

Reflections on a Pilgrimage

As I anticipated pilgrimage to the sacred places of Thuir, Rome, Assisi, my focus was the Year of St. Francis. I let Francis be the guide.

Ahead of the trip, I endeavored to become somewhat familiar with Rome and where I could find the footsteps of Francis! Little did I know that I would find him in just about every 'chiesa' we visited; but, it was St. John Lateran and San Francesco a Ripa where Francis had been with his early companions. The other places where the saints had served; early days of Christianity; holy sanctuaries of Our Lady.

Two surprises of Rome: Chiesa San Giorgio di Velabro, where the relic of St. George skull (the top section) is enshrined in front of the altar!

After returning to America I learned that Francis had made pilgrimages to Rome: his first was to the Tomb of Peter, where he asked Peter to help him discover the treasure of Gospel poverty; and, in the piazza Francis had exchanged his clothes with a beggar and begged in the French language.

On to Assisi – amazing to be able to actually visit the places where Francis -

- Was imprisoned in 1206; encountered a beggar;
- was baptized, as were Clare, his early companions, and Emperor Frederick II;
- prayed before the crucifix and 20 years later composed The Canticle of the Creatures in 1225;
- founded the Order under Mary's patronage; obtained the Pardon of Assisi in 1216; died here 800 years ago on October 3;
- was brought before Bishop Guido to settle a dispute with his father; called God his father; reconciled the mayor and bishop; resided here shortly before he died;
- converted certain robbers and assassins who later became friars;
- and the brothers set up their initial fraternal life; in the middle of the night he ate with a hungry friar; were evicted;
 - I wish I knew that when we were there: we were also "evicted" from Rivo Torto!
- had an experience of God;
- reenacted Bethlehem in 1223; the Christmas creche;
- wrote the final version of the 1223 Rule;
- spent time in prayer and solitude on Monte Subasio; he asked Sylvester to help discern whether to preach or to live a contemplative life;
- went six times for solitude; on his last visit, September 1224, he received the Stigmata; composed The Praises of God and wrote his Blessing for Brother Leo;
- was buried on May 25, 1230 (initially buried in San Giorgio 1226-1230 – the church where Francis received his elementary education and learned the basic catechism); Br. Elias and early companions lived here;
 - At the Sacro Convento, I got to visit both the Archives and the Library of the Order!

Thuine

While in Thuine, I let our founders allow me to experience their presence and spirit. One place where I first experienced them was as I looked out the bedroom window – I could see St. George Church, and it was as if I wanted to look into the past and watch Father Dall and Mother M. Anselma; the charism alive in our Sisters today at the Motherhouse and daughterhouses.

Surprises in Thuine? Yes! I visited in 1992. I was surprised by the Sisters who remember me from that time! Also, to see Sister M. Caelina there!

My expectations? Though I didn't know what to expect, having walked in the footsteps of Francis and Mother Anselma allowed me to bring them closer to my ongoing pilgrimage on earth.