



## ***Tau Maria Franciscan Formation Meditations***

### ***Saint on Saint***

#### **M Meditation – Life of St. Francis**

### **Homily on St. Francis of Assisi (03-12-1982) by *Pope John Paul II***

Saint Francis save your people from ruin

*After his meeting with the Italian Episcopal Conference in Assisi on Friday, 12 March, the Holy Father and the bishops concelebrated Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis.*

*Pope John Paul II delivered the following homily.*

1. "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to little ones" (Mt 11:25). We come here, dear brothers, to repeat these words with Christ the Lord to "bless the Father"; we come to bless him for what he revealed eight centuries ago to a Little One, to the Poverello of Assisi; things in heaven and on earth that "philosophers had never dreamed of"; things hidden from those who are only humanly "wise" and only humanly "clever"; these "things" the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, has revealed to Francis and through Francis. Through Francis, the son of Pietro di Bernardone, a rich merchant of Assisi, the son who abandoned the whole inheritance of his earthly father and married "Lady Poverty" ...

2. "Yes, Father, for so it has pleased you" (Mt 11:26). After eight centuries the relics and the mementos remain. All Assisi is a living relic and a testimony of the man. Of only the man? Of only the extraordinary man? It is the testimony of a special satisfaction that the heavenly Father through the work of his only begotten Son, had in this man in this "little one", in the "Poverello" in Francis, who -- as very few in the course of the history of the Church and of mankind -- learned from Christ to be meek and humble of heart. Yes, Father, such was your pleasure. So many men come here to follow the footsteps of your pleasure. We, the bishops of Italy, come here today....

3. We are here in the presence of the Saint who is at the same time the Patron of Italy, hence he who among the numerous canonized and beatified sons and daughters of this land particularly unites Italy with the Church. In fact, the Church's task is to proclaim and fulfill in every nation that vocation to sanctity which we have from the Father in the Holy Spirit through the work of Christ crucified and risen; this Christ whose wounds St. Francis of Assisi bore in his own body: "for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal 6:17).

We are here in his presence then, we meditate on the words of the Gospel, phrase after phrase:

"Everything has been given to me by my Father; no one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son has wished to reveal him" (Mt 11:27).

So we find ourselves in front of a man to whom the Son of God has wished to reveal, in a particular degree and with special abundance, what was given to him by the Father for all men, for all times. Certainly, Francis was sent with the Gospel of Christ especially to his own times, at the turn of the 12th century, at the height of the Italian Middle Ages, which was a period splendid and difficult at the same time: but every era has preserved something of this in itself. Still the Franciscan mission is not yet ended; it is still going on....



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4. And so, Francis seems to address us and speak to us with the words of Paul the Apostle: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers"! (Gal 6:18). Thank you, Holy Poverello, for these wishes with which you are receiving us! Looking at your figure with the eyes of the spirit and meditating on the words of the Letter to the Galatians, with which the liturgy speaks to us today, we wish to learn from you this "belonging to Jesus", of which your whole life was such a perfect example and model. "Far be it from me. . . that I boast in anything extent in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal 6:14). We hear the words of Paul, which are also, Francis, your words. Your spirit is expressed in them. Jesus Christ has allowed you, as once he allowed that Apostle, to become a "chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15), to "boast", only and exclusively, in the Cross of our Redemption. In this way you arrived at the very heart of the knowledge of the truth about God, about the world, and about man; truth which can be seen only with the eyes of love....

5. In the first reading from the Book of Sirach are recorded the words of the high priest Simon, son of Onias who "in his life repaired the temple and in his time fortified the sanctuary" (Sir 50:1). The liturgy applies these words to Francis of Assisi. He remains in tradition, in literature, in art: "as the one who repaired the temple and fortified the sanctuary". As the one who considered how to save his people from ruin and fortified the City to withstand a siege" (Sir 50:4). The reading still continues speaking of Simon, the son of Onias, and we apply these words to Francis, the son of Pietro di Bernardone. We apply to him these comparisons as well: "Like the morning star among the like the moon when it is full, like the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and like the rainbow gleaming in glorious cloud (ibid 50:6-7).... We thank you for St. Francis.

6. We gladly borrow these words from the Book of Sirach to venerate, after eight hundred years, Francis of Assisi, the Patron of Italy. It is for this that we have all come here, bishops and pastors of the Church that is in all of Italy, together with the Bishop of Rome, Peter's Successor. Nevertheless, the purpose of our pilgrimage is particularly apostolic and pastoral. When we hear Christ's words about the yoke that is sweet and the burden that is light (cf. Mt 11:30), we think of our mission as bishops and of our pastoral service....

7. ..."Francis, consider how to save your people from ruin"! Francis! As during your life, so also now, repair the temple! Fortify the sanctuary! For this we pray, we the pastors of the Church which in the school of the Second Vatican Council has learned anew to surround with a common concern the Church, Italy, and the modern world. And with our greatly beloved populations we repeat: "The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup: in his hands is my life. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. . . I keep the Lord always before me." Yes, brothers and sisters, always! And may it be so.