

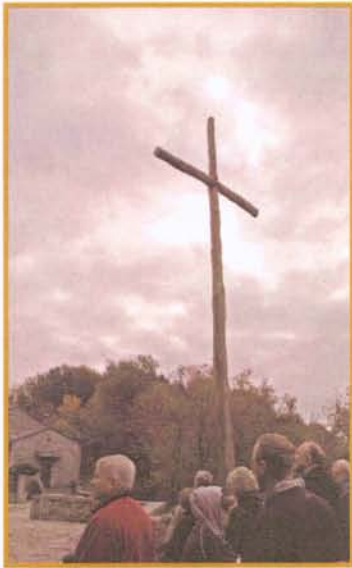
# The Spirit of Secular Franciscan Life

## Newsletter for Secular Franciscans - Assumption BVM Province

September 2006 - No. 6

### Revelation to Francis about Mt. La Verna

September 17, Feast of the Stigmata



The cross overlooking the Tuscan Valley at La Verna. Photo: A. Paratore

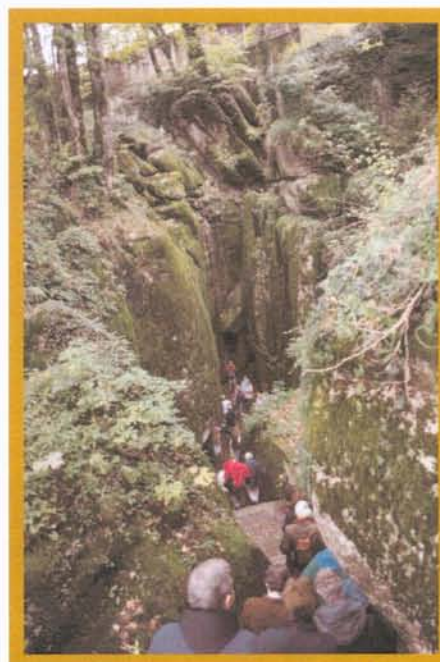
La Verna is a mountain in the Tuscan region of central Italy, about 80 miles north of Assisi. It is truly holy ground. In 1213 Count Orlando of Chiusi, a wealthy nobleman, donated the mountain to Francis and his brothers as a place suitable for prayer, penance, peace, rest and all things that might nourish the spirit. Arnaldo Fortini's descriptive account, however, would make one wonder how suitable a place La Verna was. He writes:

La Verna. It is a mountain surmounted by an immense cliff, rising vertically, cut off from the rest of the mountain on all sides. ...It is a mass of stone surmounted by furious storm clouds. A retreat for prayer in the harshness of winter. An altar in the heart of holy Italy, between its two seas, between the sources of two of its immortal rivers, whose waters have mirrored ages of iron and bronze. ...In vain one searches for the peace that Orlando had promised to Francis. The whole gigantic crag seems tormented, wounded, and broken in some horrendous convulsion. Violent passion made grievously immobile lurks in the fearsome rock that is constantly assaulted by storms, rock that seems of another world. ...This fortress does not bring to mind angelic ecstasies. It is more a setting for a battle of titans. Covering the rocky rampart, which on all sides plunges downward in a straight line, are fearful bastions, enormous towers, inaccessible citadels, all made by the bedlam of twisted rock. (A. Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, pp 551-52).

On Francis's first visit to La Verna in 1213 he received a revelation about this mountain that contributes to the mysticism of this holy place. The description is similar to Fortini's account and relates well to Francis's experience in September of 1224 when he received the wounds of Christ on his flesh. The text comes from "The Second Consideration of the Stigmata" found in *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*.

A few days later St. Francis was standing beside that cell (which Orlando made for him), gazing at the form of the mountain and marveling at the great chasms and openings in the massive rocks. And he began to pray, and then it was revealed to him by God that those striking chasms had been made in a miraculous way at the hour of Christ's Passion when, as the Gospel says, "the rocks split." And God wanted this to be manifested in a special way here on Mount La Verna in order to show that the Passion of Christ was to be renewed on that mountain in the soul of St. Francis by love and compassion and in his body by the imprinting of the Stigmata.

*St. Francis of Assisi, Omnibus of Sources, 1436.*



Pilgrims descending into a crevice in Mt. La Verna. Photo: A. Paratore



The Sasso Speco, La Verna  
Photo: A. Paratore

Some might consider these words as mere fiction, the creation of an imaginative thinker. Or, one might choose to accept them from a faith perspective. On visiting La Verna one can either walk down to the Sasso Speco (The Projecting Rock) below the main part of the sanctuary, or climb to the top of the mountain. The impression one will have is exactly as that described above.

The mountain truly seems torn apart by some massive convulsion, with rocks split and large crevices and dangerous caverns. If you have the privilege to visit La Verna, it is important to allow yourself to experience the mountain, to enter into it spiritually and mystically. This mountain shared in Jesus' Passion on Calvary. Francis shared in Jesus' Passion on La Verna.

## Invitation to All Fraternities

There are approximately 25 SFO Fraternities bonded to the Assumption BVM Province, located in the following States: Wisconsin, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Connecticut, New Jersey, Ohio and New York. Perhaps you might be interested in sharing events from your fraternities that would enrich us all.

- Is there a special ministry to tell us about? Note the information in the next column for the Blessing of Animals on September 17.
- How have you found yourselves challenged in a way that has deepened your Franciscan commitment?
- How are vocations to Secular Franciscan Life?

If you have a bit of news or activity from your region or State, let me know and I'll do my best to include it in subsequent newsletters.



## Circle Rocking "S" Children's Farm

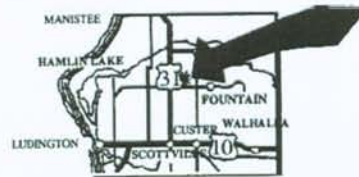
5487 Tuttle Road  
Free Soil, MI 49411  
231-462-3732

In the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi, you and your pets are invited to the.....

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Blessing of the Animals

Farm Olympics & Silent Auction

Sunday, September 17, 2006  
at 1:30 Sharp  
Rain or Shine



Take US 31 to Fountain Rd, Go East 2 Miles,  
See Signs

## SFO Pilgrimage

As mentioned previously, an attempt will be made to plan an SFO Pilgrimage either in 2007 or 2008. November through March have the lowest costs.

I continue to encourage Secular Franciscans to make a pilgrimage to Assisi. It is enriching beyond imagination. Contact the Pilgrimage office for information.

### Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs

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