was sewn the emblem of the Tau. The Tau of the Antonians, servants of the lepers, reminded Francis of that special moment in his conversion when he embraced the leper and he was devoted to that symbol of the "love of Christ, who willed to be considered a leper for our sake." (*Fior* 25:1857)

It is interesting to note that at least some of our earliest hermitages or small friaries of "St. Anthony" were originally dedicated to this St. Anthony and not to the Saint "of Padua" (e.g. Sant'Antonio del Busseto, Massa Martana, XIV century).

St. Francis was present at the IV Lateran Council called by Pope Innocent III who had verbally approved the Rule of the Order. On November 11, 1215 this Pope opened the Council with a discourse which surely found an echo in the heart of Francis. The second

part of this talk comments on the above mentioned passage from Ezechiel:

The Tau is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and has the form of a cross as was presented to us before the placard written by Pilate was placed upon it. The person who bears on his forehead the sign of the Tau shows in his way of life the splendor of the Cross-, who bears the Tau has crucified the flesh with its vices and sins; who bears the Tau affirms by this: in nothing else do I wish to glory except in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ Who bears the Tau will find mercy, in this sign of a life converted and renewed in Christ Therefore, be ye champions of the Tau and of the Cross!

This appeal of Pope Innocent a dramatic call for a general mobilization of Christendom for a Crusade of conversion and penance profoundly influenced the spirituality of Francis. Obedient to the call of the pope he signed himself with the Tau of penance. It would be his favorite symbol reminding him and his friars of their vocation to preach penance and conversion to Christ. This would be the Crusade of St. Francis, a crusade not of armed soldiers to recover Jerusalem, but a crusade of penitent men from Assisi to preach to everyone: "Do penance Be converted and bring forth fruits worthy of penance."

**Change your thoughts and
change your world.**

Norman Vincent Peale

QUIET TIME FOR PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL

By Richard Brakefield, J.D. S.F.O.

Everyone knows that prayer is an essential for the spiritual life. We know too that virtually everything that we do can be done with an attitude that can raise the most menial task to the level of a prayer. What has become increasingly problematic for those of us who live in the day to day world is finding some truly quiet time for deep

prayer and contemplation. The television, telephone, radio, Ipod and the everyday, every moment din of the street are distractions that seem to steal nearly all opportunities for quiet. For most of us, a short time of quiet for prayer requires us to make an affirmative effort to take back a piece of our busy life and cleanse it of interruptions and cacophonous noise. But noise alone is not the only distraction we have today. In our quiet time we also must free ourselves from the constant pressure of things we think we have to do. Without finding silence for a while each day, prayer time can be forgotten and lost to the intrusion of busy-ness.

We ought not forget too that prayer cannot be one sided. Deluging heaven with our personal, anxious requests and perceived needs without opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit puts ourselves before God. It is His will that we must understand and with which we are required to comply. That is, it is not enough to be constantly talking to God without listening to Him. We listen best to God when we listen with our heart and our heart is most open to God's message when we close our ears to the strident and tumultuous racket around us.

So, how do we achieve this quiet time? You and I are not about to walk into the hills searching for a cave to retreat to for our quiet time. Nor is our life such that we can scurry off to some monastery for the precious silence we seek. We can organize our day so that we allow for 20 or 30 minutes in solitude. We can simply not answer the phone, turn off the radio or television, go to a vacant bedroom or other space at home, sit back, relax physically and mentally and open our heart to the Lord. This very important time is indispensable to spiritual growth. As a necessity it must not be sacrificed except when not to do so would be an offense to God. In other words, if we do not have time set aside for God, time we spend with an open heart and a quiet mind, we are lacking something we need to nurture us spiritually.

Setting aside quite time for prayer is a simple thing to do but not an easy one. In fact, unless one has little to do on a daily basis, it is a difficult task. So who ever said that building a relationship with God was never to be a challenge? When someone speaks to me about business matters, I want to be able to give that person my complete attention. I want no unnecessary interruptions. And my client wants my full attention too. Can we accord less to the almighty and most high God?

In a world where time is of premium value, we need to donate a bit of that precious commodity to the most precious aspect of our spiritual life. Our continued advance toward our intended goal demands it. Time is not a renewable resource for the individual person, a fact we often don't fully recognize until later in life. It ought to be wisely invested. Quiet time for prayer can return the most valuable profit we can image.

Franciscan Saints, Blessed & Holy Ones
September 2015

1. St. Beatrice of Silva, II Ord. Founder of Conceptionist Poor Clares
2. Bl. John Francis Burte & Companions, I & III Ord.
4. St. Rose of Viterbo, III Ord. Reg.
8. Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary
8. Frederick Ozanam, III Ord.
14. Pedro de Corpa & Companions, I Ord..
14. Exaltation of the Holy Cross
15. Our Lady of Sorrows
17. Stigmata of St. Francis
18. St. Joseph Cupertino, I Ord.
20. St. Francis Mary of Camporosso, I Ord.
23. Finding of Body of St. Clare
23. St. Padre Pio, I Ord.
24. St. Pacific of San Severino, I Ord.
26. St. Elzear, III Ord. & Bl. Delphina, III Ord. husband and wife
27. Mother Theresa Hackelmeir, III Ord. Reg.

St. Francis embraced the mother of Jesus with an inexpressible love because she it was who made the Lord of Majesty our brother. He composed special songs of praise in her honor, he poured out prayers and offered her his affection. He made her the Advocate of the Order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave, that she might cherish and protect them to the end.

-Celano, Second Life, 198

WINDS OF FORGIVENESS

TWO FRIENDS WERE WALKING THROUGH THE DESERT. DURING SOME POINT OF THE JOURNEY, THEY HAD AN ARGUMENT; AND ONE FRIEND SLAPPED THE OTHER ONE IN THE FACE.

THE ONE WHO GOT SLAPPED WAS HURT, BUT WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING, WROTE IN THE SAND:

TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE.

THEY KEPT ON WALKING, UNTIL THEY FOUND AN OASIS, WHERE THEY DECIDED TO TAKE A BATH THE ONE WHO HAD BEEN SLAPPED GOT STUCK IN THE MIRE ! AND STARTED DROWNING, BUT THE FRIEND SAVED HIM.

AFTER HE RECOVERED FROM THE NEAR DROWNING, HE WROTE ON A STONE:

"TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SAVED MY LIFE ".

THE FRIEND WHO HAD SLAPPED AND SAVED HIS BEST FRIEND ASKED HIM, "AFTER I HURT YOU, YOU WROTE IN THE SAND AND NOW, YOU WRITE ON A STONE, WHY?"

THE FRIEND REPLIED "WHEN SOMEONE HURTS US WE SHOULD WRITE IT DOWN IN SAND, WHERE WINDS OF

FORGIVENESS CAN ERASE IT AWAY.
BUT, WHEN SOMEONE DOES
SOMETHING GOOD FOR US,
WE MUST ENGRAVE IT IN STONE
WHERE NO WIND
CAN EVER ERASE IT."

LEARN TO WRITE
YOUR HURTS IN
THE SAND AND TO
CARVE YOUR
BENEFITS IN STONE.

**The only difference
between stumbling blocks
and stepping stones
is how you use them.**

A priest was being honored at his retirement dinner after 25 years in the Parish. A leading Senator and member of the congregation was chosen to make the presentation and give a little speech at the dinner. He was delayed, so the priest decided to say his own few words while they waited.

"I got my first impression of the parish from the first confession I heard here. I thought I had been assigned to a terrible place. The very first person who entered my confessional told me he had stolen a television set and, when questioned by the police, was able to lie his way out of it. He had stolen money from his parents, embezzled from his employer, had an affair with his boss's wife; and had taken illegal drugs. I was appalled. But as the days went on I knew that my people were not all like that and I had, indeed, come to a fine parish full of good and loving people.".....

Just as the priest finished his talk, the senator arrived full of apologies at being late. He immediately began to make the presentation and gave his talk. "I'll never forget the first day our parish priest arrived," said the politician. "In fact, I had the honor

of being the first person to go to him for confession."

Moral: **NEVER, NEVER, BE LATE!**

Let us pray for the intentions of those who asked us to pray for them.



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