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*Let every creature in heaven, on earth, in the sea and in the depths,  
Give praise, glory, honor and blessing to Him Who suffered so much,  
Who has given and will give in the future every good, for He is our power and strength,  
Who alone is good, Who alone is almighty,  
Who alone is omnipotent, wonderful, glorious and Who alone is holy,  
worthy of praise and blessing through endless ages.  
Amen.*

**(Prayer of Saint Francis in the Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful)**

**In the year we celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Francis receiving the Stigmata, our daily excerpts from Franciscan Sources will be taken from those concerning the Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi. The daily excerpts for the next five months will be taken from the five considerations concerning the Stigmata of St. Francis as found in the Little Flower of St. Francis.**

**OF THE FIRST CONSIDERATION OF THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA**

**1 -** As to the first consideration, it must be known that, in 1224, St. Francis, being then forty-three years old, was inspired by God to depart from the Val di Spoleto and to go into Romagna, with Friar Leo his companion. As he went, he passed at the foot of the Castello di Montefeltro; where a great banquet and festival was then being held for the knighting of one of those Counts of Montefeltro; and St. Francis, hearing of this festival, and that many gentlefolk were gathered there from divers lands, said to Friar Leo: "Let us go up to this feast, since by God's help we shall gather some good spiritual fruit" - **When we try to make an impression, that's the impression we make.**

**2 -** Now among the other gentlemen, who had come there from that district to that ceremonial, was a great and rich gentleman of Tuscany, by name Messer Orlando of Chiusi in Casentino. By reason of the marvelous things he had heard concerning the sanctity and miracles of St. Francis, with great devotion and very great desire he went to the festival to see him and to hear him preach.- **The great thing in this world is not so much where we are but in what direction we are moving.**

**3 -** St. Francis having arrived at this town, entered in and went to the piazza, where were assembled a multitude of those gentlemen; and, in fervor of spirit, he climbed upon a little wall and began to preach, taking as the text of his sermon these words in the vulgar tongue: *So great the bliss I hope to see, That every pain delights me.*- **The manner of giving is worth more than the gift.**

**4 -** And from this text, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he preached so devoutly and so profoundly, proving the truth of the saying by divers sufferings and torments of holy apostles and

of holy martyrs, by the severe penances of holy confessors, and by the many tribulations and temptations of holy virgins and of other saints, that every man stood with eyes and mind fixed upon him, and listened to him as if it were an angel of God that spoke. Among these men, the said Messer Orlando, being touched in the heart by God, through the marvelous preaching of St. Francis, was minded to consult and speak with him after the sermon concerning the affairs of his soul. – **Hatred does more damage to the one in whom it is stored than the one on whom it is poured.**

**5** - Wherefore, when the preaching was done, he drew St. Francis aside and said unto him: "O father, I would take counsel with thee touching the salvation of my soul". St. Francis made answer: "Well content am I; but go this morning and do honor your friends who have invited you to this festival, and dine with them. After you have dined, we will talk together as long as you please". Messer Orlando, therefore, went to dinner. After dinner, he returned to St. Francis and laid before him fully all the affairs of his soul and took counsel with him concerning the same. – **God's grace within me and God's strength behind me can overcame any hurdle ahead of me.**

**6** - And finally this Messer Orlando said to St. Francis: "I have in Tuscany a mountain most apt for devotion, which is called the mountain of Alvernia, exceeding solitary, and passing well fitted for any who wish to do penance in a place remote from people, and desire a life of solitude. If it pleases you, gladly would I give it to you and to your companions for the salvation of my soul." – **If you judge people, you have no time to love them.**

**7** - St. Francis, hearing so liberal an offer of a thing which he desired so much, was very happy. Praising and thanking first God, and then Messer Orlando, he spoke to him saying: "Messer Orlando, when you return to your home, I will send you some of my companions, and you shall show them that mountain. If it seems to them fitted for prayer and for the doing of penance, even from this moment do I accept your charitable offer". – **A simple judge of my character is how I treat a person who can do absolutely nothing for me.**

**8** - And, when he had thus spoken, St. Francis departed; and after he had finished his journey he returned to Santa Maria degli Angeli. Messer Orlando likewise, when the festivities for the making of that knight ended, returned to his castle, which was called Chiusi, and which was distant a mile from Alvernia. – **Reason led me to the mountain's base and faith lifted me to the mountain's top.**

**9** - St. Francis, then, having returned to Santa Maria degli Angeli, sent two of his companions to the said Messer Orlando, who, when they arrived, were welcomed with very great joy and charity: and, desiring to show them the mountain of Alvernia, he sent with them fifty armed men, to defend them from the wild beasts. Thus accompanied, those friars went up into the mountain and explored it diligently. At last they came unto a part of the mountain well suited for devotion and for contemplation. There was also some level ground. It was there they chose for their habitation and for that of St. Francis. With the aid of those armed men who accompanied and defended them on the journey, they made a little cell with the boughs of trees, and, in the name of God, they accepted and took possession of the mountain of Alvernia and of the Place of the friars in that mountain, and departed and returned to St. Francis. – **Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.**

**10** - When they arrived, they told him how and in what manner they had taken the Place on the mountain of Alvernia, well fitted for prayer and contemplation. Now, when St. Francis heard this

news, he rejoiced greatly, and, giving praise and thanks to God, spoke to those friars with a joyful face, and said: - **Feed your faith, and your doubts will starve to death.**

**11** - "My sons, we are drawing close to our forty days' fast of St. Michael the Archangel; and I firmly believe that it is the will of God that we keep this fast in the mountain of Alverna, which by Divine dispensation hath been made ready for us, so that we may, through penance, merit from Christ the consolation of consecrating that blessed mountain to the honor and glory of God and of His glorious mother, the Virgin Mary, and of the holy angels".- **We become what we think.**

**12** - And then, having said these words, St. Francis took with him Friar Masseo da Marignano of Assisi, who was a man of great wisdom and eloquence, and Friar Angelo Tancredi da Rieti, who was a man of very noble birth, and who in the world had been a knight, and Friar Leo, who was a man of very great simplicity and purity; for the which St. Francis loved him very much. And with these three friars St. Francis betook himself to prayer, and commended himself and his companions just mentioned to the prayers of the friars who remained behind, and he set out with those three in the name of Jesus Christ the Crucified, to go to the mountain of Alvernia; - **Who stops being better stops being good.**

**13** - and, as he went, St. Francis called one of those three companions, Friar Masseo, and said to him thus: "You, Friar Masseo, shall be our Guardian and Superior on this journey. While we are going and abiding together, and we will observe our custom: that either we will say the office, or we will speak of God, or we will keep silence; and we will take no thought beforehand, neither of eating, nor of drinking, nor of sleeping; - **One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore.**

**14** - but when the time to rest for the night arrives, we will beg a little bread, and will lodge and repose ourselves in that place which God shall make ready for us." Then those three companions bowed their heads, and, signing themselves with the sign of the cross, went forward; and the first evening they came to a Place of friars, and there they lodged. - **What we usually pray to God is not that his will be done, but that he approve ours.**

**15** - The second evening, by reason of the bad weather and because they were weary, they were not able to reach any Place of friars, or any walled town, nor any hamlet; and when night and the bad weather overtook them, they sought shelter in an abandoned and disused church, and there they laid down to rest, and, while his companions slept, St. Francis gave himself to prayer; - **Jesus Christ will be Lord of all, or he will not be Lord at all.**

**16** - and lo! in the first watch of the night, there came a great multitude of most ferocious demons with very great noise and tumult, and began vehemently to give him battle and annoyance; for one plucked him on this side and another on that; one pulled him down and another up; one menaced him with one thing and another accused him of another; and thus in divers manners did they seek to disturb him in his prayer; but they were not able, because God was with him. - **People who fall love with themselves do not need to fear rivals.**

**17** - Wherefore, when St. Francis had borne these assaults of the demons for some time, he began to cry with a loud voice: "O damned spirits, you can do nothing save that which the hand of God permits you to do; and therefore, in the name of God Omnipotent I tell you that you may do to my body whatever is permitted to you by God, and I will bear it willingly; for I have no greater enemy than this body of mine. Wherefore, if you take vengeance for me upon mine enemy, you do me a very great service." Thereupon the demons, with very great impetus and fury, laid hold of him and

began to hale him about the church and to do him much greater injury and annoyance than at first.- **Humanity must put an end to war or war will put an end to humanity.**

**18** - And then St. Francis commenced to cry aloud and said: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I thank Thee for the great honor and charity which Thou show me; for it is a token of much love when the Lord thoroughly punishes His servant for all his faults in this world, to the end that he may not be punished in the next. – **Only when we learn to see the invisible will we learn to do the impossible.**

**19** - And I am ready to endure joyfully every pain and every adversity which Thou, my God, may desire to send me for my sins." Then the demons, being put to confusion and conquered by his constancy and patience, left him, - **Be careful how you live, you may be the only Bible some persons ever read.**

**20** - and St. Francis, in fervor of spirit, went forth from the church into a wood which was nearby, and there he gave himself to prayer; and, with supplications and tears and beatings of his breast, sought to find Jesus Christ, the Spouse and delight of his soul. And when, at last, he found Him in the secret places of his soul, he now spoke reverently to Him as his Lord; now answered Him as his Judge; now sought Him as his Father; and now talked with Him as to a Friend. – **Faith is like love, it cannot be forced.**

**21** - On that night and in that wood, his companions, after they were awakened and had come there to hear and consider what he was doing, they saw and heard him, with tears and cries, devoutly beseeching the Divine mercy for sinners. Then too he was heard and seen to bewail the Passion of Christ with a loud voice as if he saw the same with his bodily eyes. On that same night they saw him praying, with his arms held in the form of a cross, uplifted for a great space and raised from the ground, surrounded by a resplendent cloud. – **Evangelization is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.**

**22** - And on this wise, in these holy exercises, he passed the whole of that night without sleeping; and thereafter, in the morning, because they knew that, by reason of the fatigues of the night which he had passed without sleep, St. Francis was very weak in body and could ill have travelled on foot, his companions went to a poor laborer of that district, and besought him for the love of God to lend his little ass to St. Francis, their father, who could not go on foot. – **One of the greatest necessities is to discover creative solitude.**

**23** - Now, when this man heard them make mention of Friar Francis, he asked them: "Are you some of the friars of that friar of Assisi about whom so much good is spoken?" The friars answered: "Yes"; and that it was in truth for him that they asked the beast of burden. Then that good man made ready the little ass, with great devotion and diligence, and led it to St. Francis with great reverence and made him mount it; and they continued their journey; and he with them, behind his little ass. – **People who live solely for themselves are eventually corrupted by their own company.**

**24** - And, when they had gone some distance, that villain said to St. Francis: "Tell me, are you Friar Francis of Assisi?" And St. Francis answered him, "Yes." "Strive, then (said the villain), to be as good as all folk hold you to be, for there are many which have great faith in you; and therefore I admonish you, that thou fall not short of that which men hope to find you." – **God doesn't want our deeds; God wants the love that prompts them.**

**25** - Hearing these words, St. Francis did not disdain to be admonished by a villain, and said: "What beast is this that admonishes me?" as many many proud fellows who wear the friar's habit would say to-day; but immediately St. Francis cast himself to earth from off the ass, and kneeled down before that villain and kissed his feet, and thanked him humbly, because he had deigned to admonish him so charitably. Then the villain, together with the companions of St. Francis, raised him up from off the ground with great devotion, and set him upon the ass again, and continued their journey. – **Life must be dedicated to a destiny in order to have a meaning.**

**26** - And when they had gone perhaps half way up the mountain; because the heat was very great and the ascent difficult, this villain became exceeding thirsty, so that he began to cry aloud behind St. Francis, saying: "Alas! I am dying of thirst; if I have nothing to drink I shall presently faint." Because of this St. Francis dismounted from his ass and betook himself to prayer; and he remained upon his knees with his hands raised to heaven until he knew by revelation that God had heard him. – **Tell me whom you love and I will tell you who you are.**

**27** - And then St. Francis said to the villain: "Run, go quickly to that rock, and there thou shall find living water, which Jesus Christ, in this hour, has of His mercy made to issue from that rock". So he went to the place which St. Francis had shown him, and found there a fair spring which had come forth from the hard rock at the prayer of St. Francis, and he drank copiously thereof, and was comforted. And it was clearly seen that that fountain was miraculously produced by God through the prayers of St. Francis, because neither before nor after was there ever found, in that place, a spring of water, nor any living water near that place for a great distance round about. – **The value of persistent prayer is not that God will hear us but that we will finally hear God.**

**28** - St. Francis, with his companions and with the villain, gave thanks to God for the miracle and continued their journey. When they drew near to the foot of the peak of Alvernia itself, it pleased St. Francis to rest himself a little beneath an oak which was in that place and which is there yet; and, as he sat beneath it, St. Francis began to consider the situation of the place and of the country thereabout; and, while he was thus considering, lo! a great multitude of birds came there from divers parts, with singing and beating of wings, all showed very great joy and gladness; and they surrounded St. Francis so that some alighted upon his head, and some upon his shoulders, and some upon his arms, and some in his bosom, and some about his feet. – **Saints are persons who make it easier for others to believe in God.**

**29** - Now when his companions and the villain saw this they marveled greatly; whereupon St. Francis, all joyful in spirit, spoke to them saying: "I believe, most dear brothers, that it is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that we dwell in this solitary mountain, because our sisters and brothers the birds show such joy of our coming". And when he had said these words, they rose up and continued their journey; and finally came unto the place which his companions had chosen at the first. And this suffices for the first consideration, on how St. Francis came to the holy mountain of Alverna. – **God does not ask for our ability or our inability, but our availability.**

## Have a Fruitful and Happy Lent