



*“What we may glory in is . . . bearing daily
the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Admonitions, 5

The Little Flowers **of** **ST. FRANCIS** **OF ASSISI**

REVISED EDITION
WITH A PREFACE
BY
REV. VALENTINE LONG, O.F.M.



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PREFACE

IT happens to be one of the romantic ironies of history that the man of his day who most wanted to be forgotten is the best remembered. St. Francis of Assisi had stripped himself of fine clothes to don a coarse habit, disowned his heritage of great wealth, and forfeited his high rank to associate with beggars. He did his best to remain hidden—and he failed. The world knows and loves him above every other personality of his generation, of his century, indeed of the entire Middle Ages—covering, to say the least, a long period replete with renowned personages.

Nevertheless our assertion is valid. Who else, from that entire era, has so caught the fancy of the ages as that holy man who gave up every earthly advantage to gain spiritual riches, whose life was one endless prayer expressing his love for God and His entire creation, who indeed regarded all human beings and all other living things as his brothers and sisters? He who was so unworldly has earned the admiration of the entire world. For, in reading about his life, no matter what your position or your religious background, you cannot fail to be awe-struck. Certainly none of the canonized Saints of the Church hold a stronger fascination for those outside the fold, nor fill the hearts of sinners with a deeper yearning for God, than St. Francis of Assisi. And in the centuries since his death his popularity has grown ever stronger.

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A History of the Little Flowers of St. Francis

ST. FRANCIS died in the year 1226 at the age of forty-five. His most devoted followers survived for nearly half a century after his death: Brother Giles till 1261, Brother Leo till perhaps as late as 1271, the Lady Jacopa of Settesoli till 1273. During this period of more than forty years, the Franciscan Order underwent significant changes. This should not surprise, much less trouble us. Like all living things the Order grew and in growing it changed. But the change was outward, and though very marked, the hidden, flowing current of its true influences and ideals still remained.

However, those who had lived and basked in the radiant light of Francis' own presence regarded all change with suspicion. To them the new could never equal the old; and as they themselves began to age, they viewed with infinite regret the departing splendor—for such it seemed to them—of the Order they had joined in their youth. The Order continued to develop and progress, but they could not and would not change; and, naturally enough, they would recall among themselves, and to the younger generation growing up around them, all they remembered of Francis and the golden dawn of Franciscan life. And there was no lack of sympathetic listeners. All tended to reverence these aged friars, not merely because of their own personal charm and their intimate friendship with the founder, but because of the real unity of ideal and outlook running through generation after generation of the Order.

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

PART I

In the name of Jesus Christ our crucified Savior, and of Mary His Virgin Mother. In this book are contained certain little flowers—that is, miracles and pious examples of the glorious servant of Christ, St. Francis, and some of his holy companions, to the glory and praise of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER I

The First Twelve Companions of St. Francis

FIRST let us consider how the life of the glorious St. Francis was conformed in every act with that of our Blessed Lord. For just as Christ, before He began to preach, chose twelve Apostles, teaching them to despise all the things of this world and to follow Him in poverty and in the practice of all other virtues, so St. Francis, on the first founding of his Order, chose twelve companions, all lovers of poverty. And even as one of the twelve Apostles after being reproved by Christ committed suicide by hanging himself, so among the twelve companions of St. Francis there was one, Brother John della Capella, who apostatized and finally committed suicide in the same manner.

All Christians should regard such remarkable similarities not only as a source of inspiration but also as a reason for humility and fear when they consider how no one is certain of persevering in the grace of God to the end. As the holy Apostles, filled with the Spirit of God, shone forth mightily before the world in holiness and humility, so too