

St. Francis of Assisi

1182-1226

St. Francis of Assisi is probably the best known of all the saints. He is loved and admired by people around the world regardless of religious persuasion. Many, including this writer, have been inspired by his life and his well-known prayer that begins with these words: "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace"



Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace,

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to
console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

St. Francis was born in the town of Assisi, Italy in 1182. After a carefree youth, he turned his back on inherited wealth and committed himself to God. Like many early saints, he lived a very simple life of poverty, and in so doing, gained a reputation of being the friend of outcasts and animals. He established the rule of St Francis, which exists today as the Order of St. Francis, or the Franciscans. He died in 1226 at 44.

From early on, this writer has loved St. Francis. He has a collection of anecdotes about his life and the lives of his followers that remind him of a bouquet of fragrant flowers. It is called, "The Little Flowers of St. Francis." Peter's soul was nourished from early on by these anecdotes. He still owns the book from which his Mother read these stories. It is in German in the old script. It is a rare treasure given to him by his Mother before she fell asleep in the arms of Jesus. He hopes to be able to pass the book on to someone someday who loves this saint like he does. And "someday" maybe not be all that far in the future. Peter is 74.

In the early 1970ties a movie was made about St. Francis' life called, "Brother Son and Sister Moon." The script writers probably took some liberties as far as being historically accurate; but to Peter, it portrays the heart of the beloved saint. At first, St. Francis tried to become a hero in the world in which he lived, but utterly failed. He failed to live up to the expectations of his parents, his peers, and "The Church." At some point early in his adult life, he turned his back on all three, but later in life made peace with "The Church."

It appears that St. Francis must have had a dramatic, life-changing and life challenging encounter with God, possibly similar to what happened to the apostle Paul on the Road to Damascus and this writer. Psychiatrists might call it today, "schizophrenia" or a "psychotic break."

St. Francis was asked by God in a vision to restore the church; and he did this with great abandon. The movie, "Brother Son and Sister Moon" seems to indicate that God told him to restore a building that had been badly neglected and abandoned. But in retrospect, he knew and we know that by "The Church", God meant the spiritual entity ruled by the Pope in Rome. The church of his day was opulent, ostentatious, and powerful. It was a far cry from what Jesus meant by "The Church."

It is tempting to see ourselves as another St. Francis, St. Paul or St. Peter. Others with less lofty ambitions and smaller egos might try to see themselves as another golf pro or movie star. This writer narrowly escaped those temptations. But he readily admits that he lived for a season in a delusional world to which others had no access. He wanted his life to mirror the life of another St. Francis; but he did not divulge those lofty ambitions until he had settled the fact that there was only one St. Francis. He narrowly escaped living on the streets or being cloistered in a mental hospital, subdued by medication and or iron bars.

Peter, the name of this writer, lives in a world today in which he has a rich dialogue with Jesus. He attributes this grace as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his disciples before ascending to heaven that He will send the Holy Spirit when He returns to His Father. He, the Holy Spirit, will be your teacher and guide. Psychiatrists and other professionals may be spooked by how Peter lives, what he says, and what he writes; but that no longer influences or intimidates Peter. Neither does he try to argue with doctors or counselors about their diagnosis. A classic interview with a psychiatrist some 30 years ago went something like this:

“Peter, do you talk to God?”

Peter replied:

“Yes, I do.”

Next question:

“Peter, does God talk to you?”

Peter’s answer was and always will be:

“Yes, He does.”

When Peter questioned the doctor if his diagnosis was “schizophrenia,” he said, “Yes.” Peter was stunned and asked, “But why?” The doctor replied:

“It is OK to talk to God, but if you hear God’s voice (not necessarily an audible voice), you have stepped over the line and into the world of insanity.” Peter could have easily argued with the doctor by pointing out numerous prophets in the Bible who talked to God and also heard His voice; but Peter knew that this would be fruitless. Silence was his weapon of choice. Today a pen and prayer are his weapons of choice.

Having said all this as a preface, let me, Peter, share with you a conversation I had with Jesus in 1993 as I was taking a walk near our home on Lake Pagosa.

Jesus: “Peter, why have you assumed the posture of a peacemaker all your life?”

Peter: “I adopted St. Francis of Assisi as my role model when I was a child. He was such a wonderful saint and an instrument of peace. I have always loved him and so have many others all over the world. When I was young, I heard a lot of wonderful stories about him and not too much about You.”

Jesus: “Were there some hidden motives why you chose St. Francis as your role model?”

Peter: “Yes, Lord, there were; but I did not recognize them until much later in life. I wanted to be a peacemaker because I was afraid to confront. I also wanted to be loved and admired like St. Francis.”

Jesus: “I don’t want you to be like St. Francis or any other saint. I am to be your only role model. You are to be conformed to My image. Whenever a sinner has been canonized and proclaimed a saint, the Church has given man the glory that belongs to Me. Nothing is lost when someone forgets St. Francis, St. Peter, or Peter; but everything is lost when someone forgets Me.”

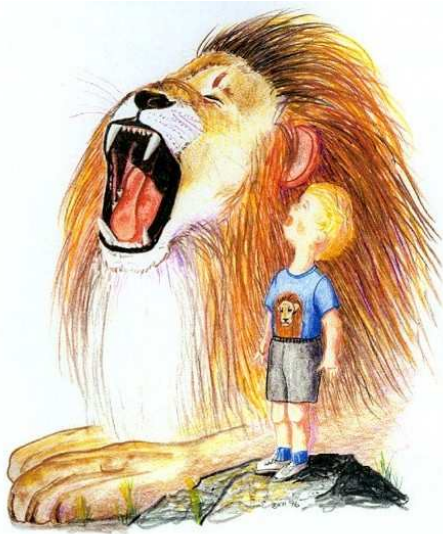
Peter: “But Lord, I am so afraid to confront as You confronted the Pharisees and turned over the money changers’ tables. It’s just not my personality, my nature. Many will hate me if I confront as You do.”

Jesus: “I know, Peter, but I want you to have My personality, My nature. That way My children will see Me in you. That’s all that matters. You can trust Me. I only want the very best for you.”

That was the end of my dialogue with Jesus.

That day Peter repented. He stopped looking at St. Francis of Assisi as his role model and chose Jesus as his only role model. He invited the Lion of the tribe of Judah into his heart just as he had invited Jesus, the Lamb of God, into his heart years earlier. A number of strongholds were broken that day. Oh, what joy to be

infused by both the gentle and the bold heart of Jesus. Peter is on his way to becoming a whole person. He is learning to confront. Confronting is still a fearful thing for him to do; but he would rather please Jesus than be canonized by some church.



Lion of Judah, teach me your ways.

When he came home from his walk, it was like being reborn – made whole. He danced and skipped around the living room and shouted, “I am whole! I am whole! I am finally a whole person!” Over the years that followed, Peter became slowly aware of the significance of his decision to see Jesus as his only role model. It became reality for him that Jesus is not only the Lamb of God who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world, including Peter’s sins; Jesus is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He realized that no one can come into the full stature of the Son of God until he invites and models himself after Jesus as both the Lamb of God and the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Peter is overjoyed to be able to write these words. The sicknesses of the mind are the derivatives (fancy word) of having a wrong, sick, or incomplete role model. The sickness of the mind and imagination is one’s inability to distinguish between the voices of heaven and hell and their representatives on earth. Many of us are unaware that we are continually being influenced by peer pressure and personalities who have a need to dominate and control our lives for selfish reasons.

The little lion cub of Judah within Peter’s heart is growing into a mature off-spring of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. It is He who compelled Peter to arise early on November 11, 2007, and pen these words. It is He who from time to time gives Peter a prophetic dream or vision. It is He who has asked Peter to pen a companion prayer to the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. It is He who prompted Peter’s handmaiden Rebekah to put on canvas a dream that shook Peter to the depth of his being.



LORD JESUS - MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF THY WAR

Let everything that is hidden be revealed!

Expose all hypocrisy, especially that which is hidden in my own heart.

Expose all rebellion which is as the sin of witchcraft.

Expose all pride, that subtle monster who hides in most of us.

Expose the greedy who exploit the needy, and the strong who oppress the weak.

Expose all lust that masquerades as love, and begin within me.

Expose and tear down every man-made idol of success and self-gratification.

Expose Satan, the accuser of the brethren, who tries to hide in all of us;

And Lord Jesus, be the advocate for all who have been falsely accused.

Lord, vindicate the insane who have been judged without a jury; and begin with me.

And Lord, then let the Lion of the tribe of Judah roar through me!

Explanation of Prophetic Painting – “The Sword of the Lord – Strongholds are Coming Down”

We are told in the book of Acts, chapter 2, verse 17, that “... your old men shall dream dreams.” The painting by the artist Rebekah Laue is a portrayal of her husband’s prophetic dream. She labored for many years before she was able to capture the essence of the dream on canvas.

In his dream, Peter saw a rock wall with an ordinary stick lying near the wall. He was prompted to pick it up and beat vigorously on the wall in a vain attempt to cause it to crumble. Nothing happened! Then he saw a lion’s paw at his feet. He dropped the stick and picked up the paw. He proceeded to touch the wall with the lion’s paw, and as he did, the wall began to crumble.

Peter awoke weeping and trembling as he experienced new authority, purpose, power, and confidence streaming into every fiber of his being. In lieu of a lion’s paw he has acquired a real sword, which he now uses in spiritual combat.

The stick is symbolic of man using his own strength and wisdom to tear down strongholds. The rock wall represents giants that imprison us, such as hate, hurt, pride, fear, lust, greed, legalism, and man’s traditions. The sword issuing from the lion’s mouth is the Sword of the Lord, which is the Word of God. The lion portrays Jesus Christ as revealed in the book of Revelation, chapter 5: “... Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed...” The truth in the painting shall march throughout the land like a banner and confront the strongholds of self and Satan that are in us and surround us.

Has God singled you out? Before saying **YES** or **NO**, count the cost or the opportunity lost! **TAKE A STAND! TAKE BACK THE LAND!**

For more insight and information, go to: www.stretcherbearers.com and request Peter’s epistles: “God’s Mighty Men of Valor” and “Wimp or Warrior?”

Peter does not claim to be whole in all aspects of his personality; but Peter is now assured that he is on his way to becoming a whole person. His compass is now focused on “True North” – none other than Jesus – the Son of the Living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. St. Francis of Assisi pointed his followers toward Jesus. He never claimed to be a substitute for Jesus.

Peter trembles in his heart whenever the church – any church – makes an idol of a person by elevating him or her to the status of sainthood. He trembles when an author, any author, is promoted to the point that his book or books become a substitute for the Word of God. It is a part of our flawed human nature to do this; but this can be highly misleading. Instead of focusing on Jesus, we innocently model our lives after one man’s interpretation or imitation of Jesus. It was never the intention of St. Francis to be idolized. The title of “Saint” is applied by a flawed religious system. Only Jesus models the Father for us – yes, only **JESUS**. Can you hear the **LION of JUDAH** roaring?

Peter

The Lord’s Scribe and Storyteller

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