

February 24th, Anno Domini 2008, marks the

800th Anniversary of the Conversion of St. Francis of Assisi

One way this grace of St. Francis can be revived in the Church for the Honor and Glory of God

THE GRACE OF GOD OUR SAVIOR bath in these latter days appeared in His servant Francis unto all such as be truly humble and lovers of holy Poverty, who, adoring the overflowing mercy of God seen in him, are taught by his example to utterly deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live after the manner of Christ, thirsting with unwearied desire in blessed hope.

For God Most High regarded Francis, as one that truly was poor and of a contrite spirit, with so great condescension of His favor as that not only did He raise him up in his need from the dust of his worldly life, but also made him a true professor, leader, and herald of Gospel perfection. Thus, He gave him as a light unto unbelievers, that by bearing witness to the Light he might prepare for the Lord the way of light and peace in the hearts of the faithful.

For Francis, even as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, shining with the bright beams of his life and teaching, by his dazzling radiance led into the light them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, and, like unto the rainbow giving light among bright clouds, set forth in himself the seal of the Lord's covenant. He preached the gospel of peace and salvation unto men, himself an Angel of the true Peace, ordained of God to follow in the likeness of the Forerunner, that, preparing in the desert the way of sublimest Poverty, he might preach repentance by his example and words alike. (QUOTED FROM THE PROLOGUE OF Saint Bonaventure's, LEGENDA MAIOR).

The Most Holy Ghost, the Lord and Vivifier of souls began this great work of holiness in His servant Francis on February 24, in the year of Our Lord 1208.

This year all Franciscans and Poor Clares as well as the whole Church, remember that glorious work of His grace in Francis, when at the little Benedictine chapel outside of Assisi, Italy, known as the Little Portion or Portiuncula of Our Lady of the Angels,

St. Francis, having attend Mass for the Feast of St. Matthias, the Apostle, having heard the Gospel, "Go take nothing with you on the way, neither gold nor silver etc.", with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass being offered, asked the priest for the meaning of these words, and having been instructed that by these very words of Our Most High Lord Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer instituted the religious life and called men to serve Him in evangelical poverty, St. Francis leaped with joy, shouting: "This is what I want, this is what I long to do with all my heart!" Whereupon, he forsook all things to follow the Lord Jesus as a holy religious.

Oh the astounding holiness of the Poverello of Assisi, the admirable simplicity and adorable sincerity!

The wonderful virtues which gleam in the soul of St. Francis are a most powerful remedy for the corruption of every age, and a most powerful force of inspiration for all Catholics, priests, religious and laity, to take up the exhortation of Our Blessed Lord, "Repent and believe the Gospel!", so as to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, in the spiritual and corporal renewal of our lives, families, and country.

In a manner after the likeness of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, who by Her "fiat" brought untold graces and mercies to a fallen, broken world, St. Francis by his simple declaration "This is what I want, this is what I long for with all my heart!" began an authentic spiritual renewal in the One True Church, and led a vast company of men and women, religious and laity, countless in number, back to the state of grace and onward in the pursuit of evangelical virtue.

Within his lifetime more than 5,000 friars had joined his Order, and since that time more than 300 Saints and Blesseds have been raised to the altars by Holy Mother Church, from among the many religious communities which follow St. Francis's example.

St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bernardine

of Siena, St. Bonaventure, Bl. John Duns Scotus, St. Francis Solano, St. Paschal Baylon, St. James of the March, St. Leonard of Port Maurice, are among the many saints who followed St. Francis in the unmitigated observance of his Holy Rule.

Today the Church rejoices in such things as as Eucharistic Exposition, Stations of the Cross, the Christmas creche, the Angelus, devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, the Immaculate Conception, the Act of Contrition, etc., all of which were either promoted or originated in St. Francis' Order.

The Ancient Roman Rite of Holy Sacrifice of the Mass itself, though it originated with St. Peter, and was greatly promoted by St. Gregory the Great, was saved by St. Francis from oblivion in the 13th Century, and spread by his Order so profusely that it was established by Pope St. Pius V as the Rite of precept for the entire Roman Church.

Today, in a world beset by the filth of lust and avarice, among minds torn loose from all sane reasoning by the errors of Hegelianism, Modernism, Evolutionism, Environmentalism, etc., St. Francis offers many unique and most necessary graces and examples, which Holy Mother Church would greatly prosper by, if only She were offered anew a generation of the sons of St. Francis as holy priests and religious.

Alas, because of these many errors, there is today in the Church no religious community of priests and brothers which observes the Rule of St. Francis without mitigations, that is entirely and explicitly in virtue of the Papal Decrees of Popes Nicholas III, Clement V and Bl. Innocent XI, all of whom authoritatively and infallibly interpreted and explained St. Francis's Rule and set down forever, never to be changed, the simple and holy manner of its observance.

St. Francis' Rule is singular in the Church for requiring its members to live in practice the literal observances of Gospel perfection which Our Most High

Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught by word and example to the Holy Apostles during the three years He walked with them before His Passion and Death in Jerusalem.

These observances are much scorned today on account of the aforementioned errors, because they require the Franciscan friar to believe the Faith and to put trust in the Divine Providence of Him who decreed these observances in the Eternal Gospel, as the practical day to day manner of living.

For this reason St. Francis and his sons for nearly 800 years refused in practice and in law to own anything of their own, to use or own money, either as a community or as individuals. This most austere and salutary poverty marks the Order of Friars Minor and the Order of Poor Clares off from all the other orders of religious men and women.

And though the Apostolic See from time to time allowed certain communities in times past to, as it were, cut corners and live less poorly, it cannot be doubted that the unmitigated observance of poverty as St. Francis precepted in His Rule and as the Apostolic See has exhorted his sons for 800 years, is a most rich source of grace, seeing that by such testimonies of authority and holiness it bears the marks of being entirely approved of and accepted in Heaven.

What is important to note for us who live in the 21st Century is that every Order which the Most Holy Trinity and the Blessed Virgin Mary have raised up in the Church for the sanctification and salvation of poor sinners, is a source of grace and salvation also for each of us and for the Holy Father and Bishops, throughout the world, even if we never happen to meet one of these religious in our own daily lives. This is because every Order fulfils in its own special manner that duty of extending and continuing in time and space the holy virtues and deeds of Jesus Our Redeemer and Mary Our Corredemptrix. Thus there is a certain contract between Heaven and Earth, that the Church shall have grace and mercy in a special and unique manner by means of these religious Orders and Congregations.

For this reason it is of the utmost importance for the common good of the entire Catholic Church — and this is very necessary to acknowledge in these times in which She stands in the midst of a

most bitter and savage war waged upon Her by Modernists, Secularists, Freemasons, Communists, Hedonists, Satanists etc. — that such Orders be restored to their pristine observances and ancient traditions.

Bl. Innocent XI teaches this very thing in his Apostolic Constitution of Nov. 20, 1679, *Sollicitudo Pastoralis: The pastoral solicitude of office, by which We preside over the governing of the Catholic Church spread throughout the whole globe by divine disposition, urges and impels Us to attend to fostering and preserving the Orders of men religious — instituted by this Holy See with wise piety for the glory of the Omnipotent God and the salvation of souls, and refulgent in the Church of God on account of their great merits — in their holy and primeval regulations, and in keeping them safe and fortifying them from those things hurtful, which could extinguish and relax the spirit and rigor of the original conscientiousness, and in providing for their blessed advancement in the way of the mandates of the Lord, as much as is conceded Us from on high.*

Pope Nicholas III for His part, in his Constitution, *Exiit qui seminat*, of August 14, 1279, praises in no uncertain terms St. Francis's own Rule and Order, in these words: *This is the meek and docile religion of the Friars Minor, rooted in poverty and humility by the kind confessor of Christ, Francis, which sprouting the sprout (cf. Is. 35:2) from that true seed, strew the same by means of the Rule among his sons, whom he generated for himself and for God by means of his ministry in the observance of the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 4:15). These very ones are the sons, who by the teaching of Jacob (Gen. 49:1-27) have received the Eternal Word, the Son of God, sown by human nature in the garden (Gen. 2:8) of the virginal womb and able to save souls in meekness (Hebr. 7:25). These are the professors of that holy Rule, which is founded on the evangelical discourse, strengthened by the example of the life of Christ, and made firm by the sermons and deeds of His Apostles, the founders of the Church Militant. This is that clean and immaculate religion in the sight of Our God and Father (Jm. 1:27b) which descending from the Father of lights (Jm. 1:17) through His Son, having been handed on to the Apostles verbally and by example, and at last through the Holy Spirit to blessed Francis, and having*

inspired those following him, contains in itself, at it were, a testimony of the whole Trinity (cf. Jn. 5:7). It is this, to which with Paul attesting no one for the sake of the rest ought to be molested (Gal. 6:17), which Christ confirmed by the stigmata of His own Passion, willing to notably mark with the signs of His own Passion the instigator of that very religion.

In times past, the sons of St. Francis could turn to the superiors of their Order, to the Bishops and to Catholic nobility to help them have a place where the Ancient Observance could be restored; but today the Order opposes this restoration, the Bishops reluctant to defend traditions, and the race of Catholic nobility is spent.

For this reason, SAVE OLD ST. MARY'S, INC., an IRS recognized, non-profit Massachusetts corporation, administered by non-salaried benefactors of Br. Alexis Bugnolo, is currently seeking fellow Catholics to assist in the establishment of a traditional Franciscan Monastery dedicated explicitly to restoring the Ancient Manner of living the Rule of St. Francis according to the Papal Decrees of Nicholas III, Clement V and Bl. Innocent XI.

So far about \$21,000 of the \$100,000 estimated to be needed to found this Monastery has been donated. **For the love of Jesus and Mary** and St. Francis, can you assist this holy cause with a donation of \$50, \$100 or even \$1000 ?

If you can, please send your US tax-deductible donation to:

**The Monastery Fund
POB 123
Mansfield, MA 02048**

Save Old St. Mary's, Inc., also seeks the donation of a piece of rural land suitable for such a monastery, and the assistance of a Catholic Architect, Lawyer & other professionals willing to work PRO BONO.

Finally, Br. Alexis Bugnolo welcomes all Catholic men 17 years & older, who want to follow St. Francis as holy brothers and priests in communion with the Pope. Candidates must be unmarried, free from debt and from the duty to care for relatives, of good moral virtue, sound in the Catholic Faith, and willing to live a life of discipline for the love of Jesus and Mary.

For more information visit <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/help.html>