

# Franciscans – Walking in Courage

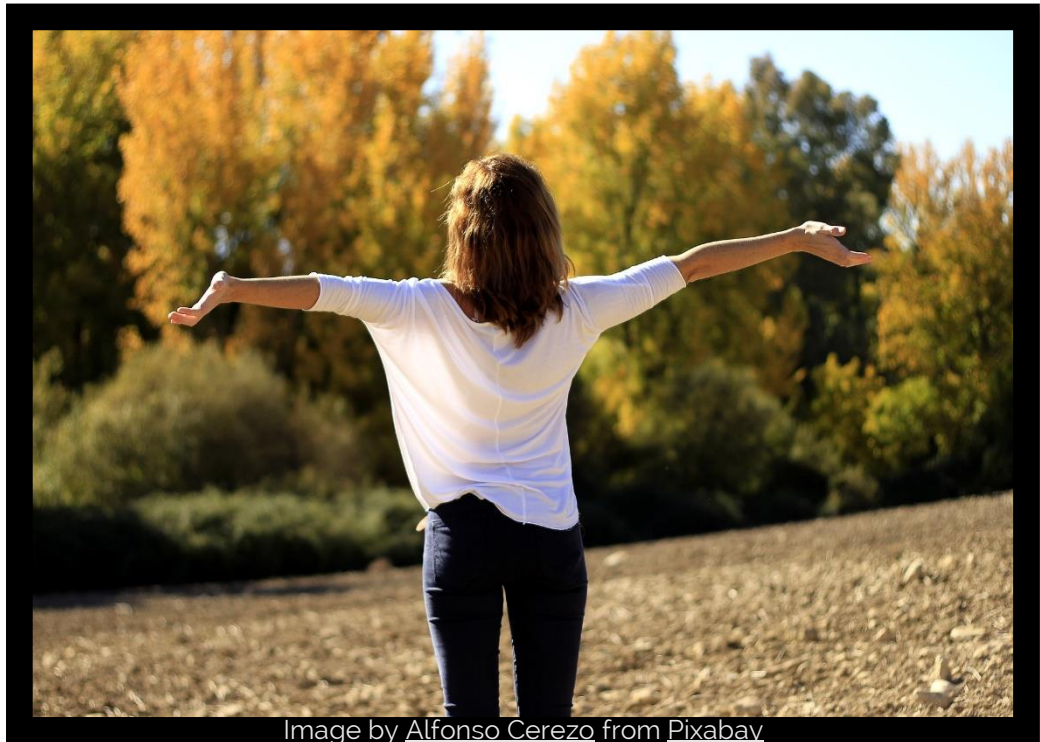


Image by Alfonso Cerezo from Pixabay

# Going Deeper

# Franciscans – Walking in Courage

## Prayer Opportunity One

### We Reflect

Emotions are a normal and important part of what it is to be human.

Of all the range of emotions perhaps it is passion which is the most powerful.

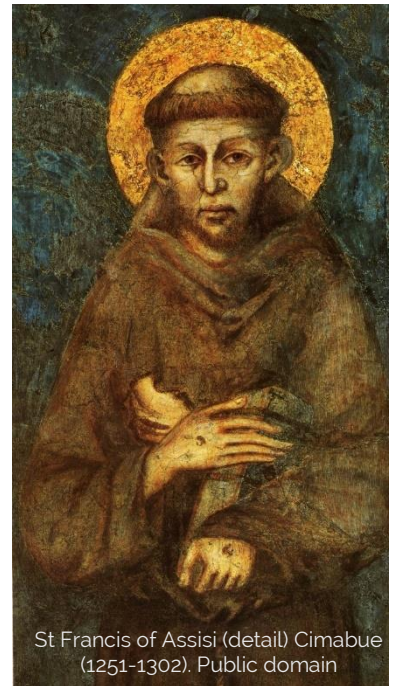
In reflecting upon the life of St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan orders, it can be seen that he was indeed one of the world's passionate Christians.

Born in Umbria in 1182 to a prosperous merchant family, it was intended he follow his father into trade. The worldly Francis dreamed of being a troubadour or knight.

In 1201 he took part in an attack on Perugia where he was captured and kept hostage for a year. During his captivity he became extremely ill and it was then that his mind began to turn to God.

One step at a time Francis gave up his comfortable, upwardly mobile, middle class life. He consciously and deliberately chose actions to open his heart and mind to what he prayed would be God's will.

Francis's life reminds us of the need for courage, as the path God often calls us to is rarely the path we would choose for ourselves.



St Francis of Assisi (detail) Cimabue (1251-1302). Public domain

## **We Listen**

### **A Reading from the book of Psalm 138:1-3 (JB)**

*I thank you, Lord, with all my heart, for you have listened to the cry I uttered.  
In the presence of the angels I sing to you, I bow down before your Holy Temple.  
I praise your name for your faithful love and your constancy;  
your promises surpass even your fame.  
You heard me on the day I called and gave new strength to my heart.*

## **We Respond**

Take a moment to slowly reread the Psalm.

- Highlight the words or phrases which speak to you.
- What meaning does this have for you at this time?

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## **Tactile Prayer**

Working with clay (or any artistic medium) encourages us to develop and explore our spiritual sides through a creative experience.

Although participating in this style of prayer in silence is a good idea, some reflective music may add to the experience.

### **Gifts and Talents**

Work your clay with your hands until it is pliable.

Take the clay in your hands and begin to knead it.

Push it, pull it and stretch it.

Roll it into a ball, make it flat like a pancake.

As you work the clay think about who you are,

what are your gifts and

what are your strengths.

Mould something that symbolises a gift you have,

a strength you have.

When finished, spend some time reflecting on your sculpting  
and the gift it symbolises.

*How do you use this gift?*

Conclude with your own prayer of thanks and gratitude.

# Franciscans – Walking in Courage

## Prayer Opportunity Two

### We Reflect:

St. Francis sought out the poor, sought out the sick, to tend to them - even spending time in a leper colony to overcome his fear of the diseased. He repaired ruined churches, by begging for rocks and other materials.

To lead the life of humility that Jesus instructed, Francis deliberately gave up ownership of everything and begged from door to door for his own food.

Now, we would have to admit that if one of our friends gave away her house in the city, left a role as aspiring CEO of her family's textile business and moved to the Lonely Street Inn, we would be very worried. If she then roamed the streets begging for food or money in order to become humble, we would think she was crazy. But, would we have the courage to do the same?

A good job and high standing in the community is of utmost importance. Right?

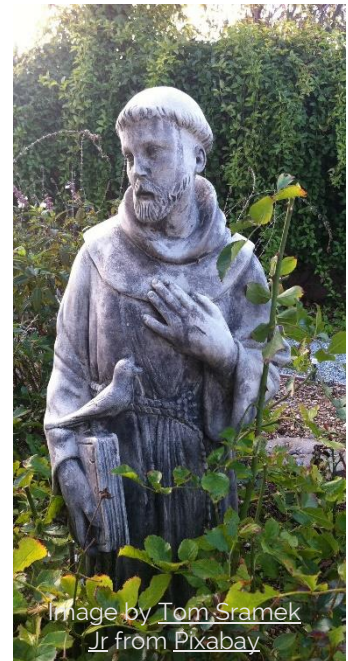
Francis and those who followed him heard a different calling.

Franciscan spirituality embraces living with the poorest of the poor, the sick and the ostracized. Through opening our hearts to the lives of others we are open to discovering that these people are not the "*other*"; and that we are all connected in the mystery of creation.

It is in recognising the beauty within the homeless woman, within the AIDS sufferer within the man begging for your change, that we are able to reach out our hand and our hearts.

Franciscan eyes see God in the homeless, the sick, the ostracized and the lost. A Franciscan way of life seeks to courageously strengthen your heart.

It calls you to do as Francis did, to step out of your comfort zones and develop your well of compassion and a love for all of God's creation. That takes courage.



## **We Listen**

### **A reading from Ephesians 1:15-18 (NRSV)**

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.

## **We Respond**

What do you need courage for, right now in your life?

Take a moment to slowly reread the verse from Ephesians.

- Does any particular part speak to you?

As we saw in the staff prayer, courage often comes from having a vision greater than the difficulty or challenge before us. For Jesus, and for Francis, their vision and life deeply centred in God, gave courage, peace and vitality.

What do you understand of God?

- Let your thoughts wander around this question.

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## **Tactile Prayer**

This prayer is a mixture of a guided meditation and tactile prayer.  
Read the instructions and remember them as best you can.  
Spend as long as you wish in your prayer.

### **Gifts and Talents**

Pick up your clay  
Push it, pull it and stretch it.  
Break it into small bits and connect it back together

As you do this, think about 2 or 3 times of great significance in your life.

Select one of these times and work the clay into a shape that symbolise this part of your journey through life.

With eyes closed, feel the clay symbol you have created.  
Imagine you can see your journey through life as a road and see yourself walking along the road.

Imagine you can see Jesus walking with you.  
Together you walk to the time symbolised in your clay.

Talk to Jesus – tell him about your symbol and why it is so significant to you.

Before you leave Jesus says –  
***“Wait! I want to tell you something important”***.  
He speaks to you.

When you are ready, you turn and leave the road, saying goodbye to Jesus and promising to meet with him again.  
Settle back to the room you are in, to where you are sitting.

Conclude with your own prayer of thanks

**"Prayer of St Francis"**

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace!

Where there is hatred let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.