



Homily in the Solemnity of the Impression of the Stigmata of St. Francis

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La Verna, 17th September 2026

HE KEPT NOTHING FOR HIMSELF

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

St Paul tells us what he boasts: "Let there be no glory for me except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14). Furthermore, he adds a word that resounds right here today: "I bear the stigmata of Jesus in my body" (Gal 6:17).

It is surprising: St Paul glories not in what he possesses, but in the cross; not in what makes him great, but in what strips him of himself. Francis had also learned this, and he writes it: in nothing can we glory, except in our infirmities and in carrying the Lord's Cross every day (cf. Am II, 8: FF 146). Everything else - the gifts, the works, even the virtues - is not ours. It is received.

St Francis came to this slowly. He understood that the first sin is to appropriate oneself: he eats from the tree, he says, he who appropriates his own will (cf. Am II, 3: FF 146). Adam holds back, takes for himself. St Francis learns to do the opposite. He has returned his father's riches. He has left the government of the Order. He has recognized that the fraternity was not his. Little by little, St Francis learned to live with his hands open.

It is here, on this mountain, he receives the greatest gift that a man can receive: the wounds of his Lord, the seal of the Beloved in the flesh. We would expect that St Francis would be proud of this, at least of this. That he would tell it. That he would guard it as the summit of his life.

But no. In the Testament, where he mentions the lepers, the priests, the brothers, the Church, he does not say a word about the Stigmata. He does not boast about them. He does not put them at the centre of the story of himself.

That is the point, dear ones. The man who holds nothing back does not even hold grace. He does not even hold back his wounds. The Stigmata are not the reward of a holy life. They are the free gift of the Beloved to a man whose hands are now open.

This is what he writes to the friars in the Rule: "Let us restore all goods to the Lord God the Most High and Supreme, and let us acknowledge that all good is his" (Rnb XVII, 17: FF 49). And in the letter to the whole Order he dares to say more: "Keep nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that he who gives himself to you in whole may receive you" (cf. Lord II, 29: FF 221).



Nothing of yourself keep for yourselves. Not only things: yourselves. It is the translation of that "without anything of your own" that is at the head of our Rule. It is not a norm on goods. It is the form of a life.

One thing still remained his: the body. That flesh that the Stigmata had marked.

Eight hundred years ago, in these days, St Francis descended from La Verna and walked towards what would be one of his last steps. On the 3rd October, he asked to be laid naked on the bare ground. He wanted to die with nothing on, like Christ on the cross, as he had come into the world. He gave back his last property, his own body, his own death - . And he had already sung it: "Praised be you, my Lord, through our sister bodily death."

This is the link between the Stigmata and the *Transitus*. At La Verna, the Lord can imprint his seal on St Francis, because St Francis no longer wants to possess even himself. The seal received in the flesh and the flesh restored to the earth are the same movement. It is today's Gospel: "Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it" (Lk 9:24).

So we, brothers and sisters? The temptation has not changed. It is Adam's temptation: to hold back. We friars sometimes hold on to homes and works, to our role and reputation, our need to succeed and to count. But we can all cling to what makes us feel safe, important, necessary. Perhaps the most difficult form of poverty for us is to accept that we do not even possess the future we had imagined. Perhaps, underneath all this, there is the fear of death: disappearing, no longer counting, being forgotten.

La Verna tells us that we are not called to defend any of this. We are called to give it back. Not out of resignation, but for the same reason as Francis: so that the One who gives himself to us in whole may welcome us in its entirety. He who gives back does not lose. He receives.

St Clare also knew this freedom. She asked not for the privilege of possessing, but for the privilege of possessing nothing: free to follow the poor Christ. And at the end of her life she blessed the One from whom she had received everything.

Brothers and sisters, celebrating the Stigmata today means asking for this grace: to open our hands. Not to keep for ourselves goods, merits, wounds. To receive everything with gratitude. To give everything back with love. So that the One who gives himself entirely to us can welcome us whole. To him alone all good. Amen.

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