



## **Journey to Assisi**

**ECCLESIOLOGY AND SPIRITUAL RENEWAL PROGRAM  
FOR HEALTH CARE LEADERS**





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Fr. Greg Friedman is a Franciscan from New Mexico, currently working in Rome on a research project for the Order's study center there. He has led groups to Rome and Assisi, as well as the Holy Land. He is an author and poet, and his reflections on the Sunday Gospel can be seen on the USCCB's website each weekend, at [usccb.org](http://usccb.org).

### **About Franciscan Pilgrimages**

The Franciscan Pilgrimage Experience is a cross-cultural journeying together in the spirit of Francis and Clare in order to nurture an encounter with Jesus Christ through the spirituality of place. We commit ourselves to serve as sisters and brothers, fostering conversion to a deeper Gospel life and promoting the future vitality of the Franciscan heritage.

Since the 1970s Franciscan Pilgrimages has provided outstanding and critically acclaimed pilgrimages to those parts of the world that have shaped the faith of Christians. Our staff consists of more than fifty Franciscan and lay men and women from all the branches of the Franciscan family. Many of the pilgrimage leaders enjoy an international reputation as Franciscan scholars. Many have published.



## Morning Prayer

### Care for the Poor and Vulnerable

Leader: O Lord, open my lips ...

**All: All so that we may praise you!**

Leader: God of the dawn and the dusk, we adore and worship you as daylight floods the earth. Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you have created a wide and wonderful world. We ask your blessing upon our journey to Assisi. Awaken us to your sacred presence and to your divine, compassionate love.

**All: All so that we may praise you!**

Leader: We give you praise and thanks for showering your radiance upon us. Be our ever-near companion, spreading the road before us with beauty and peace. May we see today the mystery of your holy plan.

**All: All so that we may praise you!**

Leader: We give praise to the God of every season and pray especially to recognize you in the faces of our brothers and sisters who are poor and vulnerable.

**All: As we journey today in the footsteps of St. Clare and St. Francis, permeate our hearts with a deep love of the poor and a desire to give ourselves completely to you. Give us all an appreciation of your gifts of simplicity, poverty of spirit and respect for all of creation. We pray in the name of Jesus.**

**Amen.**

## Assisi

In ancient times, Assisi was a Roman municipium, and probably the birthplace of C. Sextus Propertius. The people adopted Christianity in the first centuries, but the historical facts of the first preaching of the Gospel by Victorinus, Savinus and Rufinus have become clouded by the legends surrounding their names. For a long period, it was included in the Duchy of Spoleto; for many centuries the neighboring cities, especially Perugia, were hostile powers. Towards the end of the 12th century, at the price of great bloodshed, it achieved the status of a self-governing city. Assisi is known to the world, however, as the city of St. Francis. He was born here in 1182, the son of Pietro Bernardone and Madonna Pica. St. Clare was born here in 1194, and Assisi is home to other saints who have become famous because of their faithfulness to the ideals of Francis and Clare. The seraphic city of Assisi, with its well cared for Franciscan shrines, is one of Christianity's most fervent centers of spirituality.

## Prayer

*O holy city of Assisi, you are renowned throughout the world for the one fact of having been the birthplace of the "Poverello," of your Saint, all celestial in his ardor. May you comprehend this privilege and manifest to the people your faithfulness to the Christian tradition which for you, too, is a cause of true and everlasting honor. Amen.*

Pope John XXIII, October 4, 1962, Tomb of Francis, Assisi



## Eucharistic Celebration Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter

### INTRODUCTORY RITE

#### Opening Hymn

*Please stand.*

*All Creatures of Our God and King*



1. All crea-tures of our God and King, Lift up your voic - es,
2. Great rush - ing winds who are so strong, You clouds a - bove that
3. Swift flow - ing wa - ter, pure and clear, Make mu - sic for your
4. Dear moth - er earth, who day by day Un - folds your bless-ings
5. All you with mer - cy in your heart, For - giv - ing oth - ers,
6. And e - ven you, most gen - tle death, Wait - ing to hush our
7. Let all things their Cre - a - tor bless, And wor - ship him in



1. let us sing: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Bright burn - ing sun with
2. sail a - long, O \_\_ praise him! Al - le - lu - ia! Fair ris - ing morn, with
3. Lord to hear, Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Fire so in - tense and
4. on our way, O \_\_ praise him! Al - le - lu - ia! All flow'rs and fruits that
5. take your part, O \_\_ sing now! Al - le - lu - ia! All you that pain and
6. fi - nal breath, O \_\_ praise him! Al - le - lu - ia! You lead back home the
7. hum - ble - ness, O \_\_ praise him! Al - le - lu - ia! Praise God the Fa - ther,



1. gold - en beams, Soft sil - ver moon that gent - ly gleams, O praise him!
2. praise re - jice, Stars night - ly shin - ing, find a voice, O praise him!
3. fierce - ly bright, Who gives to us both warmth and light, O praise him!
4. in you grow, Let them his glo - ry al - so show: O praise him!
5. sor - row bear, Praise God, and cast on him your care: O praise him!
6. child of God, For Christ our Lord that way has trod: O praise him!
7. praise the Son, And praise the Spir - it, Three in One: O praise him!



1-7. O praise him! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

Text: LM with additions; St. Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226; *Laudato sia Dio mio Signore*;  
tr. by William H. Draper, 1855-1933, alt. Music: *Auserlesene Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Cologne, 1623.

### GREETING

Presider: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen.**

Presider: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**All: And with your spirit.**

### PENITENTIAL RITE

Presider: Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Presider: Christ, have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

Presider: Lord, have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Presider: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

**All: Amen.**

### OPENING PRAYER

*Prayer will conclude with all saying Amen.*

*Please sit.*

### Liturgy of the Word

**READING** Acts 7:51-8:1a

Reader: The word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Psalm 31

**All: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

Be my rock of refuge,

a stronghold to give me safety.

You are my rock and my fortress;

for your name's sake you will lead and guide me.

**All: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

Into your hands I commend my spirit;  
you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God.  
My trust is in the LORD;  
I will rejoice and be glad of your mercy.

**All: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your kindness.  
You hide them in the shelter of your presence  
from the plottings of men.

**All: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** *Please stand and repeat after the cantor.*



**GOSPEL** John 6:30-35

Presider: The Lord be with you.

**All: And with your spirit.**

Presider: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

**All: Glory to you, O Lord.**

Presider: The Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**HOMILY**

*Please sit.*

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

*Please stand.*

*Reader will offer petitions.*

*After each one, All: Lord, hear our prayer.*

**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

**PREPARATION OF THE ALTAR AND THE GIFTS**

*Please sit.*

*After the altar is prepared, the presider will pray: Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation ... it will become for us the bread of life.*

**All: Blessed be God forever.**

*The presider continues: Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation ... it will become our spiritual drink.*

**All: Blessed be God forever.**

*The presider continues the prayer, concluding: Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.*

**All: May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands  
for the praise and glory of God's name,  
for our good and the good of all God's Holy church.**

**EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

*Please stand.*

Presider: The Lord be with you.

**All: And with your spirit.**

Presider: Lift up your hearts.

**All: We lift them up to the Lord.**

Presider: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All: It is right and just.**

Presider: It is truly right and just ... as with one voice we acclaim:

**All: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

*Please kneel or sit.*

*After more prayer, the presider will say "the mystery of faith."*

**All: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we  
proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.**

*The Eucharistic prayer concludes.*

Presider: Through him, with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever.

**All: Amen.**

**Communion Rite**

*Please stand.*

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**All:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Presider: Deliver us Lord ... Savior, Jesus Christ.

**All:** For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

## SIGN OF PEACE

Presider: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**All:** And with your spirit.

## LAMB OF GOD

*While the bread is broken, all join in the Lamb of God.*

**All:** Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

*Please kneel or sit.*

Presider: Behold the Lamb of God ... supper of the Lamb.

**All:** Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

## COMMUNION

*Those receiving communion process forward and receive.*

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*Please stand.*

## Concluding Rites

## FINAL BLESSING

Presider: The Lord be with you.


**All:** And with your spirit.

Presider: Go in peace...


**All:** Thanks be to God.

## Closing Hymn


*Make Me a Channel of Your Peace*




1. Make me a chan-nel of your peace. Where  
2. Make me a chan-nel of your peace. Where  
4. Make me a chan-nel of your peace. It



there is ha-tred, let me bring your love. Where  
there's de-spair in life, let me bring hope. Where  
is in par-don-ing that we are par-doned, in



there is in-ju-ry, your par-don, Lord, And  
there is dark-ness, on-ly light, And  
giv-ing of our-selves that we re-ceive, and in



where there's doubt, true faith in you. 1.  
where there's sad-ness, ev-er joy. 2., 4.  
dy-ing that we're born to e-ter-nal life.

Verse 3



3. Oh, Mas-ter, grant that I may nev-er seek So much to be con-



soled as to con-sole. To be un-der-stood as to un-der-



stand. To be loved as to love with all my soul. D.C.

## Basilica of Santa Chiara

### Historical Notes

The Basilica of Santa Chiara (St. Clare) stands on the site of the former San Giorgio parish church which was administered by the canons of the Cathedral of San Rufino at the time of Francis and Clare. Next to it was a hospital for the poor, outside the city walls.

Francis learned to read and write at San Giorgio and he preached for the first time in this church. Francis' body was buried in the crypt of the church in 1226 and on May 24, 1230, it was transferred to the new basilica erected in his honor by Elias.

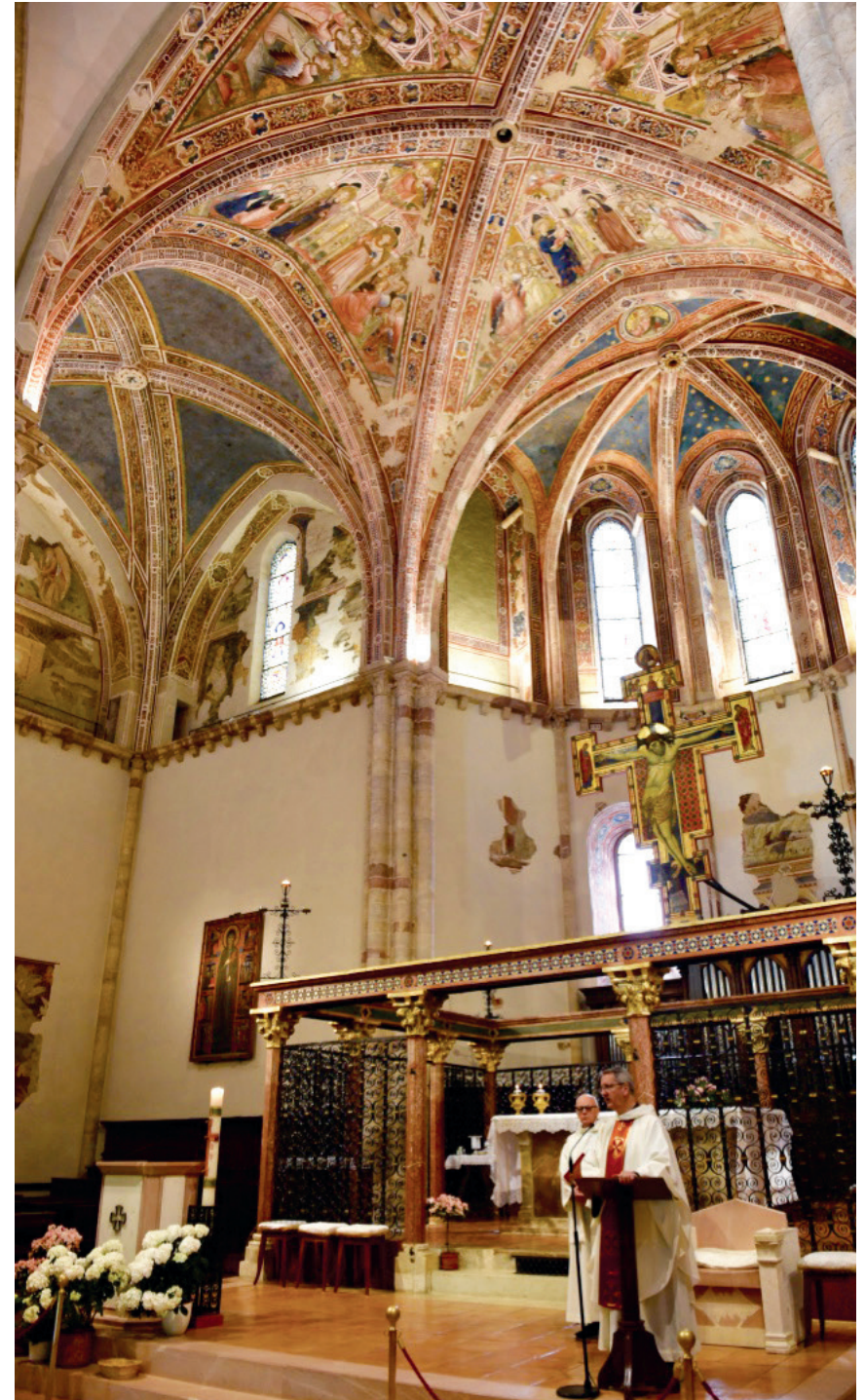
When Clare died in 1253, her body was first placed in the crypt of this same church (San Giorgio). After her canonization in 1255, Pope Alexander IV negotiated with the canons to have the property become the place for the basilica, which would be the focus for the pilgrims coming to Clare's tomb. By his decree in 1259, the few Poor Clares staying with Clare's body, and those who remained at San Damiano, became united as one community with residence at the protomonastery built on the south side of the new basilica. In 1260, St. Bonaventure, the great Franciscan theologian and head of the Franciscan Order, was present for the celebration of the completion of the basilica, at which time Clare's body was placed in a safe burial spot beneath the high altar.



### Interior

The original San Damiano crucifix was brought by the sisters to the protomonastery when they left San Damiano and it is now revered by the public in a side chapel. The crucifix has been treasured by the Order of Poor Clares and pilgrims throughout the centuries.

Clare's body was exhumed in 1850 and is maintained in a glass coffin in the crypt of the Basilica. Also in the crypt are some important Franciscan relics, including tunics worn by Francis and Clare, an alb worn by Francis, a shirt that Clare embroidered and a reliquary of Clare's hair.



## **Basilica of San Francesco Tomb of St. Francis**

### **Historical Notes**

July 17, 1228, a few days after the canonization of Francis, Pope Gregory IX laid the foundation stone for the present basilica. The transfer of Francis' body occurred on May 25, 1230. The exterior of the basilica has been much altered since it was built. Originally it consisted of two churches in the form of a Latin cross. During the 14th century the side chapels were added; also, the present transverse nave, at the east end with the chapel of St. Catherine on the north, and the double gothic portico on the south. About this time the friary buildings were enlarged, thus hiding the greater part of the south side of the church. It is believed the campanile was originally surmounted by a spire.

After numerous unsuccessful attempts to find the actual tomb, it was finally discovered in January 1818, after fifty-two nights of digging. The body was found beneath three heavy blocks of travertine, where it had been hidden by Brother Elias some 600 years before.

On the morning of September 26, 1997, two earthquakes hit Assisi in rapid succession, registering 5.5 and 6.1 respectively on the Richter scale. There was widespread devastation and many ancient buildings were destroyed or damaged, including the Basilicas of San Francesco and of Santa Chiara.



### **Upper Church**

The Upper Church of the Basilica is famous for a series of 28 frescoes along both sides of the nave depicting the Life of St. Francis and painted by the young Giotto. The artist used the *Legenda Maior*, the biography of St. Francis by St. Bonaventure (1266) to reconstruct the major events in the life of the saint.

### **Lower Church**

In the lower church, frescoes on the vault of the transept are by an unknown painter of the school of Giotto. Above the altar are others of the same school exemplifying poverty, chastity, obedience and the triumph of Francis. On the transept wall to the right of the altar, Cimabue painted St. Francis; Lorenzetti, the *Madonna del Dito* and the *Crocefissione*. Many believe that this is the nearest likeness to St. Francis that exists, showing the actual appearance of St. Francis.

### **Crypt**

Halfway down the nave of the lower church there is a stairway by which one may descend to the crypt where St. Francis is buried. After the burial place of St. Francis was discovered in 1818, a crypt was built under the lower basilica. It was designed by Pasquale Belli with precious marble in neo-classical style but was redesigned in bare stone in neo-Romanesque style by Ugo Tarchi between 1925 and 1932. In 1934 his earliest followers were entombed in the corners of the wall around the altar: Brother Rufino, Brother Angelo, Brother Masseo and Brother Leo. At the bottom of the stairs leading to the crypt there is an urn with the remains of Lady Jacopa dei Settesoli "Brother Jacopa," a Roman noblewoman and a dear friend of St. Francis. She was at his side when he died.



## The Church of St. Mary Major

### Historical Notes

The Church of St. Mary Major (Santa Maria Maggiore), one of the town's oldest churches from the 11th century, showcases early Christian Romanesque architecture and serves as a place of worship and reflection. It is historically significant for its connection to St. Francis of Assisi, who, in front of Bishop Guido, renounced his wealth and embraced a life of poverty and service — a defining moment for both his spiritual journey and the Franciscan Order.

Additionally, St. Mary Major is now home to the body of Saint Carlo Acutis. He was a cheerful, kind-hearted Italian teenager who lived an ordinary yet deeply meaningful life rooted in faith and compassion. Despite being popular and playful, loving soccer, video games, and Nutella, Carlo was also committed to self-discipline and personal growth, striving to master his passions and live virtuously. Known for his generosity, he used his own savings to help the poor rather than indulge himself. Carlo's deep Catholic faith shaped every part of his life. He had a special devotion to the Eucharist, which he called his "highway to heaven," and even created a website cataloging Eucharistic miracles around the world. When diagnosed at 15 with an aggressive form of leukemia, Carlo offered all his suffering for the Pope and the Church, expressing his hope of going straight to heaven. He passed away in 2006, and his life of quiet holiness led to his beatification in Assisi. Carlo Acutis was declared a saint by Pope Leo XIV during a canonization Mass in St. Peter's Square on September 7, 2025



## Other Holy Places in and Around Assisi

### San Damiano

#### Historical Notes

Outside the walls of Assisi, beyond the Basilica of Santa Chiara, is the Church of San Damiano. In 1205, in its ruined sanctuary, Francis was praying before its icon cross and heard Christ say, "Rebuild my house." Francis took the command literally, reconstructing the church with his own hands. After St. Clare founded the Poor Clares in 1212, she and her sisters moved to San Damiano and it was here that she died in an upstairs room on August 11, 1253.

#### Interior

Dominating the small Church of San Damiano is the crucifix, a replica of the original cross that spoke to Francis that now hangs in the Basilica of Santa Chiara. In the church are frescoes depicting St. Francis praying before the crucifix, Francis throwing away his money in front of a priest, and Francis' father threatening him with a stick. The dormitory is a large empty room over the Cloister. The spot where St. Clare died is here. The choir of the Poor Clares contains choir stalls that date from the time of St. Clare. The refectory (dining room) retains its old tables and benches.



## The San Damiano Cross

The cross pictured is the one St. Francis was praying before when he received the commission from the Lord to rebuild the Church. Fashioned in about 1100, the original cross hangs in the Basilica of Santa Chiara in Assisi. When the Poor Clares moved to Santa Chiara, they took the San Damiano Cross with them. All Franciscans cherish this cross as the symbol of their mission from God to commit their lives and resources to renew and rebuild the Church in the power of God.



## Devotion to the San Damiano Cross

In the early days of his conversion, while praying in the run-down church known as San Damiano, Francis saw the lips of Jesus move and he heard the words, “Francis, go repair my house which as you see is falling into ruin.”

At first, Francis concentrated on repairing the church buildings of San Damiano and nearby churches. Only later did he understand his commission to build up the lives of God’s people. Throughout the centuries, the cross has symbolized for Franciscans a mission to bring renewal to the Church.

## Type of Cross

The cross is called an icon cross because it contains images of persons who have a part in the meaning of the cross. The tradition of such crosses began in the Eastern Church and was carried by the Serbian monks to the Umbrian district of Italy. The Byzantine style was common in Italy before the great artists Cimabue and Giotto. The San Damiano Cross was one of a number of crosses painted with similar figures during the 12th century in Umbria.

## The Prayer Which Francis Recited Over the Cross

*Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart  
and give me, Lord, correct faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,  
sense and knowledge so that I may carry out  
Your holy and true command.*

## Carceri Hermitage

### Historical Notes

About four kilometers above Assisi, on Mount Subasio, is located the Carceri Hermitage. Although it is possible to walk to the Carceri, because of time constraints, it is best to take a taxi. St. Francis first began coming to this place in 1205, living alone in a cave and doing penance. He later founded a hermitage here where his followers could pray. Sometime between 1217 and 1222, St. Francis wrote a Rule for Hermitages.

### What to See

An entrance gate leads into an open courtyard and a well, which St. Francis is said to have used. At the end of the courtyard is a small oratory built by St. Bernardin of Siena. There is also a small friary that includes a choir, with wooden stalls and a refectory (dining room) with the original tables, both dating from around 1400.

Beyond this is an earlier chapel, the Cappella della Madonna, with an altar piece depicting the Virgin and Child. A short stairway leads down to the Grotto of St. Francis, where the saint is believed to have slept on a stone bed. From here one can look down to a hole in the stone. This is called the Devil’s Hole, where Francis is said to have tossed a demon who had been tempting one of Francis’ early followers, Brother Rufino. The porch opens onto a walkway along the top of buttressing that supports the convent.

At this end of the walkway there is a tree supported by iron braces. This is said to be the tree where St. Francis preached to the birds.

Beyond the tree, there are modern statues of St. Francis and his followers. One is focusing on the stars, the second is writing on the ground. But Francis is lying on the ground with his hands behind his head and his sandals off, gazing at the sky.

## Chiesa Nuova

### Historical Notes

The present church of Chiesa Nuova (Italian for “New Church”) was built in 1619 by Philip III of Spain, on the supposed site of the house where Francis lived. The church is dedicated to the “converted Francis” and contains some relics of the saint.

### Square

In the square outside the church is a statue of the parents of Francis, Pietro Bernardone and Lady Pica. Pietro is holding a bolt of cloth, for he was a cloth merchant. It also recalls the fact that Francis took cloth from his father’s shop to pay for the repair of churches and to give to the poor. Lady Pica is holding chains, recalling that she set her son free from his prison cell in the house.

### Interior

Upon entering the church, one sees immediately to the left of the entrance a small opening in the pilaster supporting the central dome. This is supposedly the cell in which Francis was shut up by his father after selling bales of cloth for the restoration of San Damiano. On the other side is the original door of the Casa Bernardone, protected by a grille. The high altar and sanctuary are said to be constructed on the site of the actual room lived in by Francis.

Exiting by a door to the left, you can go down a flight of stairs past the old entrance to Francis’ house, to what is said to have been the shop of Bernardone, where Francis worked. The cloister really encloses an old medieval lane.

“Francescuccio” is the name given to a small chapel that was, according to legend, the stable in which Lady Pica gave birth to her son, Francis. See the inscription over the door. It says “This oratory was the stable of the ox and ass in which was born Saint Francis, the mirror of the world.” The legend claims that when it was time for Lady Pica to give birth, the child could not be born. Then a pilgrim knocked at the door and told her that she could not give birth to Francis in the comfort of the house of Pietro di Bernardone. But when she was taken down to the stable, she joyfully gave birth to the boy Francis. Unfortunately, the legend is not older than the 15th century.

## Cathedral of San Rufino

### Square and Façade

The Cathedral is in Umbrian Romanesque style and contains the relics of Saint Rufinus, the bishop of Assisi, who was martyred in the 3rd century. Construction of the cathedral began in 1140. The house to the left of the façade stands on the site where the house of Favarone di Offreduccio, Clare’s familial home, was supposed to have stood, though some believe that the site of the familial house is the Palazzo Sermatti, on the same square. The bell tower, on the left side of the façade, dates from the 11th century.

### Interior

In the interior of the cathedral, to the right of the entrance, is the baptismal font, where St. Francis was baptized in 1182 and St. Clare in 1193. The interior of the cathedral, originally Romanesque in style, was completely modified in the late Renaissance style in 1571. On the right aisle is the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, decorated in Baroque style. It was begun in 1541 and enlarged in 1663. The 19th century main altar stands under the octagonal Renaissance dome over the remains of St. Rufinus.











*We Will Empower Bold Change to Elevate  
Human Flourishing.™*

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;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love;  
for it is in giving that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying  
that we are born to eternal life.