

# Celebrating the Feast of the Stigmata of Saint Francis



September 16, 2024

Read and Reflect ahead of time:

Most of the images of Francis in prayer on that day, show an angel with rays extending to the positions of the wounds that later appeared on Francis's body. If we leave this image out of our thinking, we are in a better position to appreciate the extraordinary depth of the actual experience. We can begin to understand that the Stigmata was not something that came from the outside of Francis into him, but rather something that came from deep within him and out of him. Celano's own description of the wounds-marks that begin appear on his body shortly after the experience clearly describes skin that is protruding outward rather than something that has been pushed inward into him.

Profound, intense, even mystical prayer can begin to literally explode out of one's psyche (one's soul) into and through one's very flesh, when the object of one's prayer-like Christ nailed to the cross has been so thoroughly interiorized. This is the deepest and most authentic form of a psychosomatic event: not in the sense of something fraudulently induced but of something that comes up out of the very depths of one's being, manifesting its effects in one's own body. We are, in other words, in the presence of a breathtaking and awesome experience of human prayer at its most intense, where grace and nature have become so commingled through the medium of a meditation upon Christ's passion. Brother Elias was probably not far from the truth in calling the result of this commingling the *novitas miraculi*: not the sense that nature has been contravened but rather in the sense that what appears on Francis's *body* - in Francis's body - has become a sign of God's deepest *conversatio* with the human person. Perhaps, therefore, Bonaventure's theological insight-namely, that Francis actually bore the stigmata (that is, the cross of Christ) within himself from the very moment of his conversion and that it gradually deepened and intensified until it emerged onto his flesh on La Verna - is not very far from the truth of the mystical experience of Francis in September 1224." (p. 52-53)

From: The Stigmata of St. Francis, New Studies, New Perspectives, 2006  
Jacques Dalarun, Michael F. Cusato and Carla Salvati

Wounded by Love...  
Healed by Love



**Song:** One Thing Remains <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qln87GTtO3w>

**On this vigil of the feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis, we pray,**

Lord Jesus Christ, who reproduced in the flesh of the most blessed Francis, the sacred marks of your own sufferings, so that in a world grown cold our hearts might be filled with burning love of you, graciously enable us by his prayers to bear your cross of love without faltering. We pray in your Holy Name. AMEN

**A Reading from the Third Letter of St. Clare to Agnes of Prague (12-14):**

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance and, through contemplation, transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself, So that you too may feel what friends feel in tasting the hidden sweetness that, from the beginning, God Himself has reserved for His lovers...may you totally love Him Who gave Himself totally for your love...

**Our Response:** Higher than the mountains that I face  
Stronger than the power of the grave  
Constant in the trial and the change  
This one thing, remains,  
Your love never fails, never gives up  
Never runs out on me ... Your love

**A reading from the First Life of St. Francis** by Thomas of Celano:

While he was staying in that hermitage called La Verna,...he saw in the vision of God a man, having six wings like a Seraph, standing over him, arms extended and feet joined, affixed to a cross. Two of his wings were raised up, two were stretched out over his head as if for flight, and two covered his whole body. When the blessed servant of the most High saw these things, he was filled with greatest awe, but could not decide what this vision meant for him. Moreover, he greatly rejoiced and was much delighted by the kind and gracious look that he saw the Seraph gave him. The Seraph's beauty was beyond comprehension, but the fact that the Seraph was fixed to the cross and the bitter suffering of that passion thoroughly frightened him. Consequently, he got up both sad and happy as joy and sorrow took their turns in his heart. Concerned over the matter, he kept thinking about what this vision could mean and his spirit was anxious to discern a sensible meaning from the vision. 1 Celano 94

**Our Response:** On and on and on and on it goes,  
Yes, it overwhelms and satisfies my soul  
And I never, ever, have to be afraid  
'Cause this one thing remains  
Your love never fails, never gives up,  
Never runs out on me... Your love

**Sharing in small groups** on the meaning of this feast for you:

Some sparks for thought-

- How does this experience of Francis relate to me??
- How do I tangibly know and feel God's love in my life??
- How do I share experiences of God's love with others?

**Convene large group:** Would anyone like to share a thought or inspiration with us?

**Closing:** One Thing Remains

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=one+thing+remains&mid=8D1F15BF72D1AFB7946E8D1F15BF72D1AFB7946E&FORM=VIRE>