

St. Francis Of Assisi

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St. Francis intentionally showed a life full of virtue in his own manner of living. He is regarded as a historical hero and a known saint, canonized two years after his death. His life, at the time, was a dramatic lesson, just meant to be watched but not imitated. He was born to Pietro and Pica Bernardone in 1181. His father was a rich silk merchant. St. Francis was raised in absolute privilege, living an expensive lifestyle. He held costly parties and dressed in the finest fashions of silk. At the time of his birth in Assisi, there was an increase and expansion in the medieval West (William R. Cook; Ronald B. Herzman p.34).

Considering the wealth and the privileges surrounding him, he decided to abandon schooling and became unmanageable. Being a war hero was his ambition. To fulfil his quest, he decided to join the Assisi military to fight against Perugia in 1202. Assisi's military was defeated, and the troops butchered, and some were imprisoned, including St. Francis. He never knew God's mission with him. After his release, he encountered a Christ vision at Spoleto and another vision when he returned to Assisi of Christ, saying, "Go and rebuild my church. It is falling down" (Lawrence 302). The visions he experienced are what made his lifestyle different forever.

In spite of the comfortable and wealthy life, St. Francis chose to live a poor life. He put on rags and wore wooden shoes. His father became extremely angry and even decided to disown him. At one point, he sold part of his father's belongings to raise money for renovating the church that Christ had talked about in a vision. Moreover, he sold his clothes and gave them to the poor. He later returned this money after a severe relationship between him and his father had ended. Because he was focused on the mission of rebuilding the church, St. Francis begged money from the townsmen of him.

Upon renouncing the rights to his inheritance, St. Francis resolved that there would be no man anywhere poorer than him (William R. Cook; Ronald B. Hertzman p.34). In 1206, he went to Rome and identified himself with the needy while helping them take care of people living with leprosy. For him, living in this world meant praying constantly in deserted chapels and caring for lepers. Francis lived alone for more than two years, just wandering because of Christianity. The then church was extremely powerful. The pope and bishops were rich. They cared mostly about getting wealthy and collecting tithes rather than caring for the needy. This was a completely different scenario for St. Francis. He passionately served his God by being pure to the heart. He certainly knew that he would be rewarded one day. His actions are a true reflection that a Christian should possess.

After a long time of preaching the gospel around Assisi, he was joined by some loyal followers. Together with his followers, they lived as a community in Assisi where preaching and his work for the poor became more engrossed in him. He became more devoted and stood firm for the other poor Italian preachers because they obeyed and had respect for the church doctrines and authorities. The state of their churches and huts actually portrayed the level of their poverty. They resided in small

churches and simple huts. They spent their night on the ground and had very few books, and the huts had no chairs or tables. This poverty did not deter them from serving their God purposefully.

In the year 1209, St. Francis became the founder of the order of Friars Minor, something that took people by surprise because he stood for poverty, obedience and chastity. In turn, he gained popularity, and many followers came in (Patricia Appelbaum p.41). Francis intended to spread the gospel mostly to people from around Assisi. Today, Christians see St. Francis as a gentle saint who could even preach to the birds and always enjoy the love of God. Out of their love for preaching, he wandered throughout Italy. In 1212, he set off as a missionary and went eastwards to preach. At one point, he crossed the Mediterranean and visited Egypt, aiming to meet the then-sultan and share with him about Christianity. He risked crossing the enemy lines and trying to convert the Muslim sultan. Though unconvinced by the sultan, he became impressed by St. Francis. Such commitment shown by Francis is clear evidence that God always wants to be known by everybody. Even though he was conveying information to his enemies, God kept protecting and using him.

St. Francis' entire life experience is one way to show Christians about living in the spirit. He has actually simplified the issue of spirituality. His spiritual life has illuminated many Christian lives who were and still are willing to be like him. His life today has become exemplary to the extent of being admired not only by Catholics but also by non-Catholics (Edward Yarnold p.98). His enigma is deeper beyond our understanding. St. Francis was an orthodox medieval Catholic. He occasionally encouraged his followers to make regular confessions, receive the Eucharist, and accept Christ's presence in the Eucharist. He also encourages them to preach only with the bishop's permission.

St. Francis's words and instructions to his followers inform today's church leaders of their duties and responsibilities. It is no doubt that St. Francis accomplished God's mission in him. He proclaimed God's name in the entire Italy and abroad before he died.

Work Cited

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