

From the "Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi."

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OF THE SACRED AND HOLY STIGMATA OF ST FRANCIS AND CERTAIN  
CONSIDERATIONS THEREON

In this part we will treat, with sundry devout considerations, of the glorious, sacred, and holy stigmata of our blessed father St Francis, which he received from Christ on the holy mountain of Alvernia. And inasmuch as the said stigmata were five, according to the five wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore this treatise shall have five considerations.

The first consideration shall be of the manner in which St Francis came to the holy mountain of Alvernia.

The second consideration shall be of his life and conversation with his companions on the same holy mountain.

The third consideration shall be of the seraphical apparition, and the impression of the most sacred stigmata.

The fourth consideration shall be of the descent of St Francis from Mount Alvernia after he had received the sacred stigmata, and of his return to St Mary of the Angels.

The fifth consideration shall be of certain apparitions and divine revelations vouchsafed, after the death of St Francis, to certain holy friars and other devout persons, concerning these sacred and glorious stigmata.

OF THE FIRST CONSIDERATION OF THE SACRED, HOLY STIGMATA

Concerning the first consideration, be it known that in the year 1224, being in his forty-third year, St Francis went, by the inspiration of God, from the Valley of Spoleto into Romagna, taking with him Brother Leo as his companion; and on their way they passed by the Castle of Montefeltro, where was a great concourse of people, and a solemn banquet held, by reason that one of the Counts of Montefeltro was that day to receive his knighthood. And when St Francis heard of this solemnity, and that many gentlemen of various countries were gathered together there, he said to Brother Leo, "Come, let us go up unto this festival; for, by God's help, we shall gather therefrom rich spiritual fruit."

Now, among other men of high degree who had come together to this feast, there was a certain gentleman of Tuscany who was both rich and mighty. He was called Orlando da Chiusi di Casentino; and for the marvelous things which he had heard concerning the holiness and the miracles of St Francis he bore him great devotion, and had an exceeding desire to see him and to hear him preach.

St Francis, then, being come to this castle, entered into the courtyard where all those gentlemen were assembled; and, in fervour of spirit, he mounted on a low wall, and began to preach, choosing for the theme of his discourse these words in the vulgar tongue:

So great is the joy which I expect,

That all pain is joy to me.

And upon this theme, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, he preached so profoundly and so devoutly, proving it by the divers pains and sufferings of the holy apostles and martyrs, and by the manifold tribulations and temptations of holy virgins and all other saints, that all that multitude of men hung upon his words both with their ears and hearts, hearkening to him as to an angel of God. Among whom the said Orlando, being touched in heart by God through the marvelous preaching of St Francis, was led to speak to him after sermon touching the state of his soul. So taking him aside, he said to him, "O Father, I would fain take counsel with thee concerning the salvation of my soul." St Francis answered him, "It pleaseth me well: but go now and pay respect to thy friends, who have bidden thee to this feast, and dine with them; and after dinner we will speak together as much as it shall please thee."

Orlando, therefore, went to dine, and after dinner returning again to St Francis, he discoursed with him at length concerning the state of his soul, and in the end he said to him, "I have a mountain in Tuscany, a devout and solitary place, called Mount Alvernia, far from all discourse of men, well fitted for one who would do penance for his sins, or who desires to lead a solitary life; if it please thee, I will freely give it to thee and thy companions for the welfare of my soul."

When St Francis heard of this bountiful offer of a thing which he had greatly desired, he was exceeding glad, and thanking and praising God in the first place, and after him Orlando, he thus replied: "Orlando, as soon as thou shalt have returned to thy home, I will send to thee some of our brethren, to whom thou shalt show this place; and if it shall seem to them well fitted for prayer and penance, I will at once accept thy charitable offer."

Having said thus, St Francis departed, returning to St Mary of the Angels; and Orlando likewise returned to his castle, which was called Chiusi, and was about a mile distant from Mount Alvernia. St Francis then sent two of his companions to the said Orlando, who received them with much charity and gladness; and he sent with them to Mount Alvernia fully fifty men-at-arms, to be their defense against wild beasts. And these brethren, being thus accompanied, ascended the mount, and searched diligently, until at last they came to a spot well fitted for devout contemplation; and this they chose for the habitation of St Francis, and, with the help of the men-at-arms in their company, they made some little cells with branches of trees; and thus they accepted Mount Alvernia, taking possession of it in the name of God, and forthwith returned again unto St Francis, who rejoiced greatly at what they told him, and, thanking and praising God, spoke with a

joyful countenance to these friars, saying, "My children, we draw near to our Lent of St. Michael the Archangel. I firmly believe it to be the will of God that we keep this Lent upon Mount Alvernia, which, by divine dispensation, has been prepared for us, that we by penance may merit from our Lord the consolation of consecrating this blessed mount to the honour and glory of God, of his glorious Mother the Virgin Mary, and of the holy angels."

And having said this, St Francis took with him Brother Masseo da Marignano of Assisi; and Brother Angelo Tancredi of Rieti, who, in the world, had been a noble knight, and was still noted for his gentle courtesy; and Brother Leo, who was a man of the greatest simplicity and purity, for the which cause St Francis loved him greatly.

And with these three brethren St Francis betook himself to prayer, then, having recommended himself and his companions to the prayers of the brethren who were left behind, he set forth with these three, in the name of Jesus Christ crucified, to go to Mount Alvernia. And on the way he called Brother Masseo to him, and said: "Thou, Brother Masseo, shalt be our guardian and our superior of this journey, both in the way and while we sojourn together on the mount; and we will observe our wonted custom, which is, that one while we will keep silence; and we will take no thought beforehand of eating, or drinking, or sleeping, but when the evening comes we will beg a little bread, and stay and rest ourselves in that place which God shall prepare for us."

Then these three comrades bowed their heads, and making the sign of the cross went on their way; and the first evening they came to a house of the brethren, and there abode. The second evening, because the weather was bad and they were weary, they could not reach any house of friars, neither any town nor castle; wherefore, when night came on, they took shelter in a ruined and deserted church, and there laid them down to rest. Now, while his companions slept, St Francis betook himself to prayer; and, behold, in the first watch of the night there came to him a multitude of most fierce demons who, with great noise and frenzy, began to attack him on all sides, in order to disturb him in his prayer; but this they could not do, because God was with him. When, therefore, St Francis had endured that conflict a long time, he began to cry aloud: "O accursed spirits, you can do nothing save by the divine permission; wherefore I bid you, on the behalf of the omnipotent God, to do with my body whatsoever he shall permit you to do, and most willingly will I endure it; because I have no greater enemy than my body, and therefore if you will avenge me upon it you shall do me good service." Then did the devils begin to torment him worse than ever. But he cried out, and said: "O my Lord Jesus Christ, I thank thee for this thy love when the Lord punisheth his servant well in this life, that so he may not be punished in the other. And I am ready gladly to endure every pain and suffering which thou, my God, art pleased to send me for my sins." Then the devils dispersed and left him, being vanquished and confounded by his penance and constancy. And St Francis in great fervour of spirit left the church and went into the wood hard by, and there, beating his breast with sighs and tears, sought after Jesus, the beloved of his soul. And having found him at last, in the secret of his heart, now he spoke to him reverently as his Lord, now he made answer to him as his judge, now he besought him as his father, now he conversed with him as his friend. On that night and in that

wood, his companions, being awake and listening to him, heard him with many tears and cries implore the divine mercy on behalf of sinners. He was heard to weep aloud for the Passion of Christ as if he had beheld it with his bodily eyes. On that same night also he was seen praying with arms outstretched in the form of a cross, and thus was he lifted up and suspended for a long time in the air, surrounded with a dazzling glory. And so, in these holy exercises, he passed all that night without sleeping.

And the next morning, his companions, knowing that he was too weak to walk, went to a poor labouring man of the country, and prayed him, for the love of God, to lend his ass to Brother Francis their father, for he was not able to travel on foot. When the poor man heard them speak of Brother Francis, he asked them: "Are you, then, of the brethren of that friar of Assisi of whom men speak so much good?" Then the friars made answer that it was even he for whom they would borrow the ass. Then that good man made ready the ass with great care and devotion, and brought it to St Francis, and with great reverence caused him to mount thereon. So the brethren set forth again, the poor man following behind his ass.

Now when they had gone forward a little, the peasant said to St Francis: "Tell me, art thou Brother Francis of Assisi?" And St Francis answered, "Yes." "Take heed, then," said the peasant, "that thou be in truth as good as all men account thee; for many have great faith in thee, and therefore I admonish thee to be no other than what the people take thee for."

When St Francis heard these words, he was not angry at being thus admonished by a peasant, neither did he say within himself, as many a proud friar who in our days wears his habit would say: "What right has such a creature as this to admonish me?" But instantly dismounting from the ass, he knelt down upon the ground before that poor man; and kissing his feet, humbly thanked him for that his charitable admonition. Then the peasant, together with the companions of St Francis, with great devotion raised him from the ground, and placed him again upon the ass, and so went on their way.

And then they were come to about the midst of the ascent of the mount, because the way was toilsome, and the heat exceeding great, the peasant was overcome with thirst, insomuch that he began to cry after St Francis saying: "Alas! alas! I am dying of thirst; unless I have something to drink, I shall presently faint."

Then St Francis dismounted from the ass, and betook himself to prayer, remaining upon his knees, with hands uplifted up to heaven, until he knew by revelation that his prayer was heard. Then said he to the peasant: "Run quickly to yonder rock, and there thou shalt find a stream of living water, which Jesus Christ of his mercy has caused to flow out from the stone." Then went he to the place which St Francis had shown to him, and found a beautiful fountain, issuing by virtue of the prayer of St Francis, from that hard rock; and he drank of it plentifully, and was refreshed. And certain it is that this spring of water flowed forth miraculously at the prayer of St Francis, for neither before nor after was a spring to be found at that spot, nor any running water save at a great distance therefrom. This done, St Francis, with his companions and the peasant, returned thanks to God for

the miracle thus vouchsafed, and went on their way; and when they drew near to the rock of Alvernia, it pleased St Francis to rest awhile under an oak, which grew by the way, and is still to be seen there, and from thence he began to consider the position of the place and the country. And while he was thus considering, behold there came a great multitude of birds from divers regions, which, by singing and clapping their wings, testified great joy and gladness, and surrounded St Francis in such wise, that some perched upon his shoulders, some on his arms, some on his bosom, and others at his feet, which when his companions and the peasant saw, they marveled greatly; but St Francis, being joyful at heart, said to them: "I believe, dearest brethren, that our Lord Jesus Christ is pleased that we should dwell on this solitary mount, inasmuch as our little brothers and sisters, the birds, show such joy at our coming." And having said these words, he arose and proceeded to the place which had been fixed upon by his companions; and so did St Francis come to the holy mount of LaVerna.

#### OF THE SECOND CONSIDERATION OF THE SACRED, HOLY STIGMATA

The second consideration is of the conversation of St Francis and his companions upon Mount Alvernia. Be it known, then, that when Orlando heard that St Francis with three companions was come to dwell on Mount Alvernia, he was filled with exceeding joy, and on the morrow he came with many others from his castle to visit St Francis, bringing with him bread and wine, and other things necessary for him and his companions; and when he came thither, he found them in prayer, and drawing near he saluted them. Then St Francis arose, and with great joy and charity received Orlando and his company; and so they began to converse together. And after they had spoken together for some time, and St Francis had thanked him for the devout solitude which he had bestowed upon them and for his coming to visit them there, he prayed Orlando to cause a little cell to be made for him at the foot of a beautiful beach-tree, which was about a stone's-throw from the place where they now were; and this Orlando immediately caused to be done. Then, because evening was drawing on, and it was now time for them to depart, St Francis preached to them for a little space; and when he had finished preaching, and had given them his blessing, Orlando called St Francis and his companions aside, and said to them: "My dearest brothers, never was it my intention that you should be exposed on this savage mountain to any corporal necessity, which might hinder you from attending perfectly to things spiritual; wherefore it is my desire - and I say it to you now once for all - that you send freely to my house for everything you want, and if you fail to do so I shall take is very ill at your hands." And so saying, he departed with his company and returned to his castle.

Then St Francis caused his companions to sit down, and taught them the manner of life they were to keep, that they might live religiously in their solitude; and among other things, most earnestly did he enjoin on them the strict observance of holy poverty, saying: "Let not Orlando's charitable offer cause you in any way to offend against our lady and mistress, holy poverty. Hold it for certain that, the more we keep aloof from her, the more will the world keep aloft from us, and the greater want shall we endure: but if we closely embrace holy poverty, the world will come after us, and will minister to us abundantly.

God has called us into this holy religion for the salvation of the world, and has made this compact between the world and us - that we should give it good example, and that it should provide for our necessities. Let us, then, persevere in holy poverty; for it is the way to perfection, and the pledge of eternal riches." And after many devout and holy words, he thus concluded: "This is the manner of life which I impose upon you and upon myself; and because I behold my death approaching, I purpose to remain in solitude to recollect myself in God, and to weep over my sins in his sight. Therefore, when it shall so please him, let Brother Leo bring me a little bread and water, and on no account suffer any secular to come near me; but do you answer for me to them." And having thus said, he gave them his blessing, and went his way to his cell under the beach-tree; and his companions remained behind, full purposed to obey his commands.

Now a few days afterwards, as St Francis was considering the formation of the mountain, and marveling at the great fissures and openings in the solid rock, it was revealed to him by God in prayer that these strange caverns had been made miraculously at the hour of the Passion of Christ, when, according to the Evangelist's words, the rocks were rent; and this was by the will of God, who manifested himself thus wonderfully upon Mount Alvernia, because there the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ was to be renewed in the soul of his servant by love and compassion, and in his body by the impression of the sacred, holy stigmata.

When St Francis had received this revelation, he forthwith shut himself up in his cell, and, in great recollection of soul, prepared himself for the mystery which was to be revealed to him; and from that time forth he began to taste more frequently the sweetness of divine contemplation, by which he was sometimes so absorbed in God, that he was seen by his companions to be raised corporally above the ground, and rapt in prayer; and in these raptures were revealed to St Francis not only things present and future, but even the secret thoughts and desires of the brethren, as was experienced by Brother Leo, his companion in those days.

For this same Brother Leo, being beset by a most grievous spiritual temptation, felt a great longing to have some devout thing written by the hand of St Francis, feeling assured that, if he had it, the temptation would leave him, either wholly or in part. But, either out of shame or reverence, he dared not speak of his desire to St Francis, to whom nevertheless it was revealed by the Holy Ghost; whereupon he called the brother to him, and bade him bring him wherewithal to write, and with his own hand he wrote a verse in honour of Christ, drawing at the foot thereof the sign of a cross Tau: and according to Brother Leo's desire, he gave it to him, saying, "Take this writing, dearest brother, and keep it most diligently till the day of thy death. May God bless thee, and guard thee from all temptation! But if temptation come unto thee, be not afraid, for I hold thee to be more truly the servant of God, and more worthy of love the harder thou art oppressed by temptation. And I tell thee in all sincerity, that no man should account himself to be a perfect friend of God until he has passed through manifold temptations and tribulations.

Now when Brother Leo had received this writing with great faith and devotion, at once all the temptation departed from him; and returning to his companions, he told them with

great joy of the grace which he had received from God through that writing of St Francis; and the brethren laid it up and kept it diligently, and by it they were enabled to work many miracles.

And from that day forward Brother Leo set himself with a good and pure intention to scrutinize and attentively consider the life of St Francis; and in reward of his purity he was permitted many times to behold him rapt in God and suspended above the earth, sometimes at the heights of three feet above the ground, sometimes four, sometimes raised as high as the top of the beach-trees, and sometimes exalted so high in the air, and surrounded with so dazzling a glory, that he could scarce endure to look upon him.

And what did this simple friar when St Francis, in his raptures, was thus raised above his reach? He would go softly behind him, and, with tears, embrace and kiss his feet, saying: "My God, have mercy upon me, a sinner, and by the merits of this holy man let me find grace in thy sight." And once when he was standing beneath the feet of St Francis, who was raised so high that he could not touch him, he saw a scroll descend from heaven and rest upon his head, whereon were these words, written in letters of gold: Here abideth the grace of God! And when he had read the scroll, he saw it return again to heaven.

By the gift of the grace of God which dwelt in him, St Francis was not only absorbed in God by ecstatic contemplation, but was comforted often by angelical visitations. One day when he was meditating upon his death, and upon what might hereafter befall his Order, he said: "O Lord God, when I am dead, what will become of this thy poor family, which in thy goodness thou hast committed to me, a sinner? Who will comfort, who will correct, who will pray to thee for it?"

Then did an angel of God appear to him, and comfort him with these words: "I declare to thee, on behalf of God, that thine Order shall never fail until the day of judgment; and no sinner, be he ever so great, who shall bear a hearty love to this thine Order, but shall find mercy with God; and no man shall live long who shall maliciously persecute it. Nor shall any evil-doer, who shall refuse to amend his life, long persevere in thine Order. And be not thou troubled if thou perceive some brethren who are not good, and observe not the rule as they ought to do, and fear not lest on that account this religion will fail; for there shall always be many and many a one who will observe with great perfection the life of Christ's Gospel, and the purity of the rule; and all these, after their bodily life is ended, shall enter into life eternal, without passing through Purgatory. Others will observe it, but not perfectly; and these, before they reach Paradise, shall remain for a while in Purgatory; but the time of their purification God will commit unto thee, `But of those who in no way observe the rule, take thou no care,' saith the Lord; for neither doth he care for them." And when the angel had said these words, he departed, leaving St Francis greatly strengthened and consoled.

And now the Feast of our Lady's Assumption drew near, and St Francis sought for a more secret and solitary place in which he might spend alone the Lent of St Michael the Archangel, which begins on the Feast of the Assumption. Wherefore he called Brother Leo, and said thus to him: "Go and stand at the door of the brethren's oratory, and when I

shall call thee, turn to me." And Brother Leo went and stood at the door, and St Francis went away a space, and called aloud, and Brother Leo heard and turned towards him. Then St Francis said: "My sons, let us seek for some more secret place, where thou wilt not hear me when I call thus to thee." And when they had searched the mount, they found a place on the northern side most secret and well fitted for the purpose, but they could not reach it because of a frightful chasm in the rock; across this chasm they cast a tree to serve for a bridge, and so passed over. Then St Francis sent for the other friars, and told them that he purposed to spend the Lent of St Michael in that solitary place, and prayed them, therefore, to make for him a little cell, so that, though he could cry aloud, he might not be heard by them. And when the cell was made, he said to them: "Return now to your place, and leave me here, without any disturbance or perturbation of mind; therefore let none of you come unto me, nor suffer any secular person to come near the cell. But thou only, Brother Leo, once a day shalt come to me with a little bread and water, and once a night at the hour of Matins, and thou shalt come in silence; and when thou art upon the bridge thou shalt say, Domine labia mea aperies; and if I answer thee, thou shalt come to the cell, and we will say Matins together; and if I do not answer thee, thou shalt depart forthwith." And this St Francis said because he was sometimes so absorbed in God that he heard nothing, nor felt anything by his bodily senses. And having thus spoken, he gave them his blessing, and they returned to their place.

Thus, on the Feast of the Assumption, St Francis began the holy Lent, with great abstinence and austerity, maserating his body and invigorating his soul by fervent prayers, vigils, and disciplines; and thus increasing more and more, and going from virtue to virtue, he prepared his soul to receive divine mysteries and illuminations, and his body to sustain the cruel conflicts with the demons, who often attacked him sensibly. And among other times it befell one day to this Lent that St Francis, going forth from his cell in great fervour of spirit, went to pray in a cave hollowed out of a rock at the top of a steep and frightful precipice, when the devil suddenly appeared before him in a terrible form, and sought to hurl him to the bottom. St Francis, being unable to fly or to endure the horrible aspect of the devil, turned his face, hands,, and whole body towards the rock, and recommended himself to God, groping with his hands, yet finding nothing to which he might cling. But, as it pleased God, who never suffers his servants to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear, the rock suddenly opened and received his body within it; and, as if he had placed his hands and face in liquid wax, the form of the hands and face of St Francis remained impressed upon the stone; and thus, by the help of God, he escaped out of the hands of the devil. But the injury which the devil could not then do to St Francis by casting him down the precipice, he inflicted long after his death upon one of his beloved and devoted brethren, who was standing in the same spot preparing some planks of wood for the safe passage of those who should come to the place out of devotion to St Francis and the miracle which had been wrought there. For one day, when he had a heavy piece of wood on his shoulder, the devil cast him down thus laden to the bottom of the rock. But God, who had preserved St Francis from falling, by his merits delivered the devout friar from all injury in his fall; for as he fell, with a loud voice and great devotion he recommended himself to St Francis, who immediately appeared to him, and taking him in his arms, set him down at the bottom of the rock without suffering any injury whatsoever. The brethren, who had heard his cry when he fell, believing that he



was assuredly dead, and that he had been dashed to pieces by his fall from so great a height upon those pointed rocks, taking a bier went round the mountain by another way, with great weeping and lamentation, to collect his mangled remains and give them burial. Having, then, descended the mountain, behold, the brother who had fallen met them with the wood on his shoulder with which he fell, singing the Te Deum with a loud voice. And the brethren marveling greatly thereat, he related to them in order the manner of his fall, and how St Francis had delivered him from all danger. Then all the brethren came with him to the place, devoutly chanting the Te Deum, and praising and thanking God and St Francis for the miracle that had been wrought in their brother.

St Francis, then, passing this Lent, as has been said, in the midst of these conflicts with the devil, received many consolations from God, not only by angelic visitations, but through the ministry of the wild mountain birds. For, through all that Lent, a falcon, whose nest was hard by his cell, awakened him every night a little before the hour of Matins by her cry and the flapping of her wings, and would not leave him till he had risen to say Matins; and if at any time St Francis was more sick than usual, or weak, or weary, this falcon, like a discreet and charitable Christian, would call him somewhat later than was her wont. Now St Francis took great delight in this clock of his, because the great carefulness of the falcon drove away all sloth and summoned him to prayer; and moreover during the daytime she would often abide familiarly with him.

To conclude this second consideration, St Francis, being much weakened in body both by his great abstinence and by his conflicts with the devil, and desiring to strengthen his body by the spiritual food of the soul, began to meditate upon the unbounded joy and glory of the blessed heaven; and he besought of God to grant him some little foretaste of their bliss. Now while this thought was in his mind, suddenly an angel appeared to him in surpassing glory, having a viol in his left hand and a bow in his right. And St Francis stood in amazement at the sight, the angel drew the bow once across the strings of the viol, when the soul of St Francis was instantly so ravished by the sweetness of the melody, that all his bodily senses were suspended, and he believed, as he afterwards told his companions, that, if the strain had been continued, the intolerable sweetness would have drawn his soul from his body. And so much for the second consideration.

### OF THE THIRD CONSIDERATION OF THE SACRED HOLY STIGMATA

We are come now to the third consideration, namely, of the seraphical apparition, and the impression of the sacred, holy stigmata.

As the Feast of the Holy Cross then drew nigh, in the month of September, Brother Leo went one night at his accustomed hour to say Matins with St Francis. When he came to the bridge, he said, as he was wont to do, Domine labia mea aperies; but St Francis made no answer. Yet Brother Leo turned not back as he had been commanded to do, but with a good and holy intention, he passed the bridge and went straight into the cell; but there he found not St Francis. Thinking, therefore, that he was gone to pray in some solitary place, he went softly through the wood, seeking him in the moonlight. At last he heard his

voice, and drawing near, beheld him kneeling in prayer with his face and hands lifted up towards heaven, and crying, in fervour of spirit: "Who art thou, my dearest Lord? and who am I, a most vile worm and thy most unprofitable servant?" and these words he repeated over and over again, adding nothing more. At this Brother Leo, greatly marveling, lifted up his eyes to heaven and beheld a torch of most intense and glorious fire, which seemed to descend and alight upon the head of St Francis; and from the flame there seemed to issue forth a voice which spake with him, but Brother Leo knew not the words which were spoken. Hearing this, and accounting himself unworthy to stand in that holy place, and fearing also to offend St Francis and to disturb him by his presence, he went away silently, and stood afar off to behold what would follow; and looking earnestly upon St Francis, he saw him thrice spread forth his hands to the flame, and after a long time he beheld it mount again to heaven. Then he turned joyfully to go back to his cell, being greatly consoled by the visitation. But, as he turned, St Francis heard the rustling of the leaves under his feet, and commanded him not to stir, but to await his coming. And Brother Leo in obedience stood still, and waited in so great fear that, as he afterwards told his companions, he would have wished that the earth might swallow him up rather than wait for St Francis, whose anger he feared exceedingly; for he took great heed always not to offend him, lest he should be deprived of his company.

When St Francis, then, came up to him, he said: "Who art thou?" and Brother Leo, in fear, and trembling, answered: "Father, I am Brother Leo." And St Francis said to him: "Wherefore hast thou come hither, dear brother? did I not forbid thee to observe me? Tell me now, by holy obedience, whether thou hast seen or heard anything?" And Brother Leo replied: "Father, I heard thee speak and say many times, 'Who art thou, my dearest Lord' and who am I, a most vile worm and thy most unprofitable servant?" And then, kneeling before St Francis, Brother Leo accused himself of disobedience to his command, and besought him to expound to him the meaning of the words which he had heard, and to tell him also those which he had not heard. Then St Francis, seeing that, for his simplicity and purity, God had revealed so much to Brother Leo, condescended to reveal and expound also that which he desired further to know; and thus he spoke to him: "Know, dearest brother, that when I said those words which thou didst hear, two great lights were before my soul, the one the knowledge of myself, the other the knowledge of the Creator. When I said: 'Who art thou, my dearest Lord?' I was in a light of contemplation, in which I beheld the abyss of the infinite goodness and wisdom and power of God; and when I said: 'Who am I?' I was in light of contemplation wherein I saw the lamentable abyss of my own vileness and misery: wherefore I said: 'Who art thou, the Lord of infinite wisdom and goodness, who dost vouchsafe to visit me, a vile worm and abominable?' and in that flame which thou didst behold was God, who under that appearance spake to me, as of old he spake to Moses. And among other things which he said to me, he asked of me three gifts; and I made answer: 'O Lord, I am all thing; thou knowest full well that I have nothing else but my cord and my tunic, and even these are thing; what, then, can I offer or give to thy Majesty?' Then he said to me: 'Search in thy bosom, and offer me what thou shalt find there.' And searching, I found there a golden ball, and I offered it to God; and the like I did three times, even as God commanded me; and then I knelt down thrice, and blessed and gave thanks to God, who had thus given me something to offer him. And immediately it was given to me to

understand that these three offerings signified holy obedience, most entire poverty, and most pure chastity, which God by his grace has enabled me so perfectly to observe that I have nothing to reproach myself thereupon. And whereas thou didst see me put my hand into my bosom and offer to God those three virtues, signified by these three golden balls which God had placed in my bosom, so God has infused such virtue into my soul, that for all the gifts and graces which of his sovereign bounty he has bestowed upon me, I should always with heart and voice praise and magnify him. These are the words which thou didst hear when thou didst see me thrice lift up my hands. But take heed, brother little lamb, that thou observe me no more, but return to thy cell with the blessing of God; and take heed to my words, for yet a few days, and God will work such strange and marvelous things upon this mountain as shall astonish the whole world; for he will do a new thing which he hath never done before to any creature upon this earth."

And when he had said these words, he bade him bring the book of the Gospels, because God had put it into his mind that, by thrice opening that book, he should learn what God would be pleased to do with him. And when the book was brought to him, St Francis went to prayer; and when he had prayed, he caused Brother Leo to open the book three times in the name of the most holy Trinity; and, by the divine disposal, it opened each time at the Passion of Christ. And by this it was given him to understand that, even as he had followed Christ in the actions of his life, so should he follow and be confirmed to him in the sufferings and afflictions of his Passion, before he should pass out of this life. And from that day forward St Francis began to taste more abundantly the sweetness of divine contemplation, and of divine visitations, among which he had one, preparatory to the impression of the sacred, holy stigmata, after the following manner. The day before the Feast of the most Holy Cross, as St Francis was praying secretly in his cell, an angel of God appeared to him, and spake to him thus from God: "I am come to admonish and encourage thee, that thou prepare thyself to receive in all patience and humility that which God will give and do to thee."

St Francis replied: "I am ready to bear patiently whatsoever my Lord shall be pleased to do to me"; and so the angel departed. On the following day - being the Feast of the Holy Cross - St Francis was praying before daybreak at the entrance of his cell, and turning his face towards the east, he prayed in these words: "O Lord Jesus Christ, two graces do I ask of thee before I die; the first, that in my lifetime I may feel, as far as possible, both in my soul and body, that pain which thou, sweet Lord, didst endure in the hour of thy most bitter Passion; the second, that I may feel in my heart as much as possible of that excess of love by which thou, O Son of God, wast inflamed to suffer so cruel a Passion for us sinners." And continuing a long time in that prayer, he understood that God had heard him, and that, so far as is possible for a mere creature, he should be permitted to feel these things.

Having then received this promise, St Francis began to contemplate most devoutly the Passion of Jesus Christ and his infinite charity; and so greatly did the fervour of devotion increase within him, that he was all transformed into Jesus by love and compassion.

And being thus inflamed in that contemplation, on that same morning he beheld a seraph descending from heaven with six fiery and resplendent wings; and this seraph with rapid flight drew nigh unto St Francis, so that he could plainly discern him, and perceive that he bore the image of one crucified; and the wings were so disposed, that two were spread over the head, two were outstretched in flight, and the other two covered the whole body. And when St Francis beheld it, he was much afraid, and filled at once with joy and grief and wonder. He felt great joy at the gracious presence of Christ, who appeared to him thus familiarly, and looked upon him thus lovingly, but, on the other hand, beholding him thus crucified, he felt exceeding grief and compassion. He marveled much at so stupendous and unwonted a vision, knowing well that the infirmity of the Passion accorded ill with the immortality of the seraphic spirit. And in that perplexity of mind it was revealed to him by him who thus appeared, that by divine providence this vision had been thus shown to him that he might understand that, not by martyrdom of the body, but by a consuming fire of the soul, he was to be transformed into the express image of Christ crucified in that wonderful apparition. Then did all the Mount Alvernia appear wrapped in intense fire, which illumined all the mountains and valleys around, as it were the sun shining in his strength upon the earth, for which cause the shepherds who were watching their flocks in that country were filled with fear, as they themselves afterwards told the brethren, affirming that this light had been visible on Mount Alvernia for upwards of an hour. And because of the brightness of that light, which shone through the windows of the inn where they were tarrying, some muleteers who were traveling in Romagna arose in haste, supposing that the sun had risen, and saddled and loaded their beasts; but as they journeyed on, they saw that light disappear, and the visible sun arise.

In this seraphical apparition, Christ, who appeared under that form to St Francis, spoke to him certain high and secret things, which in his lifetime he would never reveal to any person, but after his death he made them known to one of the brethren, and the words were these: "Knowest thou," said Christ, "what I have done to thee? I have given thee the stigmata which are the insignia of my Passion, that thou mayest be my standard-bearer; and as on the day of my death I descended into limbo, and by virtue of these my stigmata delivered thence all the souls whom I found there, so do I grant to thee that every year on the anniversary of thy death thou mayst go to Purgatory, and take with thee to the glory of Paradise all the souls of thy three Orders, the Friars Minor, the Sisters, and the Penitents, and likewise all others whom thou shalt find there, who have been especially devout to thee; that so thou mayst be conformed to me in death, as thou hast been like to me in life." Then, after long and secret conference together, that marvelous vision disappeared, leaving in the heart of St Francis an excessive fire and ardour of divine love, and on his flesh a wonderful trace and image of the Passion of Christ. For upon his hands and feet began immediately to appear the figures of the nails, as he had seen them on the Body of Christ crucified, who had appeared to him in the likeness of a seraph. And thus the hands and feet appeared pierced through the midst by the nails, the heads whereof were seen outside the flesh in the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, and the points of the nails stood out at the back of the hands, and the feet in such wise that they appeared to be twisted and bent back upon themselves, and the portion thereof that was bent back upon themselves, and the portion thereof that was bent back or twisted stood out free from the flesh, so that one could put a finger through the same as through a ring;

and the heads of the nails were round and black. In like manner, on the right side appeared the image of an unhealed wound, as if made by a lance, and still red and bleeding, from which drops of blood often flowed from the holy breast of St Francis, staining his tunic and his drawers.

And because of this his companions, before they knew the truth from himself, perceiving that he would not uncover his hands and his feet, and that he could not set the soles of his feet upon the ground, and finding traces of blood upon his tunic when they washed it, understood of a certainty that he bore in his hands and feet and side the image and similitude of our Lord Jesus Christ crucified. And although he laboured hard to conceal these sacred stigmata holy and glorious, thus clearly impressed upon his flesh, yet finding that he could with difficulty hide them from his familiar companions, and fearing at the same time to reveal the secrets of God, he was in great doubt and trouble of mind whether or not he should make known the seraphical vision and the impression of the sacred, holy stigmata. At last, being pricked in conscience, he called together certain of the brethren, in whom he placed the greatest confidence, and proposing to them his doubt in general terms, asked their counsel on the matter. Now among these friars there was one of great sanctity, called Brother Illuminato; and he, being truly illuminated by God, understood that St Francis must have seen something miraculous, and said thus to him: "Know, Brother Francis, that not for thyself alone, but for others, doth God reveal to thee his secrets, and therefore thou hast cause for fear lest thou be worthy of censure if thou conceal that which, for the good of others, has been made known to thee."

Then St Francis, being moved by these words, with great fear and reverence told them the manner of the aforesaid vision, adding that Christ, who had thus appeared to him, had said to him certain things which he might never make known so long as he should live.

Now although these sacred wounds, which had been impressed upon him by Christ, gave great joy to his heart, yet they caused unspeakable pain to his body; so that, being constrained by necessity, he made choice of Brother Leo, for his great purity and simplicity, to whom he revealed the whole matter, suffering him to touch and dress his wounds on all days except during the time from Thursday evening till Saturday morning, for then he would not by any human remedy mitigate the pain of Christ's Passion, which he bore in his body, because at that time our Saviour Jesus Christ was taken and crucified, died and was buried for us. And it came to pass sometimes that when Brother Leo was removing the bandage from the wound in the side, St Francis, because of the pain caused thereby, would lay his hand on Brother Leo's breast, and at the touch of that holy hand Brother Leo felt such sweetness of devotion as well-nigh made him to fall fainting to the ground.

To conclude, so far as concerns this third consideration, St Francis, having completed the Lent of St Michael the Archangel, prepared himself by divine revelation to return with Brother Leo to St Mary of the Angels; and calling to him Brother Masseo and Brother Angelo, he commended that holy mount unto their care, and blessing them in the name of Jesus crucified, he suffered them, at their earnest prayer, to see, touch, and kiss his sacred

hands adorned with those holy, glorious, and sacred stigmata; and so leaving them in great joy and consolation, he parted from them and came down from the holy mountain.

#### OF THE FOURTH CONSIDERATION OF THE SACRED, HOLY STIGMATA

As to the fourth consideration, be it known, that after the true love of Christ had perfectly transformed St Francis into God, and into the true image of Christ crucified, that angelical man, having fulfilled the Lent of forty days in honour of St Michael the Archangel on the holy mountain of Alvernia, came down from the mount with Brother Leo and a devout peasant, on whose ass he rode, because, by reason of the nails in his feet, he could hardly go on foot. And the fame of his sanctity being already spread abroad through the country by the shepherds who had seen Mount Alvernia on fire, and who took it to be a token of some great miracle wrought by God on his person, no sooner had he descended from the mountain than all the people of the country through which he passed, men and women, great and small, pressed round him, eagerly desiring to touch and kiss his hands; and though he could not altogether repress their devotion, yet, in order to conceal the sacred, holy stigmata, he wrapped bandages round his hands, and covered them with his sleeves, giving them only the fingers to kiss. But though he thus strove to conceal the secret of the sacred stigmata, in order to shun all occasion of worldly glory, it pleased God for his own glory to work many miracles by virtue of the same holy stigmata, and especially in this journey from Mount Alvernia to St Mary of the Angels. And the same hath he since reviewed in many and divers parts of the world, both during the lifetime of St Francis and after his glorious death, that their mysterious and marvelous virtue, and the exceeding charity and mercy of Christ towards him, might be made manifest to the world by clear and evident miracles, such as these which follow.

At St Francis drew near to a city on the confines of Arezzo, a woman came to him weeping bitterly, and carrying in her arms her son, a boy of eight years old, so greatly swollen with dropsy that he could not stand upright upon his feet; and laying him down before St Francis she besought him to pray to God for him. St Francis first betook himself to prayer, and then laying his holy hands upon the child, the swelling subsided at once, and he restored him completely cured to his mother, who received him with great joy, and took him home, thanking God and St Francis, and taking delight in showing her restored child to all her neighbours who came to her house to witness the cure.

On the same day St Francis passed on through Borgo San Sepolcro; and as soon as he approached the castle, a multitude of people poured forth from the castle and the neighbouring villages to meet him, many of them bearing olive-branches in their hands, and crying aloud: "Behold the saint; behold the saint!" And in their devotion and eager desire to touch him, the people pressed mightily upon him; but he, being rapt in contemplation, and his mind wholly fixed on God, although thus pressed upon and dragged hither and thither by the multitude, was insensible of all that passed around, and knew nothing of all that was said or done, or even that he had passed by that castle or through the country. When, therefore, the multitude had returned to their own houses, and he had reached a house of lepers about a mile on the other side of the town, coming to himself as if just returned from the other world, the heavenly contemplative asked his

companions: "When shall we come to the town?" For his soul, fixed and rapt in the contemplation of heaven, had been unconscious of all things earthly, and perceived neither lapse of time, nor change of place, nor persons passing by. And the like befell him many different times, as his companions often experienced.

That evening St Francis arrived at the house of the brethren of Monte Casale, where was a friar so grievously ill, and so cruelly afflicted by his sickness, that it seemed to be rather an infliction and torment of the devil than any natural infirmity; for sometimes he would cast himself down on the ground, trembling fearfully, and foaming at the mouth. At other times every nerve in his body seemed to be distended, or contracted, or distorted, and he would spring convulsively from the ground, and immediately fall prostrate again. St Francis, then, being seated at table, and hearing from the brethren the miserable condition of this friar, which seemed past remedy, took compassion on him, and taking a morsel of the bread which he was eating, he made the sign of the cross upon it with those holy hands that bore the stigmata of Christ, and sent it to the sick brother, who had no sooner eaten it than he was perfectly cured, and never more felt any return of his infirmity.

On the following morning St Francis sent two of the brethren from that place to abide at Alvernia, and with them the peasant who had lent him the ass, desiring him to return to his house. And having remained a few days in that place, St Francis departed and went to the city of Castello. And behold many of the citizens came to meet him, bringing with them a woman who for a long time past had been possessed by a devil; and they humbly besought him to deliver her, because she troubled all the country round by howling fearfully, or shrieking piteously, or at times by barking like a dog. Then St Francis, having first prayed and made the sign of the most holy cross over her, commanded the devil to depart out of her; and forthwith he departed, leaving her whole both in mind and body. And as the news of the miracle spread among the people, another woman full of faith brought a child sick of a grievous ulcer, and devoutly besought him to bless it with his hand. Then St Francis accepting her devotion, took the child, and removing the bandage, made the sign of the most holy cross thrice over the wound; and then, having bound it up again with his own hands, he delivered the child to his mother, who, as it was evening, laid him down immediately on his bed to sleep. In the morning, when she went to take him out of his bed, she found the wound unbandaged and perfectly healed, no trace remaining of it, save that in the place where it had been there was impressed the likeness of a red rose in testimony of the miracle, which remained until his death, and many a time excited him to devotion to St Francis, by whom he had been healed.

In that city, at the desire of the devout inhabitants, St Francis abode a month, during which time he wrought many miracles, and then departed thence to go to St Mary of the Angels with Brother Leo and a good man who had lent him an ass on which he rode. It so happened that, as they traveled night and day, finding no place where they could lodge for the night, they took shelter from the cold and the snow, which was falling fast, in the cavity of a hollow rock. And night coming upon them as they remained under this miserable shelter, which scarcely protected them from the inclemency of the weather, the poor man to whom the ass belonged, being unable to sleep for the cold, and having no means of kindling a fire, began to complain bitterly, and to weep and almost to murmur at

St Francis for having brought him into such a place. Then St Francis, hearing him, had compassion on him, and in fervour of spirit stretched out his hand and touched him, when - wonderful to say - no sooner did the poor man feel the touch of that hand which had been pierced and enkindled by the seraph's fire than all sensation of cold departed from him, and such glowing heat inflamed him within and without, as if he had been placed near the mouth of a fiery furnace, that, being instantly relieved and comforted both in body and soul, he fell asleep, and slept - as he said himself - all night through till morning, more sweetly amid the rocks and snow than he had ever slept in his own bed.

Now when they had journeyed for another day, they came to St Mary of the Angels, and as they drew nigh to it, Brother Leo lifted up his eyes and beheld a most beautiful cross, and upon it the image of the Crucified, going before St Francis, who followed after it; so that when he stood still, the cross stood still, and when he went forward, the cross went ever before him; and such was the splendour of that cross, that it not only illumined the face of St Francis, but made all the way bright around him, and so continued shining till he entered the convent of St Mary of the Angels. St Francis, then, coming with Brother Leo, was received by the brethren with great charity and joy, and from that day forward St Francis dwelt for the most of his time at St Mary of the Angels until the day of his death. And as the fame of his sanctity and of his miracles went forth more and more out of the depth of his humility did he conceal the gifts and graces of God as far as he could, calling himself the greatest of sinners.

On occasion of this Brother Leo marveling, on a certain day, considered foolishly within himself: "See now, how he calleth himself the greatest of sinners, and that before all men, when he has become great in the Order and is so much honoured of God; while yet in secret he never confessed himself to be guilty of carnal sin; is it then that he is still a virgin?" And thenceforth there took him a great longing to know the truth in this matter, yet did he not dare to ask St Francis. Wherefore he turned himself to God, praying earnestly that he would reveal to him the truth he so much wished to know; and by his many prayers and through the merit of St Francis he was heard, and it was answered to him that St Francis was, in very truth, a virgin in his body, by means of the vision that followed. For in his vision he beheld St Francis standing in a high place and an honourable, whereto none other could attain to stand beside him; and it was said unto him in the spirit that this place, so lofty and so excellent, signified the most high virginal chastity of St Francis, which was wholly reasonable in that flesh of his that was to be adorned with the sacred, holy stigmata of Christ.

St Francis finding that, by reason of the stigmata of Christ, his bodily strength was gradually wasting away, and that he could no longer rule over the Order, hastened to assemble a general chapter; and the brethren being all met together, he humbly laid before them his incapacity, by reason of his infirmities, any longer to fill the office of general, although he might not resign the generalate, to which he had been appointed by the Pope, nor name a successor without his express sanction; but he nominated Brother Peter Cattani his vicar, affectionately and with all his heart recommending the Order to him and to the ministers provincial. And having done this, St Francis, being strengthened in spirit, raised his eyes and hands to heaven, saying thus: "To thee, O Lord my God, - to



thee do I commend thy family, which till now thou hast committed to me, and of which, by reason of my infirmities, as thou knowest, O my sweetest Lord, I can now no longer take care. I commend it also to the ministers provincial, who shall render an account to thee at the day of judgment if any brother perish by their negligence, or evil example, or over- sharp correction. And by these words, as it pleased God, all the brethren understood that he spoke of the sacred stigmata - which he called his infirmities - and none of them could refrain from weeping for devotion. And thenceforth he left all the care and government of the Order in the hands of his vicar and of the ministers provincial; and he said: "Now that for my infirmities I have given over the care of the Order, I have nothing to do henceforth but to pray to God for this our Religion, and to give a good example to the brethren. And I know moreover that, even were I freed from my infirmities, the greatest good which I could do to the Order would be to pray to God for it continually, that he would be pleased to defend and rule and preserve it."

Now, as we have said before, St Francis did all in his power to conceal the sacred, holy stigmata, for after he received them he kept always his hands and feet covered; yet could he not hinder that many times several of the brethren contrived to see and touch them, and especially the wound of the side, which with the greatest diligence he sought to conceal. Thus a brother who waited on him, having one day persuaded him to take off his tunic in his presence that he might shake the dust out of it, clearly saw the wound in the side; and thrusting his hand suddenly into the bosom of St Francis, he touched it with three fingers, ascertaining its length and breadth: and in like manner it was discovered at another time by his vicar. But it was attested still more clearly by Brother Ruffino, a man of most sublime contemplation, of whom St Francis was wont to say that in all the world he knew not a holier man; so that for his great sanctity he loved him most heartily and granted to him all he desired. In three several ways did this Brother Ruffino certify both himself and others of the reality of the sacred, holy stigmata, and especially of that in the side. The first was that, having obtained permission to wash his undergarment, which St Francis wore very loose, that by wrapping it well around him he might conceal the wound in his pierced side, the said Brother Ruffino examined it diligently and continually found traces of blood on the right side of the garment, by which he knew for certain that the blood came from the wound aforesaid; whereupon St Francis reproved him for spreading out the garment in order to discover the mark of the wound. The second way was that the said Brother Ruffino once purposely put his finger into the wound in the side; when St Francis, for the pain he felt, cried aloud: "God forgive thee, Brother Ruffino, for what thou hast done." The third way was that this brother once besought St Francis of his charity to change habits with him, to which the charitable father having consented, although unwillingly, in the exchange of the garments he clearly saw the wound in the right side. Brother Leo likewise, and many others of the brethren, saw the sacred, holy stigmata during the lifetime of St Francis; and although for their sanctity these brethren were worthy of all faith upon their simple word, nevertheless, to remove all doubt did they swear upon the sacred Scriptures that they had seen them plainly. Certain of the Cardinals, also, who enjoyed great familiarity with St Francis, composed of the said sacred, holy stigmata. The Sovereign Pontiff also, Pope Alexander, when preaching to the people in the presence of the Cardinals, among whom was the holy Brother Bonaventure, himself a Cardinal, affirmed that with his own eyes he had seen the sacred, holy stigmata

of St Francis during his lifetime. And the Lady Jacopa di Settesoli, who was the greatest lady in Rome of her time, and most devout to St Francis, before and after his death saw and kissed them with great reverence; for she came from Rome to Assisi by divine revelation, at the death of St Francis; and thus it came to pass. A few days before his death, St Francis lay sick in the bishop's palace at Assisi with certain of his companions and notwithstanding his infirmity he oftentimes sang canticles in honour of Jesus Christ. One of his companions, therefore, said to him one day: "Father, thou knowest that the citizens of this place have great faith in thee, and account thee to be a holy man, perhaps therefore they may think that, if thou be what they take thee for, being so grievously sick, thou shouldest think upon death in this thine infirmity, and weep rather than sing. And know that this singing of thine, and of ours whom thou wilt have to sing with thee, is heard by many in the palace and without, forasmuch as this palace is guarded on thine account by many men-at-arms, who may perhaps take scandal thereat. Therefore I think," said this friar, "that thou wilt do well to depart hence, and to return to St Mary of the Angels; for we are not well here among seculars." Then St Francis answered him: "Thou knowest, dearest brother, that two years ago, when we were at Foligno, God revealed the end of my life to thee, and he revealed it to me also - that in this sickness, and in a few days, this my life shall come to an end. And in this revelation God assured me of the remission of all my sins, and of the bliss of Paradise. Until I received that revelation, I wept over my sins and at the thought of death; but since I have received it, I have been so full of joy that I can weep no longer; and therefore I sing, and will sing to God, who hath bestowed on me the gift of his grace, and hath certainly promised me the gift of heavenly glory. For our departure hence, it pleaseth me well, and I willingly consent thereto; but find you a way to carry me, for because of my infirmity I cannot walk." Then the brethren took him up and bore him on their shoulders, and many of the citizens went with them. And coming to a hostel which was on the way, St Francis said to those who bore him: "Set me down upon the ground, and turn my face towards the city"; and when he was thus turned towards Assisi, he blessed the city with many blessings, saying: "Blessed be thou of God, O holy city, forasmuch as by means of thee many souls shall be saved, and in thee many servants of God shall dwell, and of thy children many shall be elected to eternal life." And when he had said these words, he caused himself to be borne onwards to St Mary of the Angels; and they carried him to the infirmary, and there laid him down to rest. Then St Francis called to him one of his companions, and said to him: "Dearest brother, God has revealed to me that by this sickness, a few days hence, I am to pass from this life; and thou knowest that the devout Lady Jacopa di Settesoli, who is so dear to our Order, would be deeply grieved, should she hear of my death, not to have been present at it; therefore signify to her that, if she desire to see me again in life, she must come hither with all speed." And the brother made answer: "Too true, Father; for indeed, because of the great devotion she bears thee, most unmeet were it that she should not be present at thy death." "Go, then," said St Francis; "bring pen and paper, and write as I shall bid thee." And when he had brought them, St Francis dictated the letter in the following form: "The Lady Jacopa, the handmaid of the Lord, Brother Francis, the poor little one of Christ, wisheth health and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost in our Lord Jesus Christ. Be it known to thee, most beloved, that Christ our Lord hath by his grace revealed to me the day of my death, which is near at hand. Wherefore, if thou wouldst find me alive, as soon as thou shalt receive this letter, do thou set forth immediately, and come to St Mary of the

Angels; for if thou come not forthwith, thou shalt not find me alive. And bring with thee hair-cloth wherein to wrap my body, and the cerecloth that will be needed for my burial. I pray thee that thou wouldst bring me also some of the food such as thou gavest to me when I was sick at Rome." Now, while this letter was being written, it was revealed to St Francis that the Lady Jacopa was coming to him, and was already near at hand, and that she had brought with her all the things which were asked for in the letter. Having, then, received this revelation, St Francis bade the brother who was writing to write no more, for it was not needed, but to lay the letter aside; whereupon the brethren greatly marveled why he would not have it finished or sent. But a short space afterwards, there came a loud knocking at the door, and St Francis bade the porter open it; which, when he had done, he saw the Lady Jacopa, the most noble of all the ladies of Rome, with two of her sons, who were senators of Rome, and a great company of horsemen, and they entered the house; and the Lady Jacopa went straight to the infirmary to St Francis. And St Francis felt great consolation at her coming, and she also rejoiced exceedingly to find him alive, and to speak with him. Then she declared to him how, being at Rome in prayer, God had revealed to her that his life would shortly come to an end, and that he would send for her and ask those things of her which she had now brought. Then she brought them to St Francis and gave him to eat; and when he had eaten, and was now much strengthened thereby, the Lady Jacopa knelt at the feet of St Francis, and with such exceeding devotion kissed and bathed with her tears those feet, marked and adorned with the wounds of Christ, that the brethren who were standing round thought they beheld the Magdalene at the feet of Jesus Christ, and could in no way remove her from him. At length, after a long space of time they raised her up, and, taking her aside, they asked her how it was she had come thus opportunely, and thus well provided with all things needful for St Francis, both in his life and for his burial. To this the Lady Jacopa answered, that as she was praying one night in Rome she heard a voice from heaven, which said: "If thou wouldst find St Francis alive, go without delay to Assisi, and take with thee those things which thou hast been accustomed to prepare for him in sickness, and those which shall be needed for his burial." And, continued the Lady, "As the voice bade me do, so have I done." So the Lady Jacopa abode at Assisi until St Francis passed from this life and was buried; and she and all her company paid great honour to his burial, and bore all the cost of it. Then returning to Rome, that noble lady soon afterwards died a holy death, desiring, out of devotion to St Francis, to be carried to St Mary of the Angels, and there to be buried; which was done according to her will.

#### HOW JEROME, WHO AT FIRST BELIEVED NOT, SAW AND TOUCHED THE SACRED, HOLY STIGMATA OF ST FRANCIS

On the death of St Francis his glorious, sacred stigmata were seen and kissed, not only by the said Lady Jacopa and her company, but by many citizens of Assisi; among others by a knight of great renown, named Jerome, who had doubted much, and disbelieved them; as St Thomas disbelieved the wounds of Christ. And to assure himself and others, he boldly, in the presence both of the brethren and of seculars, moved the nails in the hands and feet, and strongly pressed the wound in the side. By which means he was enabled to bear constant witness to the truth of the miracle, swearing on the Gospels that he had seen and

touched the glorious, holy stigmata of St Francis, the which were seen and touched also by St Clare and her religious, who were present at his burial.

#### OF THE DAY AND YEAR OF THE DEATH OF ST FRANCIS

St Francis, the glorious confessor of Christ, passed from this life in the year of our Lord 1226, on Saturday, October 4, and was buried on the Sunday following. He died in the twentieth year of his conversion - that is, from the time when he began to do penance - the second year after the impression of the sacred, holy stigmata, and the forty-fifth of his age.

#### OF THE CANONIZATION OF ST FRANCIS

St Francis was canonized in the year 1228 by Pope Gregory IX, who came in person to Assisi for his canonization. And this shall suffice for the fourth consideration.

#### OF THE FIFTH AND LAST CONSIDERATION OF THE SACRED, HOLY STIGMATA

The fifth and last consideration is of certain apparitions, revelations, and miracles, which God vouchsafed after the death of St Francis, in confirmation of the truth of his sacred stigmata, and to certify the day and hour on which Christ gave them to him. In the year of our Lord, then, 1282, in the month of October, Brother Philip, the minister of Tuscany, by the command of Brother John Buonagrazia, the minister general, required under holy obedience Brother Matthew de Castiglione of Arezzo, a man of great devotion and sanctity, to tell him what he knew of the day and hour in which the sacred, holy stigmata were impressed by Christ on the body of St Francis, because he had heard that it had been revealed to him. And Brother Matthew, being constrained by holy obedience, made answer thus: "Being one of the community of Alvernia, last May I was praying in my cell, which is on the spot where the seraph is believed to have appeared. And in my prayer I besought God most devoutly that he would be pleased to make known to some person the day, the hour, and the place in which the sacred, holy stigmata were impressed on the body of St Francis. And persevering thus for a long time in this prayer, St Francis appeared to me in great glory, and said to me: 'My son, what prayer art thou making to God?' And I said to him: 'Father, I am praying such and such things.' And he said to me: 'I am thy Father Francis. Dost thou know me?' 'Yes, Father,' said I. Then he showed me the sacred, holy stigmata in his hands and feet and side, saying: 'The time is now come when God wills that to be manifested for his glory, which the brethren have not hitherto sought to know. Know, then, that he who appeared to me was no angel, but Jesus Christ himself under the appearance of a seraph, who, with his own hands, impressed those wounds upon my body, as he himself received them in his body on the cross; and it was thus. On the day before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, an angel came to me, and bade me, on the part of God, to prepare to receive with patience whatsoever he should be

pleased to send me. And I made answer that I was prepared to receive and endure whatever God should be pleased to appoint for me. And on the following morning, being the morning of Holy Cross day, which in that year fell on a Friday, I left my cell at daybreak in great fervour of spirit, and went to pray in that very spot where thou now dwellest, where I was often accustomed to pray. And as I was praying there descended through the air with great rapidity the figure of a young man crucified, in the guise of a seraph with six wings. At which marvelous sight I knelt down humbly, and began devoutly to contemplate the unbounded love of Jesus Christ crucified, and the unbounded anguish of his Passion. And such compassion did this spectacle excite within me, that it seemed to me as if I felt that Passion in my own body, and the whole mountain shone like the sun in his presence: and, thus, descending, he came close to me. And standing before me, he spoke to me certain secret words, which I have never yet revealed to anyone, but the time is now at hand when they shall be revealed. Then after a little space, Christ departed and returned to heaven, and I found myself thus signed with these wounds. Go, then,' said St Francis, 'and assure thy minister of these things; for this is the work of God and not of man.' Having said these words, St Francis blessed me and returned to heaven, accompanied by a great multitude of glorious spirits." All these things the said Brother Matthew declared that he had seen, not sleeping, but waking. And he made oath that he had thus related them to the said minister in his cell at Florence, when so enjoined by him to do under holy obedience.