



## The Crucifix of San Damiano

*How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and simply to be in God's presence! How much good it does us when God once more touches our lives and impels us to share new life! What then happens to us is that "we speak of what we have seen and heard." 1Jn 1:3*

Pope Francis' *The Joy of the Gospel* #264, 2013

**Original Crucifix now in the Basilica of Santa Chiara, Assisi**

### *The Prayer of St. Francis before the San Damiano Crucifix*

**Leader:** Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart, and give me true **faith**, certain **hope**, and perfect **charity**, **sense and knowledge**, Lord, that I may carry out your holy and true command.

## The Crucifix Itself

This 12<sup>th</sup> Century icon was painted (written) by a Syrian monk on a background of walnut wood perhaps 100 years before Francis of Assisi was born. The icon speaks to us of the profound mystery of Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. It is unique in the world as it expresses the total and universal Paschal Mystery of Jesus, inviting everyone to participate in it in a lively and lived faith. The color **red**, symbolic of love, found all about the icon, dramatizes the victory of **Light and Love** over darkness. The artist was clearly influenced by the **Gospel of John**.

One "reads" the icon in the light of the *crown of glory* around the head of Jesus which replaces the crown of thorns. In identifying the feelings of the other persons on this painting, we note that they are companions with Jesus who is already *glorified*. Of course *they are smiling!*

**Leader:** From the Letter of St. John we pray:

**Side One:** This is what we proclaim to you; what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes.

**Side Two:** What we have looked upon and our hands have touched.

**ALL:** *We speak of the word of LIFE.*

2.

**Side One:** This life became visible; we have seen and bear witness to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was present to the Father, and became visible to us.

**Side Two:** What we have seen and heard we proclaim in turn to you, so that you may share life with us.

**ALL:** *This kinship of ours is with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Reading**

The word of God from the **Gospel of John** as reflected on the san Damiano Crucifix

No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart who has made God known. ***All that came to be had life in him.*** And that life was the light of all. A light shines in the dark. A light that darkness could not overpower.

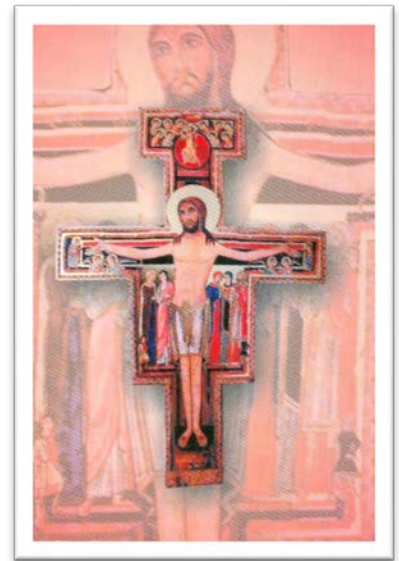
***"I am the light of the world."*** I, the light, have come into the world, so that whoever believes in me need not stay in the dark anymore.

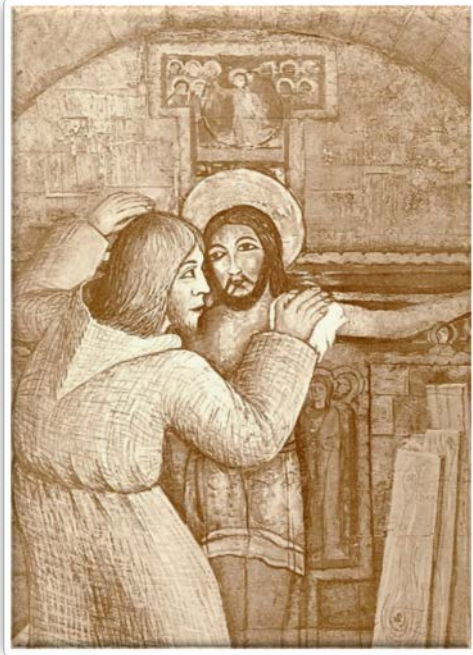
***"I am the vine. You are the branches."*** whoever remains in me, with me in them, bears fruit in plenty. One can have no greater love than to lay down one's life for their friends. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.

I have given them the glory you gave me ... that the world will realize that it was you who sent me, ***and that I have loved them as much as you loved me ...*** Father, the world has not known you, but I have made your name known to them, and will continue to make it known, ***so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.***

***"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."*** No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. ***From this moment you know God and have seen God.***

Jn 1:18; 1:4-5; 7:12; 12:45; 15:5; 15:13; 13:35; 17:22-24, 26; 14:6-7.





## FRANCIS SPEAKS

from *I Francis* by Carlo Carretto, pp.14-17

One day as I gazed at the crucifix I had the altogether clear impression that the lips were moving. At the same moment I heard a voice:

*“Francis, repair my house! You can see it is all in ruins.”*

I shall not attempt to convey the effect this had upon me. It was like a message linking me to the invisible world, and it sealed a long period of wavering, of enthusiasm, and of searching.

I felt permeated by an infinite sweetness, and I went up to the crucifix to kiss it. I was all alone, and I was not afraid to leap up on the altar to embrace Jesus with my whole self. I do not know how long I stayed there ... touching, stroking, caressing, and contemplating Christ – like someone passionately in love.

I must confess that in that moment I was thunderstruck at the mystery of **Christ's Incarnation**. Just as it had been the poor who had been my inspiration, so now it was the idea of the **incarnation of God** which becoming my only answer to all the “whys” I had posed myself up to that time in my life.

Jesus was the epitome of all: in him heaven and earth resolved all their contradictions in one stupendous, vital act of divine unification, and satisfied all the thirsts of humanity ...

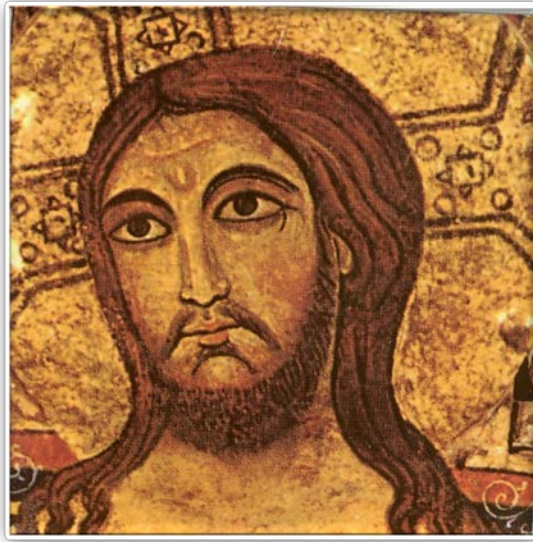
**Jesus' cross** was humanity's happiness, **love's answer to all the whys**, the resolution of every conflict, the overcoming of every tension and polarization, God's victory over death.

I clamored down from the altar and began to dance, barefoot, on the floor of the Church of San Damiano ... **that crucifix** had explained to me the mystery of the whole universe, and ... helped me to enter into the truth of Christ and of things invisible.

**Quiet Reflection**

4.

**Leader:** As we listen to this beautiful message from St Clare who prayed before this very San Damiano crucifix for over forty years of her life at San Damiano, we reverence the same Gospel call with gratitude that our God continues to give: A correct **faith**, certain **hope**, and perfect **charity**.



*“Gaze Upon The Lord”*

Gaze upon the Lord, gaze upon his face,  
Gaze upon the one who holds you in his embrace.  
Gaze upon his life, gaze upon his love.  
Gaze upon his coming poor from heaven above.

Look upon your Lord. Look upon his way.  
Look upon his heart which open to each day.  
Though he was despised, the lowest of all men,  
Look upon his sacred cross which brings to life again,

If you open to life’s pain, then with him you shall reign.  
And allow your heart to weep, then with him you’ll rejoice.  
And open to his cross, the wounds of each day’s love,

then you'll know the splendor of his kingdom above.

5.

Gaze upon his life, gaze upon his love.

Gaze upon his coming poor

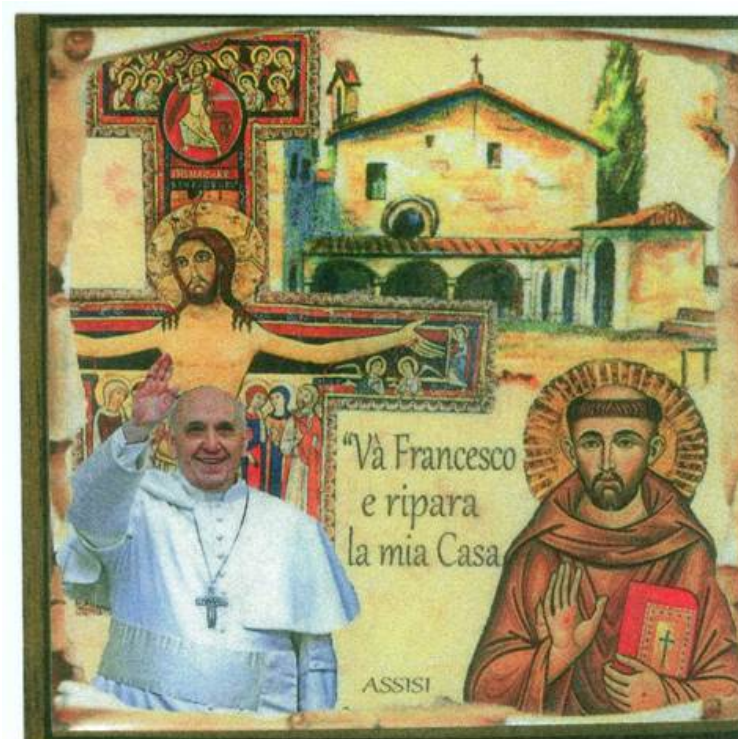
From eav'n above, from heav'n above.

Source: *Taste the Hidden Sweetness*. Briege O'Hare osc

1991. Poor Clare Monastery, Upper Faughart, Dundalk, Co.Louth Ireland

[www.Pooeclairesireland.org](http://www.Pooeclairesireland.org)

CONCLUSION: Special sharing from words of Pope Francis in *The Joy of The Gospel* - recognizing the traces of God's Spirit in events great and small ... while pointing out **new** paths for the Church's journey in years to come.



*Art of a tile designed in 2013, Assisi, Italy*