

RELIANCE AND REBUILDING

By Olivia Spears (@Blessed Is She)

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, one of Catholicism's greatest Saints, reformers, and spiritual fathers. Famously, one day while Francis was praying in his local church, the Lord spoke to him from the crucifix. Jesus commanded him to rebuild His Church.

I hear the same call now.

The call from Jesus to Francis is the same call pressed into the lives of you and me. We are commissioned to be saints, to be lights, to be reformers at this exact time in the life of the Church. As today's Gospel reminds us, "The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2).

Working for the Kingdom is a *labor*. Being one of the few can feel intense at times. Loving God and His people consistently is no easy task. Holiness requires something of us. Striving for sainthood is not flashy or numbing. In fact, it's the thing that will give us the greatest return-on-investment and make us feel most alive.

But I have to be willing to work. I must be willing to completely rely on God ("carry no money bag with you"), to be a bearer of peace in my relationships ("peace to this household"), and to witness the joy of knowing Christ to others both in word and deed ("the Kingdom of God is at hand") (Luke 10:4, 5, 9).

Am I willing to answer Jesus' call? Am I willing to go out? Am I ready for this particular time, this particular battle? Am I ready to get uncomfortable for the sake of the Kingdom? Am I ready to have hard conversations with myself, with God, with others? Am I willing to forsake distraction, to forsake sin, to do this work? Am I ready to risk reputation and relationship? Am I willing to demolish vice in my heart and renovate with virtue? Am I open to letting Christ rebuild my own soul so that I can help rebuild His Church?

If the call to sainthood, to a sainthood like that of Francis, has felt like a long-term goal, or perhaps an unattainable one, let this be our wake up call. Christ rallies us in today's Gospel, like He rallied Francis from the crucifix. The time for holiness is now. The time for rebuilding is now. The Kingdom of God is at hand.

Let's renew our hope in our Vindicator (Job 19:25). And let's get to work

A Closer Look at the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis

By: Jack Wintz, OFM

(article found at <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/a-closer-look-at-the-peace-prayer-of-saint-francis/>)



Few prayers are more popular around the world and better loved than the “Peace Prayer of Saint Francis.” Nearly everyone recognizes a happy harmony between the words of this prayer and the generous, joy-filled and peace-loving spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi. Let us look at this prayer more closely.

What will surprise many readers is that no serious scholar today, Franciscan or otherwise, would place the Peace Prayer among the authentic writings of Saint Francis. In recent decades it has become evident that the prayer originated during the early years of the 1900's, but until recently

no one has pointed out the exact year. Finally, researchers are getting to the bottom of the mystery.

About eight years ago, a Franciscan confrere gave me the e-mail address of French scholar Dr. Christian Renoux of the University of Orleans in France, who had come to know a lot about this issue. In 2001, Renoux authored a book in French, entitled *La priere pour la paix attribuee a Saint Francois. Une enigme a resoudre (The Peace Prayer Attributed to St. Francis: A Riddle to Be Solved)*. While working on a writing project about 7 years ago, I asked Dr. Renoux if he could summarize his findings for me. Dr. Renoux kindly agreed to do so.

The Peace Prayer Takes a Circuitous Path

“The first appearance of the Peace Prayer,” according to Dr. Renoux, “occurred in France in 1912 in a small spiritual magazine called *La Clochette* (the little bell). It was published in Paris by a Catholic association known as *La Ligue de la Sainte-Messe*, “The Holy Mass League,” founded in 1901 by a French priest, Father Esther Bouquerel (1855-1923). The prayer bore the title of *Belle priere a faire pendant la messe*; “A Beautiful Prayer to Say During the Mass” and was published anonymously. The author could have possibly been Father Bouquerel himself, but until now the identity of the author remains a mystery.

“The prayer was sent in French to Pope Benedict XV in 1915. This was soon followed by its 1916 appearance, in Italian, in the *Osservatore Romano*. Around 1920, the prayer was printed by a French Franciscan priest on the back of an image of Francis with the title *Priere pour la paix*, “Prayer for Peace,” but without being attributed to the saint. Between the two World Wars, the prayer circulated in Europe and was translated into English.

“The first translation in English that we know of appeared in 1936 in *Living Courageously*, a book by Kirby Page (1890-1957), a Disciples of Christ minister. Page attributed the text to Francis of Assisi. During the Second World War and immediately after, this prayer for peace began circulating widely as the Prayer of Saint Francis and over the years has gained a worldwide popularity with people of all faiths.”

Reflections on the Peace Prayer

Though written in simple language, the Peace Prayer provides rich material for spiritual reflection. The following are some of my thoughts on the Peace Prayer inspired by the lines (printed in bold type) of this prayer and by the example of Saint Francis.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Like that of Christ, our mission on earth is to bring to others God's peace—God's state of "perfect well-being" and completeness. *Shalom* is the Hebrew word for this rich concept of "peace." Often used as a greeting of peace, *Shalom* is a wish that those so greeted will find healing and fullness of life.

Francis saw this as his mission, too. In Chapter 3 of his Rule of 1223, he advised his followers that in going about the world "they should not be quarrelsome or take part in disputes with words...or criticize others; but they should be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to everyone....Whatever house they enter, they should first say, 'Peace to this house'" (Cf. Luke 10:5). Surely, Francis was an instrument of peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love,

In his 9th Admonition, called *Charity*, Saint Francis tells his followers, "Our Lord says in the Gospel, *Love your enemies* (Matthew 5: 44). A man really loves his enemy when he is not offended by the injury done to himself, but for love of God feels burning sorrow for the sin his enemy has brought on his own soul, and proves his love in a practical way."

Where there is injury, pardon,

During the violence-ridden Crusades, Francis discovered a path of peace, pardon and non-violence. The "little poor man" went to Egypt to engage in a peaceful dialogue with the sultan (head of the Muslim forces), a meeting in which a spirit of forgiveness, respect and understanding prevailed. Francis would have the same message for those in our times who are so quick to see violence as the only cure for terrorism.

Where there is doubt, faith,

When, as a young man, Francis found himself in a fog of doubt as to the nature of God's care for him, he sought the face of God through prayer in solitary places. God opened Francis' eyes of faith. The saint saw a vision of Christ gazing at him from the Cross with such a look of love that Francis' "soul melted," to use the words of his biographer, Saint Bonaventure. The fog of doubt lifted for Francis, and he went through the world setting others free from their own burdens of doubt.

Where there is despair, hope/Where there is darkness, light,

Think of Saint Francis embracing lepers and lovingly washing their sores. Surely, many of those suffering souls felt an inner surge of hope and human dignity when they experienced Francis' care.

And where there is sadness, joy.

The secret of Saint Francis' joyful spirit was his vibrant belief in a God of overflowing goodness and love. Saint Francis was so in love with God that at times he would pick up two sticks from the ground, tuck one under his chin like a violin and move the other over it like a bow. Then, in an ecstasy of joy, he would sing in French songs of love and praise to God. Francis used to say that he wanted his followers to go about the world like strolling minstrels, "to inspire the hearts of people and stir them to spiritual joy." They give us an example to follow in our own day!

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.

Francis of Assisi may not have *written* the words of the prayer attributed to him, but he certainly *lived* them. Everyone who is able to read and understand these words, moreover, readily sees that

they communicate the heart of the Gospels and capture what is most essential in the world's great religions.

So we see, the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis is a deep well of spiritual wisdom. We are wise to visit this well often.

Closing Prayer - St. Francis' Prayer Before a Crucifix

Most high, glorious God,
cast your light into the darkness of my heart.
Give me right faith, certain hope,
perfect charity, and profound humility,
with wisdom and perception,
O Lord, so that I may do what is truly your holy will.
Amen.

