



# The Pilgrim's Companion:

## Sharing the Franciscan Journey

October, 2023

### Contemplative Corner

..... ❖ .....

He saw that it was a man and yet a Seraph with six wings...The face was beautiful beyond all earthly beauty, and it smiled gently upon Francis. Conflicting emotions filled his heart, for though the vision brought great joy, the sight of the suffering and crucified figure stirred him to deepest sorrow. Pondering what this vision might mean, he finally understood that by God's providence he would be made like to the crucified Christ not by a bodily martyrdom but by conformity in mind and heart. Then as the vision disappeared, it left not only a greater ardour of love in the inner man but no less marvelously marked him outwardly with the stigmata of the Crucified.

- St. Bonaventure



St. Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata by Giotto di Bondone:



### Embracing Solitude: Journey to La Verna

As we step into the heart of autumn, we share a reflection that evokes a deeper understanding of the gifts found in solitude. Laura Carloni, parishioner and assistant for Religious Education, Confirmation and Liturgical Ministries at the Old Mission St. Ines, California, recounts her experience of solitude during a Franciscan pilgrimage. One year later, as the Feast of the Stigmata was celebrated, Laura took time to put her experience into words.

Her narrative transports us to La Verna, a place of faith and reverence for Franciscans, where St. Francis received the stigmata amid an environment of rugged solitude, soaring cliffs, tumbled rocks, and mountain weather. The impact of Laura's moment of solitude by the Stigmata Chapel, coupled with the peace she found in the prayerful meditation of the Rosary upon her return, created a pilgrimage moment that continues to unfold.

As you read, may you find a gentle reminder of the peace beyond understanding that may be found in solitude and the sacred places in your life. On pilgrimage, the spirituality of La Verna offers an opportunity to deepen awareness of faith and enter into life's mysteries. You are invited to take a moment to travel with Laura, and perhaps, find a place of solitude that resonates with you today.

Wishing you Peace and Good on the journey.

Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs  
 Journeying together in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare  
 Deepening one's life in the Spirit

# Embracing Solitude: A Pilgrim's Journey to La Verna by Laura Carloni

It has been almost a year since I took part in the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program to Rome and Assisi. Many memories of the pilgrimage were forefront in my mind this year when the feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis, approached. This date is also the Founding Day of my parish: Old Mission Santa Inés, in Solvang, CA. As we celebrated the 219th birthday of our Mission, I was also remembering my time in La Verna, where St. Francis received the stigmata.



I am used to having "alone time" in my everyday life. There are not a lot of opportunities to be alone on pilgrimage as new friendships are forged through the shared experiences planned for each day. I did not realize I missed my alone time until we traveled to the top of the mountain at La Verna. When we were given free time, it was more important for me to sit in silence by the large cross in the courtyard, than explore the grounds. The day was capped off with a Mass in the chapel of the Stigmata.

The moment I entered the chapel, I experienced an overwhelming feeling that I still cannot put into words. We were invited to put anything we wanted blessed on the altar before Mass. I put my new rosary, purchased in Assisi, on the altar and sat right by the framed area in the floor where St. Francis received the stigmata. The overwhelming feeling stayed with me throughout the Mass and I felt that "alone time" I was looking for.

After Mass, I picked up my rosary from the altar and left the chapel as quickly as possible. The only word that described how I felt was "full." There was no room or inclination to talk to anyone. I had to stay alone. I was one of the first ones back on our bus, which was very unusual because I was usually at the back of the group during our walks. Our group was small enough that each of us had our own seat on the bus. This was fine with me, and as we returned to Assisi, I was ready to interact with my fellow pilgrims once again.

When I returned home from pilgrimage, I began to pray the rosary, something my family did not do as I was growing up.

I still cannot put into words how I felt on that wondrous day in La Verna, but as I prepared for Old Mission Santa Inés' Founding Day Mass, I brought my rosary as the readings for the Mass were from the Mass of the Stigmata. It came to me that maybe, on that day in La Verna, that overwhelming feeling was leading me to pray the rosary. I try to pray the rosary each day. I have found it leads me to answers to any problems I am having, as well as giving me solace during the tough and confusing times. It also gives me the peace and especially the "alone time" that I need to pray and connect with our Lord.

The memories of the pilgrimage will remain with me for a long, long time, especially when I pray the rosary.

Thank you, St. Francis. Peace and Good.

## Franciscan Happenings

Click on pictures for online links

Heavenly Earth:  
St. Francis at La Verna  
Illustrated online volume



Upcoming: Join us for the 800th  
Anniversary of Christmas at Greccio



Reflection: St. Francis and  
the Gift of Greccio



Join us: Pilgrimage to Holy  
Land and Sinai



Connect with us on:



[franciscanpilgrimages.com](http://franciscanpilgrimages.com)



(414) 427-0570

P.O. Box 321490, Franklin, WI 53132

General Questions can be sent to [InfoFPP@thefranciscans.net](mailto:InfoFPP@thefranciscans.net)

Do you have a story or picture to share?

Send to:

Editor: Mary Beth Wisniewski

Public Relations/Marketing

[mbwisniewski@franciscanpilgrimages.com](mailto:mbwisniewski@franciscanpilgrimages.com)