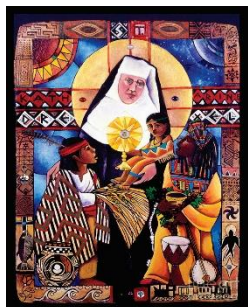


SAINT KATHARINE DREXEL REGIONAL NEWSLETTER

September 17, 2026 – Feast of the Sacred Stigmata of Saint Francis



Brothers and sisters,

On this feast day of the Sacred Stigmata, we remember the mystical union that Francis shared with Christ at La Verna. There was such a beautiful reflection on this from the CIOFS Secretariate for Formation in May 2024 when the Franciscan Family celebrated the 8th Centenary:

“The stigmatization of St. Francis is not just an acceptance of the extraordinary signs of Christ's suffering in the flesh. It is also the great joy and consolation of God's closeness along with the pain of seeing the cross, shortly before receiving the stigmata. In the earliest sources these elements are found side by side and with equal intensity, so we will consider them together.

For Francis, the stigmata did not appear on his body during the mysterious vision, but after it was over, when he struggled to understand its meaning. At first, he was filled with something beautiful and blissful both from what he was seeing and from the way the man on the cross was looking at him (that he was seen). Then came the pain when he realized that this man was tied to the cross. Only then did the stigmata become apparent. How can we understand this?

There are more possibilities. We could think of regret for our own failures that cause crucifixion-like torment in a person's soul. Or, reflecting on the wounds and pains, those of Christ 2000 years ago, and those now carried by his mystical body - the many lonely and sick in body/soul, members of minorities, marginalized, people without support or work, persecuted, abused, driven into insecurity by various circumstances.... We stand before the invitation to see Christ's kind gaze looking at us from the midst of this suffering.

We are invited to see God's presence in the midst of the wounds we carry and the wounds we touch. God looks at us and sees us in each of our sufferings, not just from the outside, as an observer, but as one who suffers with us. We bear his image in our souls, and he bears us in his heart, even with our vulnerability and wounds.

We are those whom God sees and looks at us with the same captivating and delightful gaze that he looked at Francis. A gaze that infuses joy and hope into our souls- when we expose ourselves to him and stay close to him, in the safety of his love; when we touch his glorified wounds, like Thomas in the Gospel.

When we allow this joy to permeate us, we will have the strength to suffer with those who suffer and to bear and carry the wounds on our own body (and in our soul), like Francis. Then we will not be destroyed by becoming vulnerable, it will be Christ in us who suffers, whose wounds are already glorified. His resurrection is our hope.”

I am also attaching a copy of the Stigmata Examen that Carolyn Townes, OFS, had prepared for the celebration of the Centenary of the Stigmata in 2024. It is meaningful for the many celebrations during the month of September.

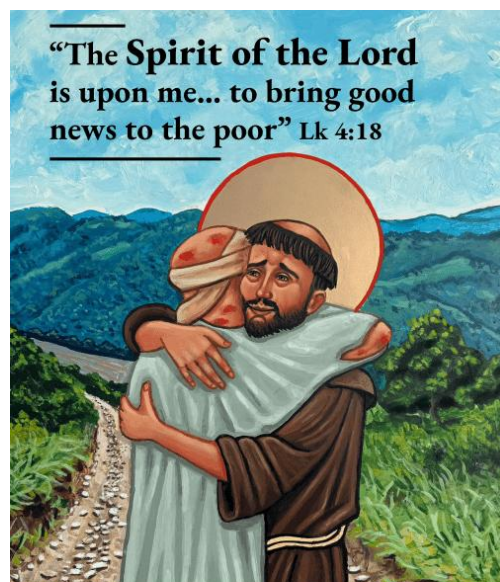
Special feast day greetings to Fr. Francis Sariego, OFM Cap,
and the friars of the Sacred Stigmata Province
as they celebrate their wondrous charism! ♥

Catechetical Sunday (September 20th)

Within our Region, many members of our local fraternities serve as catechists in our six dioceses and many parishes within them. These catechists may be teachers in Catholic schools, volunteers for parish Religious Education programs, on the staff for OCIA programs, mentoring youth groups, assisting families preparing for sacraments, fraternity formation team members, and sharing faith formation in our homes and families. This Sunday, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops has its annual celebration of Catechetical Sunday (from the USCCB website):

*"Catechetical Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the role that each person plays, **by virtue of Baptism**, in handing on the faith and being a witness to the Gospel. Catechetical Sunday is an opportunity for all to rededicate themselves to this mission as a community of faith."*

- As Secular Franciscans, how are we handing on the faith?
- Do we wear our Tau cross daily?
- Does our Franciscanism inspire our catechesis?



Many blessings to everyone in the Region committed to witnessing to the Gospel!

OFS-USA Message from NAFRA Centenary Committee (Vickie Klick, OFS-Chairperson)

Dear brothers and sisters,

Two weeks from now (at the time I am writing this) our NAFRA Zoom event celebrating the Centenary of the Easter of Francis will be a memory (with a recording). We have 177 registrants already - thank you! If you haven't had a chance to register yet, please take a moment now and sign up.

Again, the event is Sunday, September 27, at 3PM Eastern. To register, please use the link below:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ahf_ABrrSoOljENFC_uC-w

If you are watching as a group, only the one who will actually connect to the Zoom needs to register. We are very happy that some fraternities will be participating together!

For those who haven't seen the announcement previously, our event this year is structured around elements of a Transitus service, and also includes discussion of what Francis' transitus and our four-year celebration of this 800th anniversary means to us as Secular Franciscans. We will have participation via pre-recorded video from the First and Second Orders as well.

The event is planned to be 60-75 minutes long. It will be recorded and will be made available afterwards.

Please start the week of celebration leading up to Francis' feast day with us!

Franciscan Month (October 2026)

Many local fraternities have already started to plan activities to celebrate Franciscan Month in their parishes and local communities. There are wonderful resources available on their website: <https://www.franciscanmonth.org/>. Hopefully, everyone is taking the time to celebrate the 8th Centenary of the Transitus of St. Francis on October 3rd and his feast day on October 4th.

SKD Regional News

Monthly Spiritual Assistant Info: The monthly greeting and reflection from Fr. Francis were posted to the Regional website at the beginning of the month. If you were not able to see them there, they are attached to the e-mail with this newsletter.

New Local Spiritual Assistant: We welcome Fr. Bart Karwacki, OFM Conv, to Saint Katharine Drexel Region as the newly appointed Spiritual Assistant for Blessed Sacrament Fraternity in Whiting, NJ. Fr. Bart has many years of experience with Secular Franciscans in several states and is a native of Riverside, NJ. We give thanks to Fr. Noel Danielewicz, OFM Conv, for his faithful service to Blessed Sacrament Fraternity. Fr. Noel is now in residence in Massachusetts and assures us of his prayers:

Fr. Noel Danielewicz, OFM Cap
110 Cyman Drive
Chicopee, MA 01013

Mass of Creation for the Jubilee Year of Saint Francis (Saturday-September 26th)

In honor of the Jubilee Year of Saint Francis, Bishop Joseph Williams of the Diocese of Camden will celebrate the Mass of Creation at 11:00 AM:

Church of the Incarnation
240 Main Street - Mantua, NJ

Refreshments to follow in the Kernan Center immediately after the Mass

This event is hosted by Christ the King and Divine Mercy Fraternities. All Secular Franciscans, spiritual assistants, and Franciscans in the area are joyfully invited to participate in this special celebration during the Season of Creation.

St. Francis Movie Night (Monday – September 28th)

Eight centuries after his death, St. Francis of Assisi continues to inspire people around the world. But who was he, really? Join us in the Salerno Room at the Church of the Incarnation (Mantua, NJ) on Monday, Sept. 28 at 7 p.m. for the showing of the film “St. Francis of Assisi: Sign of Contradiction” Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, sets out on a journey to discover the heart of St. Francis. He highlights how Francis was a man who struggled and searched for purpose and ultimately found it in Jesus Christ. Even when others called him a fool, St. Francis became a sign of contradiction. His conversion shows us how we, too, can turn back to God.

St. Katharine Drexel Regional Website

We are in the , of doing some upgrades to our Regional website to offer timely information in a useful presentation. Many ministers requested that we have a calendar on the website. While we do the redesign, you will already have the opportunity to see “Events” listed on the home page using the right side toolbar. There are many good events that have already been added there.

Mini-Quinquennial

The Region is hosting a “*Bring the Q Home Event*” on Saturday, October 24th at Sacred Heart Auditorium (260 High Street) in Mount Holly, NJ. We look forward to seeing many brothers and sisters at this event which will begin at 9:30 AM. There is great joy from the global celebration of the “Easter” of St. Francis. Bring a friend and introduce them to Franciscan life.

Season of Care for Creation (September 1 – October 4) Theme: Living Water

In August, the Delaware Valley Franciscan Justice Circle welcomed Mike Huck, OFS, a member of the OFS-USA National JPIC Commission, to share his project “Sister Water,” which has a special tie-in to this year’s Season of Creation. Recently, his formation materials were uploaded to the OFS-USA website at this link: <https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/sister-water-formation-packet/>. Local fraternities should explore the resources that Mike has posted and consider using them in fraternity ongoing formation.

October 4th Franciscan Afternoon Retreat (hosted by Holy Dormition Fraternity-Sugarloaf, PA)

All are invited to an afternoon spiritual retreat.

- **Date:** Sunday, October 4, 2026
- **Time:** 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
- **Location:** St. John Bosco Parish, 573 PA Route 93, Sugarloaf, PA 18249

- **Retreat Leader:** Father Brian W.J. Clarke, Pastor of St. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, Hazleton
- **Cost:** Free and open to all
- **Special 800th Anniversary**

This year marks the **800th anniversary of the *Transitus***—the passing of St. Francis of Assisi from his earthly life to his eternal home in heaven on October 3, 1226. This historic milestone for the Church and the Franciscan family offers a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the timeless wisdom and beauty of St. Francis' teachings in a warm and welcoming environment. Snacks and refreshments will be served following the program.

- **RSVP & Information**

While reservations are not required, advance notice is appreciated to assist with planning.

- **Phone:** Call Joan Pesta at 570-926-0326
- **Email us at:** ofs.franciscan@gmail.com

Weekend Retreat Information (October 9-11) from St. Mary of Providence Center (Elverson, PA)

There is an opportunity to participate in a Jubilee Year of St. Francis Retreat: *In the Footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi* at St. Mary of Providence Center in Elverson, PA. The retreat begins at 4 PM on Friday afternoon and concludes at 1:30 PM on Sunday. The cost is \$250 (double) or \$350 (single). Registration link:

[Register – Spiritual Pilgrimage in the Footsteps of St. Francis: A Jubilee Weekend Retreat – St Mary of Providence Center](#)

Meet Our Retreat Leaders

- **Fr. James Watson, OFM Cap.**

Fr. James is a native Philadelphian who brings a wealth of pastoral experience and Franciscan spirituality to our weekend. He currently serves as the Catholic Hospital Chaplain for the Indiana Regional Medical Center, the Catholic Chaplain for the PA State Correctional Institution Pine Grove, and provides sacramental support for the Church of the Resurrection Parish.

- **Sr. Anne Amati, OSF**

Sr. Anne is a native of Trenton, NJ, who has served over the years as an educator, facilitator, itinerant retreat director, and in congregational leadership. She spent many summers as a pilgrimage leader in Italy, traversing the streets of Rome and Assisi to guide, lecture, and celebrate with pilgrims at the sacred sites of Saints Francis and Clare.

Eternal Rest

- **Fr. Dominic Monti, OFM** (Our Lady of Guadalupe Province) embraced Sister Bodily Death on September 16, 2026. If you are familiar with the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition website, then you will recognize Fr. Dominic's name as someone who regularly posted inspiring Franciscan information to share generations of the Franciscan legacy. This is the message posted by Br. Michael Perry, OFM, Minister of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province:

Today (September 16th) we mourn the loss of a truly great person, our beloved brother Fr. Dominic Monti, OFM. Dominic, 83, of St. Bonaventure University Friary, embraced Sister Death this morning at St. Elizabeth's Motherhouse in Allegany, New York, after a brief battle with cancer.

What made Dominic so great was his ability to embrace the challenges and difficulties of daily life, contemplate their deeper meaning, and allow them to shape a wise vision of the world—to see the world and the people around him as gifts from the Creator and instruments of grace. In recent months, I had a number of phone conversations with Dominic. He was fully aware of what was happening to his body, but he did not allow this to take his eyes off the "prize": his deep intellectual, spiritual, and heartfelt awareness that his life was profoundly blessed by God, by the gift of his brothers, and by everyone whom God placed in his life.

A brilliant mind, Dominic possessed the humility of St. Anthony of Lisbon (Padua). A loving and caring heart, Dominic sought to invite all to approach the banquet of the Lord, with no one excluded, and no one left behind. A visionary scholar, Dominic masterfully bridged history and theology, finding God's evolving invitation within every epochal change and affirming it as a call toward broader horizons. He was a professed Franciscan friar for 61 years and a priest for 55 years.

May you, our beloved Dominic, be embraced by the angels in paradise. May we continue to draw courage and grace from the memory of your humor, intellect, loving concern, and faithful living of our shared Gospel life, following the footprints of Jesus and St. Francis. Let us keep Dominic and his family in our prayers. Funeral arrangements will be forthcoming. The Provincial Administration would like to honor Dominic's life with a virtual wake. Please send your memories and photos for him to communications@friars.us by Sept. 23, 2026.

September Servant Leader Celebrations

8	Maria Schultes, OFS	Holy Assumption Fraternity Minister (Roebbing, NJ)	26 th Profession Anniversary
9	Jim Heimlich, OFS	St Francis Fraternity Minister (LBI, NJ)	Birthday
12	Br. John Neuffer, OFM	SKD Regional Spiritual Assistant & Spiritual Asst to St. Francis Fraternity (Philadelphia, PA) & Christ the King Fraternity (Haddonfield, NJ)	Birthday
15	Marie Gilligan, OFS	St. Francis Fraternity Minister (Folsom, PA)	24 th Profession Anniversary
20	Ed Pane, OFS	Holy Dormition Fraternity Minister (Sugarloaf, PA)	Birthday
30	Mark Shedden, OFS	St. Francis Fraternity Minister (Easton, PA)	Birthday

Special Profession Anniversaries

Professed Member	Fraternity	Profession Date
35 Years		
Andrew Zampini, OFS	San Damiano-Wilmington-DE	9/17/1991
20 Years		
Imelda Cruz, OFS	Christ The King-Haddonfield-NJ	9/17/2006
15 Years		
Pius Yollong, OFS	Immaculate Conception-Norristown-PA	9/4/2011
5 Years		
Alfred Drushler, OFS	San Damiano-Wilmington-DE	9/7/2021
Luke LeTourneau, OFS	Venerable Matt Talbot- Philadelphia-PA	9/19/2021
Robert Mariotti, OFS	Venerable Matt Talbot-Philadelphia-PA	9/19/2021

JPIC

National Migration Week 2026 (“Even just one of these children”)

September 21–27, 2026

Culminating in the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (Sunday, September 27)

For more than 45 years, the Catholic Church in the United States has observed National Migration Week — remembering our immigrant roots and responding to migrants and refugees with prayer, accompaniment, and advocacy. The week culminates in the Universal Church's celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on the last Sunday of September.

Pope Leo XIV has chosen “*Even just one of these children*” as this year's theme, taken from Matthew 18:5 — “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” In announcing it, the Vatican explained that the Holy Father wished to voice the Church's concern for children directly caught up in migration, and

to recall our duty to welcome each one of them as the Gospel teaches. In solidarity with him, the U.S. bishops have adopted the same theme for National Migration Week.

As Franciscans, this theme lands close to home. Francis went out to meet the leper, and then crossed a battle line to meet the Sultan — stepping past every boundary his world had drawn between insider and outsider. Clare gathered the poor and made a home of San Damiano. To welcome one child is no small thing in our tradition: it is the whole Gospel in miniature, and it is the work of minority — standing with those who hold the least power, offering what we have, expecting nothing in return.

As Franciscans, we are invited this week to pray for migrant and refugee children and for the families who carry them across deserts, oceans, and paperwork; to learn what they face; and to let that knowledge move us toward concrete acts of welcome in our own communities and ministries.

Ways to Observe the Week

Pray

- [Booklet of Prayers](#) — USCCB prayers for migrants, refugees, and victims of human trafficking
- Join us on September 21, International Day of Peace, for our Zoom Rosary for Justice
- Mark September 27 by joining us on Zoom as we pray together on World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Reflect

- [Pope Leo XIV's Message for WDMR 2026](#) — released August 11; read a passage at prayer or at table
- [USCCB National Migration Week](#) page — overview, background, and updates

Learn

- [WDMR Webinar: Wednesday, September 23, 2:00 p.m. Eastern](#) — expert panelists on the international and domestic realities facing children in migration (registration required)
- [Justice for Immigrants 2026 Toolkit](#) — reflections, bulletin inserts, and community resources

Act

- [The Cabrini Pledge](#) — sign as a community and invite others to join • Franciscan Action Network: Immigration — advocacy rooted in the Franciscan charism, in collaboration with Justice for Immigrants and the Interfaith Immigration Coalition

“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” — Matthew 18:5

International Day of Peace (September 21st)

2026 Theme: Invest in Peace - For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day

On 21 September, the world marks the International Day of Peace. Today, amidst staggering volatility, the search for peace feels overwhelming—but it has never been more urgent. Peace is more than the absence of war; it is the foundation necessary to collectively tackle humanity's challenges. It is the lived experience of safety, dignity, opportunities and cooperation in our daily lives. Under the theme **Invest in Peace: For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day**, this year's International Day of Peace honors the 'everyday architects of peace'—people driving local action, laying the groundwork for stability, and building a lasting peace from the ground up.

Remember, peace isn't just built in conference rooms—it is shaped by everyone, everywhere, every day. Everyone, everywhere can do their part for peace. Take one small step for peace every day:

- Give your time to help someone else.
- Lend your voice to drive positive change.
- Host a [Peace Circle](#) - an intergeneration youth-led conversation on solutions.
- Use your platform to promote a cause or tell a story of peace and hope

Prayer Services

Rosary for Justice - Monday, September 21 7 P.M. ET

Zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87608935587?pwd=8xFGAit55taPlSX24nh03pdMuwyGmE.1>

Meeting ID: 876 0893 5587

Passcode: 492177 ---

One tap mobile +13126266799,,87608935587# US (Chicago) +16468769923,,87608935587# US (New York)

Prayer for World Day for Migrants and Refugees - Sunday, September 27 7 P.M. ET

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85425158191?pwd=muBB4zS34irg4hVjTFoN5bbtzzKiOB.1>

Meeting ID: 854 2515 8191

Passcode: 996868 ---

One tap mobile +16469313860,,85425158191# US +13017158592,,85425158191# US (Washington DC)

Peace and all good,
Teresa S. Redder, OFS
SKD Regional Minister

P.S. Enjoy the legacy of Fr. Dominic Monti, OFM, from the Franciscan Tradition website for the feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis that follows.

Feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis: Marked with the Wounds of Christ

By Dominic Montui, OFM
Published in Saints & Spirituality
September 14, 2026



Main image: El Greco, St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata (detail), Greek, 1586-1600, Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery. El Greco was a Secular Franciscan and the Stigmata was one of his favorite subjects.

On September 17, Franciscans celebrate the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis, to recall Francis's body being wondrously marked with the wounds of Christ.

What happened in La Verna?

A modern biographer, Andre Vauchez, says: "What happened on La Verna on an undetermined day in September 1224? . . . It is difficult to say with any precision, as Francis [himself] did not mention it in his writings, and he forbade from speaking about it those rare persons who came to observe the traces of the wounds. It is thus only after his death and before his burial that a certain number of witnesses were able to actually see them on his flesh."

Context of the Stigmata



We do know the setting. By 1224 Francis's health was rapidly failing, yet in late summer he decided to make an arduous journey from Assisi to a favorite hermitage on Mount La Verna in Tuscany. His purpose was to go apart at this critical stage in his life with a few companions to observe the "Lent of St. Michael" — a forty-day retreat devoted to prayer and fasting from the Assumption to the feast of the Archangel. This particular day, Francis had gone apart from the others to meditate more intently on the Passion of Christ when something happened.

This painting by Spanish artist José Benlliure y Gil (1855–1937) depicts St. Francis and Brother Leo in a cave at La Verna.

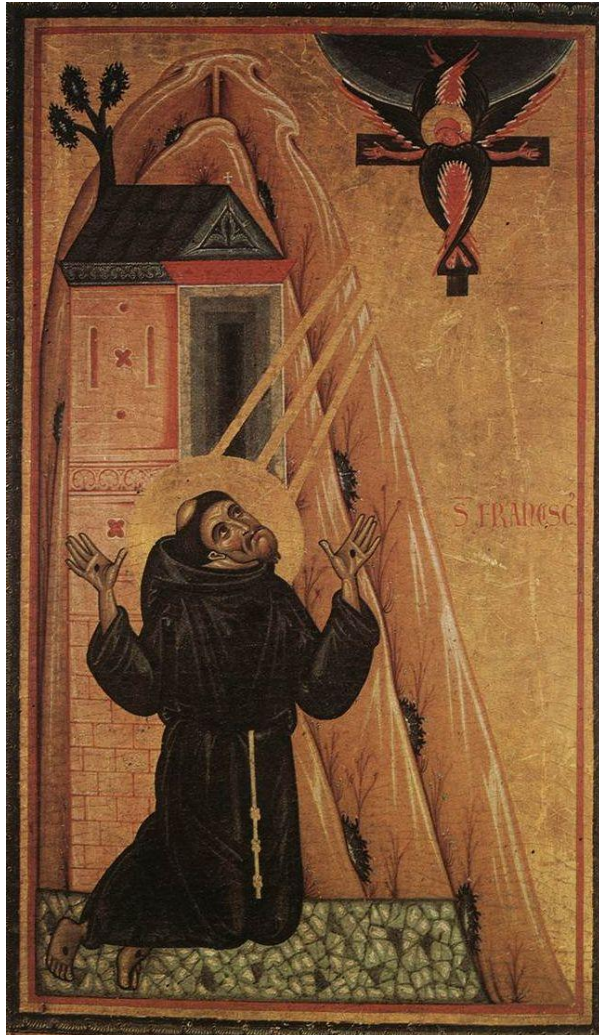
Classic Account of the Stigmata

The account provided by St. Bonaventure in his official life of 1260s, in turn based on the 1229 account in the first "Life of Saint Francis" by Thomas of Celano — only three years after Francis's death — became normative in the Franciscan tradition:

While he was praying one morning on the mountainside around the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, he saw the likeness of a Seraph, which had six fiery and glittering wings, descending from the grandeur of heaven. . . to a spot in the air near to the man of God. The Seraph not only appeared to have wings but also to be crucified. His hands and feet were extended and fastened to a cross. . . . Seeing this, Francis was overwhelmed. His mind flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He experienced an incomparable joy in the gracious way Christ appeared to him so wonderful and intimate, while the deplorable sight of being fastened to a cross pierced his soul with the sword of compassionate sorrow. He understood . . . that such a vision had been presented to his sight, that he might learn in advance that he had to be transformed totally, not by a martyrdom of the flesh but by the enkindling of his soul, into the manifest likeness of Christ Jesus crucified. The vision. . . inflamed him interiorly with a seraphic ardor and marked his flesh exteriorly with a likeness conformed to the Crucified; it was as if the liquefying power of fire preceded the impression of the seal. . . . the likeness of the Crucified in his side as well as in his hands and feet. . . . And so the angelic man, Francis, came down from the mountain bearing the likeness of the Crucified, depicted not on tablets of stone or on panels of wood, but engraved on parts of his flesh by the finger of the living God. (Bonaventure, *Minor Legend*, 6)



Giotto, Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata (detail), Italian, c. 1295–1300, Paris, Musée du Louvre. This image was based on St. Bonaventure's account.



Meaning of the Stigmata

It is clear that here Bonaventure, following Celano, is not giving a matter-of-fact account but presenting an experience in theological terms, incorporating Biblical symbolism: the image of a Crucified Man enfolded within the wings of a six-winged Seraph weaves together three Biblical references: John 3:13-17 (the Son of Man being lifted up, giving his life for the salvation of all); Numbers 21:4-8 (the Old Testament account of the saraph serpents as an image of healing); and Isaiah 6:1-2 (the six-winged Seraphim standing before the presence of God}. This powerful symbol, however, packed a simple but overwhelming message — as Ilia Delio puts it in her *Franciscan Prayer*, Francis came to understand that his experience of God would reach its fullness only "by allowing himself to be fully grasped by the compassionate love of the crucified Christ. For the sake of love he spared nothing and gave everything he had to the one he loved."

This image by Master of San Francesco Bardi from the second quarter of the 13th century is one of the earliest depictions of St. Francis receiving the Stigmata.

The Stigmata: from without or from within?

In his recent study, *Francis of Assisi: His Life, Vision and Companions* (London: Reaktion Books, 2023), Michael Cusato offers a profound suggestion:

What is the meaning of this complex image presented to us [in the sources]? First, most commentators

interpret the image as being that of a Seraph angel who then proceeds to imprint the five wounds of Christ's passion into onto the praying Francis. But this is inexact. The central image is indeed the Crucified Christ presented as lifted up. . . The Seraph, in other words, is not really an angelic figure; rather it is Christ himself, crucified for the healing of the human race. Hence, the central figure is Christ Crucified enfolded within the wings of an angel. . . the very person on whom Francis had been so profoundly meditating. . . . Second, such artistic representations — as moving as they can be — can also be unwittingly misleading. For such as depictions appear to show an angel zapping, as it were, the praying Francis in the same five points of his body, replicating the wounds of Christ Himself on the cross. . . However, my contention is the following: what occurred in this mystical rapture was that Francis had internalized so deeply and profoundly the image of the Crucified Christ on the cross that it literally, physically, exploded out of his psyche and onto his own flesh, marking him with the wounds of Christ, the stigmata. Hence, rather than the mystery being conceived as a movement from outside of Francis and onto him, the movement went, rather, from within him and out onto his own body. So powerful was his prayer and so visceral was his internalizing of the mystery of Christ's healing grace from the cross for the world that it made its way onto his own body. The stigmatization was, in other words, the paradigm of a psychosomatic experience. . . Francis became what and to whom he was praying." (Michael F. Cusato, pp. 181-182)



Stigmata (2020), Michael Reyes, OFM, paper; metal leaves, marble dust and oil on canvas 72" x 60". St. Bonaventure University, New York.



View of the rugged mountainside of Mount La Verna on which the sanctuary of the Stigmata stands (Photo: Mattana, Wikimedia Commons).

La Verna Today

La Verna remains an important place of prayer and retreat today. Click [here](#) to visit the website of the La Verna Franciscan friar community.