

of his rule of life to paper. (After he finished a first version it was promptly lost, and Francis was forced to retire again to re-write it.) The rule was pared down from 23 to 12 chapters, and was solemnly approved by Pope Honorius III on November 29, 1223. It was unique up to that time in that it stressed the vow of poverty, which it made absolute, and in the compromise between the secular and religious states in his Third Order.

PRAYER IN HONOR OF THE SACRED STIGMATA OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

O Lord Jesus Christ,
Who when the world was growing cold,
in order that the hearts of men might burn anew
with the fire of Your love,
did in the flesh of the most blessed Francis
reproduce the stigmata of Your passion:
be mindful of his merits and prayers;
and in Your mercy vouchsafe to us the grace ever
to carry Your cross,
and to bring forth worthy fruits of penance.
Amen.

*To all the faithful who, upon the **five Sundays**
which immediately precede
the feast of the sacred stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi,
or upon **any other five consecutive Sundays during the year**,
shall exercise themselves either in pious meditation,
or in vocal prayer, **(for example: see above prayer)**
or in any other work of Christian piety,
in honor of the said sacred stigmata,
a plenary indulgence is granted once a year,
on each of the five Sundays, on the usual conditions.*

-Pope Leo XIII, 21 November 1885

**(excerpted from: www.franciscanfriarstor.com; [//saints.sqpn.com](http://saints.sqpn.com))*

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The Stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi

PLENARY INDULGENCE GRANTED

SEE BACK PAGE

Feast Day: September 17



**Through the sacred stigmata
Saint Francis of Assisi
bore the image of the Crucified.**

The Stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi

**From the beginning of his conversion our Seraphic Father Saint Francis had a very great devotion and veneration for Christ crucified and never ceased to preach this devotion till his death. In the year 1224 as he was rapt in deep contemplation on Mt. Alverna Christ the Lord by a stupendous miracle imprinted the marks of his passion on the saint's body. Pope Benedict XI permitted the Franciscan Order to celebrate annually on this day the memory of this extraordinary event attested by reliable witnesses.*

From the Legenda Minor of St. Bonaventure

(de Stigmatibus sacris, 1-4; ed. Quaracchi, 1941; pgg. 202-204)

Two years before Francis, the faithful servant of Christ, gave his soul back to God, he was alone on the top of Mt. Alverna. There he had begun a fast of forty days in honor of the archangel Michael and was immersed more deeply than usual in the delights of heavenly contemplation. His soul became aglow with the ardor of fervent longing for heaven as he experienced within himself the operations of grace.

As he was drawn aloft through ardent longing for God one morning near the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and was praying on the mountainside, he saw what appeared as a seraph with six bright wings gleaming like a fire descending from the heights of heaven. As this figure approached in swift flight and came near the man of God it appeared not only winged but also crucified. The sight of it amazed Francis and his soul experienced joy mingled with pain. He was delighted with the sight of Christ appearing to him so graciously and intimately and yet the awe-inspiring vision of Christ nailed to the cross aroused in his soul a joy of compassionate love.

When the vision vanished after a mysterious and intimate conversation it left Francis aglow with seraphic love in his soul. Externally, however, it left marks on his body like those of the Crucified as if the impression of a seal had been left on heated wax. The figures of the nails appeared immediately on his hands and feet. The heads of the nails were inside his hands but on top of his feet with their points extending through to the opposite side. His right side too showed a blood-red wound as if it had been pierced by a lance, and blood flowed frequently from it.

Because of this new and astounding miracle unheard of in times past, Francis came down from the mountain a new man adorned with the sacred stigmata, bearing in his body the image of the Crucified not made by a craftsman in wood or stone, but fashioned in his members by the hand of the living God.

Francis and his followers travelled and preached all over Europe, gaining popularity and followers everywhere. Francis himself preached before the Pope and Cardinals at the Lateran in 1217 and met St. Dominic during that stay in Rome. Lay people were so moved by Francis' preaching that they came to him pleading to join his order, once an entire congregation implored him *en masse*. At this point he devised his Third Order, which he intended as a middle state for people who were not ready or able to leave all for the cloister. Many Franciscans also went to preach to the Muslims, Francis himself preached to the sultan as he and his army were faced by crusaders from Europe. Many of the friars who went to Muslim lands were martyred.

Francis' first rule was only approved verbally by Innocent III, and in written form it was overly long and not precise. After some relaxations in the austerity he desired for his friars and imposition of rules by outside or unauthorized people, Francis retired to solitude to entrust an official version