



# The Pilgrim's Companion:

## Sharing the Franciscan Journey

November, 2023

### Contemplative Corner

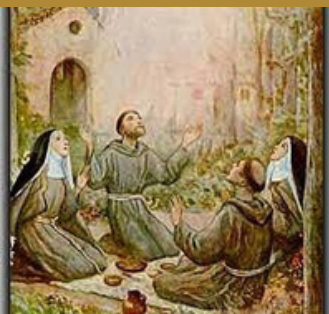
#### Clare and Francis Share a Meal

While Francis and Clare were rapt, with eyes and hands raised to heaven, the people of Assisi saw St. Mary of the Angels, and the wood nearby, as if it were on fire...

But when they reached the Place they saw that there was no fire at all; and they found St. Francis and St. Clare and their companions rapt in God through contemplation, and sitting around a lowly meal.

Then they understood it was the fire of Divine love which had enkindled the souls of those holy friars and holy nuns.

After a long time, St. Francis and St. Clare, together with the others, returned to themselves, greatly comforted with spiritual food; and so, that blessed meal being ended, St. Clare, well accompanied, returned to St. Damiano.



Adapted from [The Little Flowers of St. Francis](#)



### Embracing Gratitude

As we move through November, we find ourselves in the season of giving thanks. It is a time to reflect on the blessings that grace our lives and express our gratitude for the moments that define our journey.

In the spirit of this season, our thoughts turn to the spiritual sanctuary of St. Mary of the Angels - the Portiuncula - a place that holds profound significance in the Franciscan tradition. The Portiuncula, or "Little Portion," was both chapel and gathering place for Francis: it was a sacred space where he discovered his vocation, grew the Franciscan family, and ultimately, where he bid farewell to this earthly life.

This sacred ground also played a pivotal role in St. Clare's Franciscan journey. It was there that she embarked on a life of Gospel living and, later, shared a memorable meal with St. Francis (see the Contemplative Corner).

As we gather in the spirit of Thanksgiving, let's take a moment to recall our "Portiuncula" – our own special place of grace in life. And, as we remember the profound gratitude that St. Francis had for the Portiuncula and for the divine grace that transformed his life, may our hearts be equally filled with gratitude for the sacred spaces and grace that enrich our journey.

May this season of Thanksgiving bless you abundantly.  
Peace and Good!

Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs

Journeying together in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

Deepening one's life in the Spirit

Francis was especially fond of St. Mary of the Angels – the “little portion” – a tiny chapel, hidden away in the woods and marshes near Assisi: “He loved this spot more than any other in the world. It was here that he began his religious life in a very small way; it was here he made such extraordinary progress, and it was here that he came to a happy end.” (Major Life of St. Bonaventure II.8)

Although blessed Francis was aware that the kingdom of heaven was established in every place on earth and believed that the grace of God could everywhere be given to the faithful, he learned from experience that St. Mary of the Angels was filled with richer grace and often visited by celestial spirits. So he often said to the friars, “My sons, see that you never abandon this place! If you are driven out of one door, re-enter by another, for this place is holy indeed; it is the dwelling-place of Christ and His Virgin Mother.” (Mirror of Perfection, 83)

On February 24, 1208 – The Feast of St. Matthias – Francis attended Mass in the Portiuncula. During the Mass he was aware of an interior voice responding to the words of the Gospel. After Mass Francis asked the celebrant to explain the meaning of the Gospel. Then Francis responded: “This is what I wish, this is what I seek, this is what I long for with all my heart!” (First Life, 22) At that, Francis stripped himself of all superfluities and identified himself with the Gospel.

The Portiuncula was the cradle of the Franciscan Order, and the focal point for the brotherhood. Try to eliminate all the accretions of the centuries and reconstruct the Chapel of the Portiuncula, the huts of the friars, and the living arrangements. Consider early Franciscan life, both within community and as individuals, and reflect:

How is the Franciscan way of life meaningful for me?

What places, and gifts of grace, should I never abandon, and always return to in thanks and praise?



And as you go, preach the message, 'The kingdom is at hand!'...Take no gold, nor silver, nor money in your belts, no bag for your journey...



## Franciscan Resources

Click on pictures for online links

Ready to book your 2024 Pilgrimage?



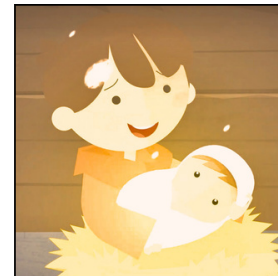
Catch up with Pope Francis: Read: Laudate Deum



Reflection: St. Francis and the Gift of Greccio



Teach Kids: Online video - Francis and the Christmas Creche



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