

**OF THE 5 CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE
SACRED AND HOLY STIGMATA OF ST FRANCIS**

OF THE FIRST CONSIDERATION OF THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA

As to the first consideration, it must be known that, in 1224, St. Francis, being then forty-three years old, was inspired of God to depart from the Val di Spoleto and to go into Romagna, with Friar Leo his companion; and as he went, he passed at the foot of the Castello di Montefeltro; in the which town there was then being held a great banquet and festival for the knighting of one of those Counts of Montefeltro; and St. Francis, hearing of this festival, and that many gentlefolk were gathered there from divers lands, said unto Friar Leo: "Let us go up thither unto this feast, since by God's help we shall gather some good spiritual fruit". Now among the other gentlemen, who had come thither from that district to that ceremonial, was a great and rich gentleman of Tuscany, by name Messer Orlando of Chiusi in Casentino, the which, by reason of the marvellous things which he had heard touching the sanctity and miracles of St. Francis, bore him great devotion and had very great desire to see him and to hear him preach. St. Francis then, having arrived at this town, entered in and gat him to the piazza, where were assembled all the multitude of those gentlemen; and, in fervour of spirit, he climbed upon a little wall and began to preach, taking as the text of his sermon these words in the vulgar tongue:

*So great the bliss I hope to see,
That every pain delighteth me.*

And from this text, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he preached so devoutly and so profoundly, proving the truth thereof by divers sufferings and torments of holy apostles and of holy martyrs, by the severe penances of holy confessors, and by the many tribulations and temptations of holy virgins and of other saints, that every man stood with eyes and mind fixed upon him, and hearkened unto him as if it were an angel of God that spoke; among whom, the said Messer Orlando, being touched in the heart by God, through the marvellous preaching of St. Francis, was minded to consult and speak with him after the sermon concerning the affairs of his soul. Wherefore, when the

preaching was done, he drew St. Francis aside and said unto him: "O father, I would take counsel with thee touching the salvation of my soul". St. Francis made answer: "Well content am I; but go thou this morning and do honour to thy friends who have invited thee to this festival, and dine with them; [and, after thou hast dined, we will talk together as long as thou shalt please". Messer Orlando, therefore, went to dinner;] and, after dinner, he returned to St. Francis and laid before him fully all the affairs of his soul and took counsel with him concerning the same. And finally this Messer Orlando said to St. Francis: "I have in Tuscany a mountain most apt for devotion, the which is called the mountain of Alvernia, exceeding solitary, and passing well fitted for such as would do penance in a place remote from men, and desire a life of solitude. If it pleases thee, gladly would I give it to thee and to thy companions for the salvation of my soul." St. Francis, hearing so liberal an offer of a thing which he much desired, was exceeding joyful thereat; and praising and thanking first God, and then Messer Orlando, he spake unto him thus: "Messer Orlando, when you shall have returned to your home, I will send unto you some of my companions, and you shall show them that mountain; and, if it shall seem to them fitted for prayer and for the doing of penance, even from this moment do I accept your charitable offer". And, when he had thus spoken, St. Francis departed; and after he had finished his journey he returned to Santa Maria degli Angeli; and Messer Orlando likewise, when the festivities for the making of that knight were ended, returned to his castle, which was called Chiusi, and which was distant a mile from Alvernia. St. Francis, then, having returned to Santa Maria degli Angeli, sent two of his companions to the said Messer Orlando, who, when they were come unto him, welcomed them with very great joy and charity: and, desiring to show them the mountain of Alvernia, he sent with them fully fifty armed men, to the end that they might defend them from the wild beasts; and thus accompanied those friars went up into the mountain and explored it diligently; and at last they came unto a part of the mountain exceeding well fitted for devotion and for contemplation; in the which part there was some level ground; and that place they chose for their habitation and for that of St. Francis; and with the aid of those armed men which were in their company they made a little cell with the boughs of trees, and on this wise, in the name of God, they accepted and took possession of the mountain of Alvernia and of the Place of the friars in that mountain, and departed and returned to St. Francis. And, when they had come unto him, they told him how and in what manner they had taken the said Place upon the mountain of Alvernia, well fitted for prayer and contemplation. Now, when St. Francis

heard this news, he rejoiced greatly, and, giving praise and thanks to God, spake unto those friars with happy face, and said: "My sons, we are drawing nigh to our forty days' fast of St. Michael the Archangel; and I firmly believe that it is the will of God that we keep this fast in the mountain of Alvernia, the which by Divine dispensation hath been made ready for us, to the end that we may, through penance, merit from Christ the consolation of consecrating that blessed mountain to the honour and glory of God and of His glorious mother, the Virgin Mary, and of the holy angels". And then, having said these words, St. Francis took with him Friar Masseo da Marignano of Assisi, the which was a man of great wisdom and eloquence, and Friar Angelo Tancredi da Rieti, who was a man of very noble birth, and who in the world had been a knight, and Friar Leo, who was a man of very great simplicity and purity; for the which cause St. Francis loved him much. And with these three friars St. Francis betook himself to prayer, and commended himself and his companions aforesaid to the prayers of the friars which remained behind, and set out with those three in the name of Jesus Christ the Crucified, to go to the mountain of Alvernia; and, as he went, St. Francis called unto him one of those three companions, to wit Friar Masseo, and spake unto him thus: "Thou, Friar Masseo, shalt be our Guardian and Superior on this journey; to wit while we shall be going and abiding together, and we will observe our custom: that either we will say the office, or we will speak of God, or we will keep silence; and we will take no thought beforehand, neither of eating, nor of drinking, nor of sleeping; but when the time to rest for the night shall be come, we will beg a little bread, and will lodge and repose ourselves in that place which God shall make ready for us." Then those three companions bowed their heads, and, signing themselves with the sign of the cross, went forward; and the first evening they came to a Place of friars, and there they lodged. The second evening, by reason of the bad weather and because they were weary, they were not able to reach any Place of friars, or any walled town, nor any hamlet; and when night and the bad weather overtook them, they sought shelter in an abandoned and disused church, and there they laid them down to rest, and, while his companions slept, St. Francis gave himself to prayer; and lo! in the first watch of the night, there came a great multitude of most ferocious demons with very great noise and tumult, and began vehemently to give him battle and annoy; for one plucked him on this side and another on that; one pulled him down and another up; one menaced him with one thing and another accused him of another; and thus in divers manners did they seek to disturb him in his prayer; but they were not able, because God was with him. Wherefore, when St.

Francis had borne these assaults of the demons for some time, he began to cry with a loud voice: "O damned spirits, ye can do nothing save that which the hand of God permitteth you; and therefore, in the name of God Omnipotent I tell you that ye may do unto my body whatsoever is permitted you by God, and I will bear it willingly; for I have no greater enemy than this body of mine. Wherefore, if ye take vengeance for me upon mine enemy, ye do me very great service." Thereupon the demons, with very great impetus and fury, laid hold of him and began to hale him about the church and to do him much greater injury and annoy than at first. And then St. Francis commenced to cry aloud and said: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I thank Thee for the great honour and charity which Thou showest me; for it is a token of much love when the Lord thoroughly punisheth His servant for all his faults in this world, to the end that he may not be punished in the next. And I am ready to endure joyfully every pain and every adversity which Thou, my God, mayest vouchsafe to send me for my sins." Then the demons, being put to confusion and conquered by his constancy and patience, left him, and St. Francis, in fervour of spirit, went forth from the church into a wood which was thereby, and there he gave himself to prayer; and, with supplications and tears and beatings of his breast, sought to find Jesus Christ, the Spouse and delight of his soul. And when, at last, he found Him in the secret places of his soul, he now spake reverently unto Him as his Lord; now answered Him as his Judge; now besought Him as his Father; and now talked with Him as to a Friend. On that night and in that wood, his companions, after they were awakened and had come thither to hear and to consider that which he was doing, saw and heard him, with tears and cries, devoutly beseeching the Divine mercy for sinners. Then too he was heard and seen to bewail the Passion of Christ with a loud voice as if he saw the same with his bodily eyes. On that same night they beheld him praying, with his arms held in the form of a cross, uplifted for a great space and raised from the ground, surrounded by a resplendent cloud. And on this wise, in these holy exercises, he passed the whole of that night without sleeping; and thereafter, in the morning, because they knew that, by reason of the fatigues of the night which he had passed without sleep, St. Francis was very weak in body and could ill have travelled on foot, his companions went to a poor labourer of that district, and besought him for the love of God to lend his little ass to St. Francis, their father, who could not go on foot. Now, when this man heard them make mention of Friar Francis, he asked them: "Are ye some of the friars of that friar of Assisi whereof so much good is spoken?" The friars answered: "Yes"; and that it was in truth for him that they asked the beast of burden.

Then that good man made ready the little ass, with great devotion and diligence, and led it to St. Francis with great reverence and made him mount thereon; and they continued their journey; and he with them, behind his little ass. And, when they had gone some distance, that villain said to St. Francis: "Tell me, art thou Friar Francis of Assisi?" And St. Francis answered him, "Yea." "Strive thou, then (said the villain), to be as good as all folk hold thee to be, for there are many which have great faith in thee; and therefore I admonish thee, that thou fall not short of that which men hope to find thee." Hearing these words, St. Francis did not disdain to be admonished by a villain, and said not within himself: "What beast is this that admonisheth me?" even as many many proud fellows who wear the friar's habit would say to-day; but forthwith he cast himself to earth from off the ass, and kneeled him down before that villain and kissed his feet, and thanked him humbly, because he had deigned to admonish him so charitably. Then the villain, together with the companions of St. Francis, raised him up from off the ground with great devotion, and set him upon the ass again, and continued their journey. And when they had gone perhaps half way up the mountain; because the heat was very great and the ascent difficult, this villain became exceeding thirsty, so that he began to cry aloud behind St. Francis, saying: "Alas! I am dying of thirst; if I have not something to drink I shall presently swoon away." For the which cause St. Francis dismounted from his ass and betook himself to prayer; and he remained upon his knees with his hands raised to heaven until he knew by revelation that God had heard him. And then St. Francis said to the villain: "Run, go quickly to yonder rock, and there thou shalt find living water, which Jesus Christ, in this hour, hath of His mercy made to issue forth from that rock". So he went to the place which St. Francis had shown him, and found there a fair spring which had come forth from the hard rock at the prayer of St. Francis, and he drank copiously thereof, and was comforted. And it was clearly seen that that fountain was miraculously produced by God through the prayers of St. Francis, because neither before nor after was there ever found, in that place, a spring of water, nor any living water near that place for a great distance round about. When he had thus done, St. Francis, with his companions and with the villain, gave thanks to God for the miracle vouchsafed, and thereafter they continued their journey. And when they drew nigh to the foot of the peak of Alvernia itself, it pleased St. Francis to rest himself a little beneath an oak which was in that place and which is there yet; and, as he sat beneath it, St. Francis began to consider the situation of the place and of the country thereabout; and, while he was thus considering, lo! a great multitude of birds came thither from

divers parts, the which, with singing and beating of wings, all showed very great joy and gladness; and they surrounded St. Francis on such wise that some alighted upon his head, and some upon his shoulders, and some upon his arms, some in his bosom, and some about his feet. Now when his companions and the villain saw this they marvelled greatly; whereupon St. Francis, all joyful in spirit, spake unto them thus: "I believe, most dear brethren, that it is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ that we dwell in this solitary mountain, because our sisters and brothers the birds show such joy of our coming". And when he had said these words, they rose up and continued their journey; and finally came unto the place which his companions had chosen at the first. And this sufficeth for the first consideration, to wit how St. Francis came to the holy mountain of Alvernia.

OF THE SECOND CONSIDERATION OF THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA

The second consideration is touching the conversation of St. Francis with his companions upon the said mountain of Alvernia. And as to this it is to be known; that, when Messer Orlando had heard that St. Francis with three companions had gone up into the mountain of Alvernia to dwell there, he had very great joy thereof; and, on the following day, he set out with many of his retainers and came to visit St. Francis, bearing bread and wine and other victuals for him and for his companions; and, coming to the place where they were, he found them in prayer; and drawing nigh unto them he saluted them. Then St. Francis rose up and with very great charity and joy welcomed Messer Orlando and his company; and, when he had thus done, he entered into conversation with him; and, after they had talked together and St. Francis had thanked him for the holy mountain which he had given him and for his coming thither, he besought him that he would cause a poor little cell to be made at the foot of a very beautiful beech-tree, which was distant a stone's throw from the Place of the friars, because that spot seemed to him most apt and dedicate to prayer. And straightway Messer Orlando caused it to be built; and, when it was finished, because the evening drew nigh and it was time for them to depart, St. Francis, before they went, preached unto them a little: and, after that he had preached and given them his blessing, Messer Orlando, since he could no longer stay, called St. Francis and his companions aside and said unto them: "My most dear friars, I would not that, in this savage mountain, ye suffered any bodily want, whereby ye might be let and hindered from spiritual things; and therefore I desire (and this I tell you once for all) that ye fail not to send to my

house for all that ye need; and, if ye do not do so, I shall take it very ill of you". And, having thus spoken, he departed with his company and returned to his castle. Then St. Francis made his companions sit down and instructed them concerning the manner of life which they, and whosoever desireth to live religiously in hermitages, must lead. And, among other things, he especially laid upon them the observance of holy poverty, saying: "Regard not overmuch the charitable offer of Messer Orlando, that in naught may ye offend our lady and mistress, holy Poverty. Be ye sure that the more we shun Poverty the more the world will shun us; but, if we shall closely embrace holy Poverty, the world will follow after us and will abundantly supply all our needs. God hath called us to this holy religion for the salvation of the world, and hath made this covenant between us and the world; that we should give unto the world a good ensample and the world should provide for us in our necessities. Let us continue, therefore, in holy poverty, because that is the way of perfection and the pledge and earnest of eternal riches. And, after many beautiful and devout words and admonishments touching this matter, he concluded, saying: "This is the manner of life which I lay upon myself and upon you; for I perceive that I draw nigh unto my death, and I am minded to be solitary, and to turn all my thoughts to God and to bewail my sins before Him; and Friar Leo, when it shall seem good to him, shall bring me a little bread and a little water; and on nowise do ye permit any layman to come unto me; but do ye answer them for me". And when he had said these words he gave them his blessing, and gat him to the cell beneath the beech-tree; and his companions abode in the Place, firmly resolved to observe the commandments of St. Francis. A few days thereafter, as St. Francis was standing beside the said cell, considering the conformation of the mountain, and marvelling at the huge chasms and clefts in those tremendous rocks, he betook himself to prayer; and then was it revealed to him of God that those wondrous fissures had been made miraculously in the hour of Christ's Passion, when, even as saith the evangelist, "the rocks were rent". And this, as God willed it, was singularly manifested in that mountain of Alvernia because it was foreordained that, in that place, St. Francis must renew the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his soul through love and pity, and in his body through the imprinting of the most holy stigmata. Now, when he had received this revelation, St. Francis straightway shut himself up in his cell, and, closing his mind to all earthly things, disposed himself to await the mystery of this revelation. And from thenceforward, because he continued alway in prayer, St. Francis began, more often than heretofore, to taste the sweetness of Divine contemplation; whereby he was

ofttimes so rapt in God that he was seen by his companions uplifted from the ground and rapt from out himself. In these raptures of contemplation, not only were things present and future revealed unto him by God, but also the secret thoughts and desires of the friars, even as Friar Leo, his companion, on that day, proved in his own person. For the said Friar Leo being vexed of the devil with a very grievous temptation, not carnal but spiritual, there came upon him a great desire to have some holy thing written by the hand of St. Francis; for he thought that, if he had it, that temptation would leave him, either altogether or in part; nevertheless, albeit he had this desire, for shame and reverence he lacked the courage to speak thereof to St. Francis; but that which Friar Leo told him not, was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost. Wherefore St. Francis called him unto him and made him bring inkhorn and pen and paper, and with his own hand wrote a laud of Christ, according to the desire of the friar, and at the end thereof made the sign of the Tau, and gave it unto him saying: "Take this paper, dearest friar, and keep it diligently until thy death. God bless thee and preserve thee from every temptation. Be not dismayed that thou hast temptations, for then do I hold thee more my friend and a truer servant of God; and I love thee the more the more thou hast fought against thy temptations. Verily I say unto thee that no man may call himself a perfect friend of God until he hath passed through many temptations and tribulations." And when Friar Leo had received this writing with very great devotion and faith, anon every temptation left him; and, returning to the Place, he related to his companions, with great joy, what grace God had done him as he received that writing from St. Francis; and he put it in a safe place and preserved it diligently; and therewith, in after-time, the friars wrought many miracles. And from that hour the said Friar Leo commenced to scrutinise and to consider the life of St. Francis, with great purity and goodwill; and, by reason of his purity, he merited to behold how many a time and oft St. Francis was rapt in God and uplifted from the ground, sometimes for the space of three cubits, sometimes of four, and sometimes even to the height of the beech-tree; and sometimes he beheld him raised so high in the air, and surrounded by such radiance, that scarcely could he see him. And what did this simple friar do when St. Francis was so little raised above the ground that he could reach him? He went softly and embraced his feet and kissed them with tears, saying: "My God, have mercy upon me a sinner; and, for the merits of this holy man, grant me to find Thy grace." And, one time among the rest, while he stood thus beneath the feet of St. Francis, when he was so far uplifted from the ground, that he could not touch him, he beheld a scroll inscribed with letters of gold descend from heaven and

rest above the head of St. Francis, upon the which scroll these words were written: "QVI È LA GRAZIA DI DIO—Here is the grace of God"; and, after that he had read it, he saw it return again to heaven. By reason of this grace of God which was in him, not only was St. Francis rapt in God through ecstatic contemplation, but also he was sometimes comforted by angelic visitations. Thus, one day, while St. Francis was thinking of his death and of the state of his Religion after his life should be ended, and was saying: "Lord God, what after my death shall become of Thy mendicant family, the which through Thy goodness Thou hast entrusted to me a sinner? Who shall console them? Who shall correct them? Who shall pray to Thee for them?" While he spake these and such-like words, there appeared unto him the angel sent by God, which comforted him, saying: "I tell thee in God's name that the profession of thy Order shall not fail until the Day of Judgment; and there shall be no sinner so great that, if he shall love thy Order from his heart, he shall not find mercy with God; and no one who persecuteth thy Order maliciously shall live long. Moreover no one, in thy Order, who is very wicked and who doth not amend his life will be able to remain long in the Order. Therefore grieve not thyself if thou see in thy Religion certain friars who are not good, and who observe not the Rule as they ought to do; neither think thou that for this thy Religion languisheth; for there will always be very many therein who will perfectly follow the life of the gospel of Christ and the purity of the Rule; and such as these, as soon as ever their earthly life is done, will go to the life eternal, without passing through purgatory at all; some will follow it, but not perfectly; and these, before they go to paradise, will be in purgatory: but the time of their purgation will be remitted unto thee by God. But for those who observe not the Rule at all, care thou not, saith God, because He careth not for them." And when the angel had spoken these words he departed, leaving St. Francis consoled and comforted. Thereafter, when the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady drew nigh, St. Francis sought to find a fitting spot, more secret and remote, wherein in greater solitude he might keep the forty days' fast of St. Michael the Archangel, the which commenceth on the said feast of the Assumption. Wherefore he called Friar Leo and spake unto him thus: "Go and stand at the doorway of the oratory of the Place of the friars; and, when I shall call thee, do thou return to me". Friar Leo went and stood in the said doorway; and St. Francis gat him thence a space and called loudly. Friar Leo, hearing him call, returned unto him; and St. Francis said: "Son, search we out another more secret spot whence thou shalt not be able thus to hear me when I shall call thee"; and, as they searched, they saw, on the southern side of the mountain, a lonely place

exceeding well fitted for his purpose; but it was impossible to reach it, because there was in front of it a rocky chasm, horrible and fearful, and very great. Wherefore, with much labour they laid a tree across the same, after the fashion of a bridge, and passed over to the other side. Then St. Francis sent for the other friars and told them how he purposed to keep the forty days' fast of St. Michael in that solitary place; and therefore he besought them that they would make him a little cell there, so that for no crying of his might he be heard of them; and, when the little cell of St. Francis was finished, he said unto them: "Go ye to your own Place and leave me here alone; for, with the help of God, I mean to keep this fast in this place without any trouble or disturbance of mind; and therefore let none of you come nigh me, nor suffer any layman to come unto me. But thou, Friar Leo, alone shalt come unto me, once a day, with a little bread and water, and at night once again, at the hour of matins; and then shalt thou come unto me in silence; and, when thou art at the head of the bridge, thou shalt say unto me: Domine, labia mea aperies; and, if I answer thee, pass over and come to the cell and we will say matins together; but if I answer thee not, get thee gone immediately." And this St. Francis said because he was sometimes so rapt in God that he heard not nor perceived anything with the bodily senses; and, when he had thus spoken, St. Francis gave them his blessing; and they returned to the Place. Now, the feast of the Assumption being come, St. Francis began the holy fast with very great abstinence and severity, mortifying his body and comforting his spirit with fervent prayers, vigils and flagellations; and in these prayers, ever growing from virtue to virtue, he prepared his mind to receive the Divine mysteries and the Divine splendours, and his body to endure the cruel assaults of the fiends, with whom oftentimes he fought bodily. And among the other times was one when, on a day, as St. Francis came forth from his cell in fervour of spirit, and went to a place hard by, to pray in the cavity of a hollow rock, wherefrom down to the ground there is a very great height, and a horrible and fearful precipice; suddenly the devil came in terrible shape, with tempest and with very great uproar, and smote him to cast him down from thence. Wherefore, St. Francis, not having any place to flee unto, and being unable to endure the passing cruel aspect of the demon, forthwith turned himself round, with his hands and face and with all his body against the rock, commending himself to God, and groping with his hands if, perchance, he might find something to lay hold of. But, as it pleased God, who never allows His servants to be tempted beyond that which they can bear, on a sudden the rock whereto he clung miraculously hollowed itself to the form of his body and so received him into itself; and

even as if he had put his hands and face into liquid wax, so was the shape of the face and hands of St. Francis imprinted upon the said rock; and, on this wise, being helped of God, he escaped from the devil. But that which the devil could not then do to St. Francis, namely to cast him down from thence, he did a good while thereafter, when St. Francis was dead, to a dear and devout friar of his, the which, in that same place, was adjusting certain pieces of wood to the end that it might be possible to go thither without peril, for devotion toward St. Francis and toward the miracle which was wrought there; and one day the devil pushed him, when he had a great log on his head which he wished to set there, and caused him to fall down thence with that log on his head; but God, who had saved and preserved St. Francis from falling, through his merits saved and preserved that devout friar of his from the peril of the fall; for, as the friar fell, he commended himself with very great devotion and with a loud voice to St. Francis, who straightway appeared to him and took him and set him on the rocks below, without permitting him to suffer any shuck or hurt. Then, the friars, having heard his cry as he fell, and believing that he was dead and dashed to pieces, by reason of the great height wherefrom he had fallen upon the sharp rocks, with great sorrow and weeping took the bier and went from the other side of the mountain to search for the fragments of his body and to bury them. Now, when they had already come down from the mountain, the friar who had fallen met them, with the log wherewith he had fallen upon his head; and he was singing the *Te Deum laudamus*, in a loud voice. And, because the friars marvelled greatly, he related unto them in order all the manner of his falling, and how St. Francis had rescued him from every peril. Then all the friars accompanied him to the place, singing most devoutly the aforesaid psalm, *Te Deum laudamus*, and praising and thanking God together with St. Francis for the miracle which he had wrought in his friar. St. Francis, then, continuing (as hath been said) the aforesaid fast, albeit he sustained many assaults of the devil, nevertheless received many consolations from God, not only through angelic visitations but also through the birds of the air; for, during all the time of that fast, a hawk, which was building its nest hard by his cell, awakened him every night a little before matins, with its cry, and by beating itself against his cell, and departed not until he rose up to say matins; and, when St. Francis was more weary than usual, or weak or sick, this hawk, after the manner of a discreet and compassionate person, uttered its cry later than it was wont to do. And so St. Francis took great joy of this clock, because the great diligence of the hawk drove away from him all sloth, and urged him to prayer: and besides this, sometimes, in the daytime,

it would familiarly sit with him. Finally, touching this second consideration, St. Francis, being much weakened in body, both by reason of his great abstinence, and of the assaults of the devil, and desiring to comfort his body with the spiritual food of the soul, began to meditate on the immeasurable glory and joy of the blessed in the life eternal, and therewith he began -to pray God that He would grant him to taste a little of that joy. And, as he continued in this thought, anon there appeared unto him an angel, with very great splendour, bearing a viol in his left hand and in his right a bow; and, while yet St. Francis was all amazed at the sight of him, the angel drew his bow once across the viol; and straightway St. Francis heard so sweet a melody that it filled all his soul with rapture and rendered it insensible to every bodily feeling; insomuch that, according to that which he afterward told his companions, he doubted whether, if the angel had drawn the bow back again across the viol, his soul must not have departed out of his body by reason of the intolerable sweetness. And this sufficeth for the second consideration.

OF THE THIRD CONSIDERATION OF THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA

Coming to the third consideration, to wit the seraphic vision and the imprinting of the most holy stigmata, it is to be considered that when the festival of the most Holy Cross of the month of September was drawing nigh, Friar Leo went one night, at the accustomed hour, to say matins with St. Francis, and calling, as he was wont, from the head of the bridge: Domine, labia mea aperies, and St. Francis making no answer, Friar Leo turned not back again as St. Francis had commanded him; but, with good and holy purpose, he crossed over the bridge and softly entered the cell; and, finding him not, he thought that he was somewhere in the wood in prayer; wherefore he came forth and, by the light of the moon, went searching softly through the wood; and finally he heard the voice of St Francis; and, drawing nigh, he saw him on his knees in prayer, with face and hands raised to heaven; and in fervour of spirit he was speaking thus: "Who art Thou, my most sweet God? What am I, most vile worm and Thine unprofitable servant?" And these same words alone did he repeat, and said no other thing. For the which cause, Friar Leo, marvelling thereat, raised his eyes and gazed toward heaven; and, as he looked, he beheld, coming down from heaven, a torch of fire, most beautiful and bright, which descended and lighted upon the head of St. Francis; and from out the said flame he heard a voice come which spake with St. Francis; but Friar Leo understood not the words. Hearing this, and deeming himself unworthy to abide so near to that holy place,

where was that marvellous apparition, and fearing also to offend St. Francis, or to disturb him in his contemplation, if he should be perceived by him, he softly drew back, and, standing afar off, waited to see the end; and, gazing fixedly, he saw St. Francis stretch out his hands three times to the flame; and finally, after a long time, he saw the flame return to heaven. Wherefore he gat him thence, deeming himself unseen and glad of the vision, and was returning to his cell. And, as he went confidently, St. Francis perceived him by the rustling which his feet made upon the leaves, and commanded him to wait for him and not to move. Then Friar Leo, obedient, stood still and waited for him, with such fear that, as he afterwards told his companions, he would rather, at that moment, that the earth had swallowed him up than wait for St. Francis, who he thought was angered with him; because with very great diligence he took heed not to offend his fatherhood, lest, through fault of his, St. Francis should deprive him of his company. Then, when he had come up to him, St. Francis asked him: "Who art thou?" and Friar Leo, all trembling, replied: "My father, I am Friar Leo"; and St. Francis said unto him: "Wherefore didst thou come hither, friar little sheep? Did I not tell thee not to come and watch me? For holy obedience, tell me whether thou sawest or heardest aught." Friar Leo replied: "Father, I heard thee speak and say many times: 'Who art Thou, my most sweet God? What am I, most vile worm and Thine unprofitable servant?'" And then Friar Leo, kneeling down before St. Francis, confessed himself guilty of disobedience, in that he had done contrary to his commandment, and besought his pardon with many tears. And thereafter he prayed him devoutly that he would explain those words which he had heard, and would tell him those which he had not understood. Then, seeing that to the humble Friar Leo God had revealed or granted to hear and to see certain things, by reason of his simplicity and purity, St. Francis condescended to reveal and to explain unto him that which he asked; and he spake as follows: "Know, friar little sheep of Jesus Christ, that when I was saying those words which thou heardest, then were shown unto me two lights for my soul; the one of knowledge and understanding of my own self, the other of knowledge and understanding of the Creator. When I said: 'Who art thou, O my most sweet God?' then I was in a light of contemplation wherein I saw the abyss of the infinite goodness and wisdom and power of God; and when I said: 'What am I?' I was in a light of contemplation in the which I beheld the depth of my baseness and misery; and therefore I said: 'Who art Thou, Lord of infinite goodness and wisdom, that deignest to visit me, that am a vile worm and abominable?' And in that flame which thou sawest was God; who in that form spake with me, even as of old He spake unto Moses. And,

among other things which He said unto me, He asked me to give Him three gifts; and I made answer: 'Lord, I am all Thine; Thou knowest well that I have nothing beside the habit and the cord and the breeches, and even these three things are Thine; what then can I offer or give unto Thy majesty?' Then God said unto me: 'Search in thy bosom, and give Me that which thou findest therein'. I searched and found a ball of gold; and I offered it to God; and thus did I three times, even as God three times commanded me; and thereafter I kneeled me down three times and blessed and thanked God who had given me wherewith to offer Him. And straightway, it was given me to understand that these three offerings signified holy obedience, highest poverty and most resplendent chastity; the which God, through His grace, hath permitted me to observe so perfectly that my conscience accuseth me of nothing. And as thou sawest me put my hands in my bosom and offer to God those three virtues symbolised by those three balls of gold, which God had placed in my bosom; so hath God given me such virtue in my soul that, for all the benefits and all the graces which He hath granted me of His most holy goodness, I ever praise and magnify Him with heart and mouth. These are the words which thou heardest when I thrice lifted up my hands, as thou sawest. But look to it, friar little sheep, that thou watch me no more; but return to thy cell with the blessing of God, and do thou have diligent care of me; because, a few days from now, God will do such great and marvellous things upon this mountain that all the world shall wonder thereat; for He will do certain new things, the which He hath never done unto any creature in this world." And, when he had spoken these words, he caused the book of the Gospels to be brought unto him; for God had put it in his mind that, by the opening of the book of the Gospels three times, that which it was the will of God to do unto him should be revealed. And, when the book was brought unto him, St. Francis betook himself to prayer; and, when he had finished his prayer, he caused the book to be opened three times by the hand of Friar Leo, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity; and, as it pleased the Divine Providence, in those three times ever there appeared before him the Passion of Christ. By the which thing it was given him to understand that, even as he had followed Christ in the actions of his life, so he must follow Him, and be conformed to Him in afflictions and sorrows and in his passion, before he departed from this life. And from that moment St. Francis began to taste and to feel more abundantly the sweetness of Divine contemplation and of the Divine visitations. Among the which he had one which was an immediate preparative for the imprinting of the most holy stigmata; and it was upon this wise: On the day before the festival of the most Holy

Cross of the month of September, while St. Francis was secretly praying in his cell, the angel of God appeared unto him, and said unto him in God's name: "I exhort thee and admonish thee that thou prepare and dispose thyself, humbly and with all patience, to receive that which God willeth to give thee, and to work in thee". St. Francis made answer: "I am ready to bear patiently everything that my Lord willeth to do unto me"; and, when he had said this, the angel departed. The next day came, to wit the day of the most Holy Cross, and St. Francis, betimes in the morning, or ever it was day, betook himself to prayer before the entrance of his cell, and turning his face towards the East, prayed after this manner: "O my Lord Jesus Christ, two graces do I beseech Thee to grant me before I die: the first, that, during my lifetime, I may feel in my soul and in my body, so far as may be possible, that pain which Thou, sweet Lord, didst suffer in the hour of Thy most bitter passion; the second is that I may feel in my heart, so far as may be possible, that exceeding love, whereby Thou, Son of God, wast enkindled to willingly bear such passion for us sinners". And, when he had continued long time in this prayer, he knew that God would hear him, and that, as far as was possible for a mere creature, so far would it be granted to him to feel the aforesaid things. Having this promise, St. Francis began to contemplate with very great devotion the Passion of Christ and His infinite charity; and so much did the fervour of devotion increase in him that he altogether transformed himself into Jesus through love and pity. And, being thus self-inflamed in this contemplation, on that same morning, he saw, coming from heaven, a Seraph, with six wings resplendent and ablaze; the which Seraph, flying swiftly, drew near unto St. Francis, so that he was able to discern Him clearly, and he perceived that He bore the likeness to a crucified Man; and His wings were so disposed that two wings extended above His head, two were spread out to fly, and the other two covered all His body. Seeing this, St. Francis was sore afraid, and, at the same time, was filled with joy and grief and wonder. He had passing great joy of the gracious aspect of Christ, who appeared to him so familiarly and regarded him so kindly; but, on the other hand, seeing Him crucified upon the cross, he felt immeasurable grief for pity's sake. Next, he marvelled much at so strange and stupendous a vision, knowing well that the infirmity of suffering agreeth not with the immortality of the seraphic spirit. And, while he thus marvelled, it was revealed unto him by Him who appeared to him: that that vision had been shown unto him in that form, by the Divine providence, to the end that he might understand that, not by corporal suffering but by enkindling of the mind, he must be altogether transformed into the express image of Christ crucified, in that marvellous

vision. Then all the mountain of Alvernia seemed to burn with brightest flame, which shone forth and lighted up all the mountains and the valleys round about, even as if the sun had risen upon the earth; wherefore the shepherds, who kept watch in those regions, beholding the mountain all on fire and so great a light round about it, were very much afraid, according as they afterward related to the friars, declaring that that flame continued upon the mountain of Alvernia for the space of an hour or more. In like manner, by reason of the brightness of this light, which shone through the windows into the hostelries of the countryside, certain muleteers, who were journeying into Romagna, rose up, believing that the sun had risen, and saddled and loaded their beasts; and, as they went upon their way, they beheld the said light die out, and the material sun arise. In the said seraphic vision, Christ, who appeared to St. Francis, spake unto him certain high and secret things, the which St. Francis was never willing to reveal to any one during his life; but, after his death, he revealed it, even as is set forth below; and the words were these: "Knowest thou," said Christ, "that which I have done unto thee? I have given thee the stigmata, which are the tokens of My Passion, so that thou mayest be My standard-bearer. And even as I, on the day of My death, descended into Limbo, and, in virtue of these My stigmata, drew out thence all the souls which I found there; so to thee do I grant that, every year on the day of thy death, thou shalt go to purgatory, and in virtue of thy stigmata, shalt draw out thence all the souls of thy three Orders, to wit minors, sisters and continents, and also those others who have borne great devotion unto thee, and shalt lead them unto the glory of paradise, to the end that thou mayest be conformed to Me in death as thou art in life." Now when, after long and secret converse, this marvellous vision vanished away, it left an exceeding ardour and flame of Divine love in the heart of St. Francis, and in his flesh a marvellous image and imprint of the Passion of Christ. For anon, in the hands and in the feet of St. Francis the marks of nails began to appear after the same fashion as he had just seen in the body of Jesus Christ crucified, the which had appeared unto him in the form of a seraph; and even so were his hands and his feet pierced through the midst with nails, the heads whereof were in the palms of the hands and in the soles of the feet, outside the flesh; and the points came out through the back of the hands and of the feet, where they showed bent back and clinched on such wise that, under the clinching and the bend, which all stood out above the flesh, it would have been easy to put a finger of the hand, as in a ring; and the heads of the nails were round and black. In like manner, in his right side appeared the likeness of a lance wound, open, red and bloody; the which oftentimes thereafter spouted blood

from the holy breast of St. Francis, and covered his habit and breeches with blood. Wherefore his companions, before they knew thereof from him, perceiving nevertheless that he uncovered neither his hands nor his feet, and that he could not put the soles of his feet to the ground; and therewithal finding his habit and breeches all bloody, when they washed them, knew certainly that he bore, imprinted on his hands and feet and likewise on his side, the express image and likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ crucified. And although he very earnestly endeavoured to conceal and to hide those most holy and glorious stigmata which were so clearly imprinted on his flesh, he perceived that he could but ill conceal them from his familiar companions; and therefore he stood in very great doubt, fearing to make public the secrets of God, and knowing not whether he ought to reveal the seraphic vision and the imprinting of the most holy stigmata. At the last, being goaded thereunto by his conscience, he called to him certain of his most intimate friends among the friars, and, setting before them his doubt in general terms, yet without explaining the actual fact, he asked their advice; and among the said friars was one of great sanctity, who was called Friar Illuminatus. Now this man, being of a truth illuminate by God, and understanding that St. Francis must have seen marvellous things, answered him after this manner: "Friar Francis, know thou that, not for thy sake only but also for the sake of others, God manifesteth unto thee at divers times His mysteries; and therefore thou hast good reason to fear that, if thou keepest secret that which God hath shown thee for the benefit of others, thou wilt be worthy of blame". Then St. Francis, being moved by these words, with great dread related unto them all the manner and form of the aforesaid vision; adding that Christ, who had appeared unto him, had spoken certain things unto him which he would never repeat as long as he lived. And, albeit those most holy wounds, inasmuch as they were imprinted by Christ, gave very great joy to his heart; nevertheless to his flesh and to his corporal senses they gave intolerable pain. Wherefore, being compelled thereunto by necessity, he chose Friar Leo, as more simple and more pure than the others, and to him he revealed everything; permitting him to see and to touch those sacred wounds and to bind them with certain handkerchiefs, for the allaying of the pain, and to catch the blood which issued and flowed from the said wounds; the which bandages, in time of sickness, he permitted him to change frequently, and even daily, except from Thursday evening to Saturday morning, during which time our Saviour Jesus Christ was taken for our sakes and crucified, slain and buried; and therefore, during that time, St. Francis would not suffer that the pain of the Passion of Christ, which he bore in his body, should be

assuaged in anywise by any human remedy or medicine whatsoever. It befel, sometimes, that, as Friar Leo was changing the bandage of the wound in his side, St. Francis, for the pain which he felt when that blood-soaked bandage was plucked away, laid his hand upon the breast of Friar Leo; whereby, from the touch of those sacred hands, Friar Leo felt such sweetness of devotion in his heart, that he well-nigh fell swooning to the ground. And finally, as touching this third consideration, St. Francis having finished the fast of St. Michael the Archangel, prepared himself, by Divine revelation, to return to Santa Maria degli Angeli. Wherefore he called unto him Friar Masseo and Friar Agnolo, and, after many words and holy admonishments, he commended unto them that holy mountain with all possible earnestness, telling them that it behoved him, together with Friar Leo, to return to Santa Maria degli Angeli. And when he had said this, he took leave of them and blessed them in the name of Jesus crucified; and, yielding to their entreaties, he gave them his most holy hands, adorned with those glorious and sacred stigmata, to see, to touch and to kiss; and so leaving them consoled, he departed from them and descended the holy mountain.

OF THE FOURTH CONSIDERATION OF THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA

AS touching the fourth consideration, it must be that, after the true love of Christ had perfectly transformed St. Francis into God and into the true image of Christ crucified; having finished the fast of forty days in honour of St. Michael the Archangel upon the holy mountain of Alvernia; after the festival of St. Michael, the angelical man, St. Francis, descended from the mountain with Friar Leo and with a devout villain, upon whose ass he sat, because by reason of the nails in his feet he could not well go afoot. Now, when St. Francis had come down from the mountain, the fame of his sanctity was already noised abroad throughout the land; for it had been reported by the shepherds how they had seen the mountain of Alvernia all ablaze, and that this was the token of some great miracle which God had wrought upon St. Francis; wherefore, when the people of the district heard that he was passing, they all flocked to see him, both men and women, small and great, and all of them with much devotion and desire sought to touch him and to kiss his hands; and not being able to resist the devotion of the people, albeit he had bandaged the palms of his hands, nevertheless, the better to hide the most holy stigmata, he bandaged them yet more and covered them with his sleeves, and only gave them his fingers to kiss. But albeit he endeavoured to conceal and to hide the mystery of the most holy stigmata, to avoid every occasion of worldly glory, it pleased

God for His own glory to show forth many miracles by virtue of the said most holy stigmata, and singularly in that journey from Vernia to Santa Maria degli Angeli, and very many thereafter in divers parts of the world, both during his life and after his glorious death; to the end that their occult and marvellous virtue, and the extreme charity and mercy of Christ, towards him to whom He had so marvellously given them, might be manifested to the world by clear and evident miracles; whereof we will set forth some in this place. Thus, when St. Francis was drawing nigh unto a village which was upon the borders of the county of Arezzo, a woman came before him, weeping sore and holding her child in her arms; the which child was eight years old and had been dropsical for four years; and his belly was so terribly swollen that, when he stood upright, he could not see his feet; and this woman laid that son of hers before him, and besought him to pray God for him; and St. Francis first betook himself to prayer and then, when he had prayed, laid his holy hands upon the belly of the child; and anon, all the swelling disappeared, and he was made perfectly whole, and he gave him back to his mother, who received him with very great joy, and led him home, thanking God and St. Francis; and she willingly showed her son that was healed to all those of the district who came to her house to see him. On the same day St. Francis passed through Borgo San Sepolcro, and or ever he drew nigh unto the walls, the inhabitants of the town and of the villages came forth to meet him, and many of them went before him with boughs of olive in their hands, crying aloud: "Behold the saint! behold the saint!" And, for devotion and the desire which the folk had to touch him, they thronged and pressed upon him; but ever he went on his way with his mind uplifted and rapt in God through contemplation, and, albeit he was touched and held and plucked at by the people, he, even as one insensible, knew nothing at all of that which was done or said around him; neither did he perceive that he was passing through that town or through that district. For, when he had passed through Borgo and the crowd had returned to their homes, that contemplator of celestial things, having arrived at a house for lepers, a full mile beyond Borgo, returned to himself, and, as one who had come from another world, inquired of his companion: "When shall we be near Borgo?" Of a truth his soul, being fixed and rapt in contemplation of heavenly things, had been unconscious of anything earthly, whether of change of place, or of time, or of the people who thronged about him; and this befel many other times, as his companions proved by evident experience. That evening St. Francis reached the Place of the friars of Monte Casale, in the which place a friar was so cruelly sick and so horribly tormented by sickness that his disease seemed

rather some affliction and torment of the devil than a natural infirmity; for sometimes he cast himself upon the ground trembling violently and foaming at the mouth; anon all the sinews of his body were contracted, then stretched, then bent, then twisted, and anon his heels were drawn up to the nape of his neck, and he flung himself into the air, and straightway fell flat on his back. Now, while St. Francis sat at table, he heard from the friars of this friar, so miserably sick and without remedy; and he had compassion on him, and took a piece of bread which he was eating, and, with his holy hands imprinted with the stigmata, made over it the sign of the most holy Cross, and sent it to the sick friar; who, as soon as he had eaten it, was made perfectly whole, and never felt that sickness any more. When the following morning was come, St. Francis sent two of those friars who were in that Place to dwell at Alvernia; and he sent back with them the villain, who had come with him behind the ass, which he had lent him, desiring that he should return with them to his home. The friars went with the said villain, and, as they entered the county of Arezzo, certain men of the district saw them afar off, and had great joy thereof, thinking that it was St. Francis, who had passed that way two days before; for one of their women, which had been three days in travail and could not bring to the birth was dying; and they thought to have her back sound and well, if St. Francis laid his holy hands upon her. But, when the said friars drew near, they perceived that St. Francis was not with them; and they were very sad. Nevertheless, albeit the saint was not there in the flesh, his, virtue lacked not, because they lacked not faith. O marvellous thing! the woman was dying and was already in her death agony, when they asked the friars if they had anything which the most holy hands of St. Francis had touched. The friars thought and searched diligently, but could find nothing which St. Francis had touched with his hands save only the halter of the ass upon which he had come. With great reverence and devotion those men took that halter and laid it upon the belly of the pregnant woman, calling devoutly on the name of St. Francis and faithfully commending themselves to him. And what more? No sooner had the aforesaid halter been laid upon the woman than, anon, she was freed from all peril, and gave birth joyfully, with ease and safety. Now St. Francis, after he had been some days in the said place, departed and went to Città di Castello; and behold, many of the citizens brought to him a woman, who had been possessed of a devil for a long time, and humbly besought him for her deliverance; because, with her dolorous howlings and cruel shrieks and dog-like barkings, she disturbed all the neighbourhood. Then St. Francis, having first prayed and made over her the sign of the most holy Cross, commanded the demon

to depart from her; and he straightway departed, leaving her sane in body and in mind. And, when this miracle was noised abroad among the people, another woman with great faith brought to him her sick child, who was afflicted with a cruel sore, and besought him devoutly that he would be pleased to make the sign of the Cross upon him with his hands. Then St. Francis gave ear unto her prayer, and took the child and loosed the bandage from off his sore and blessed him, making the sign of the most holy Cross over the sore three times, and thereafter with his own hands he replaced the bandage, and gave him back to his mother; and, because it was evening, she forthwith laid him on the bed to sleep. Thereafter, in the morning, she went to take her child from the bed, and found the bandage unloosed, and looked and saw that he was as perfectly whole as if he had never had any sickness at all; save only that, in the place where the sore had been, the flesh had grown over after the manner of a red rose; and that rather in testimony of the miracle than as a scar left by the sore; because the said rose, remaining during the whole of his lifetime, often moved him to devotion toward St. Francis who had healed him. In that city, then, St. Francis sojourned for a month, at the prayer of the devout citizens, in the which time he wrought many other miracles; and thereafter he departed thence, to go unto Santa Maria degli Angeli with Friar Leo, and with a good man, who lent him his little ass, whereupon St. Francis rode. Now, it came to pass that, by reason of the bad roads and the great cold, they journeyed all day without being able to reach any place where they might lodge; for the which cause, being constrained by the darkness and by the bad weather, they took shelter beneath the brow of a hollow rock, to avoid the snow and the night which was coming on. And, being in this evil case And also badly clad, the good man, to whom the ass belonged, could not sleep by reason of the cold; wherefore he began to murmur gently within himself and to weep; and almost did he blame St. Francis, who had brought him into such a place. Then St. Francis, perceiving this, had compassion upon him, and, in fervour of spirit, stretched out his hand toward him and touched him. O marvellous thing! as soon as he had touched him with that hand of his, enkindled and pierced by the fire of the Seraph, all the cold left him; and so much heat entered into him, both within and without, that he seemed to be hard by the mouth of a burning furnace; whence being presently comforted in soul and body he fell asleep; and, according to that which he said, he slept more sweetly that night, among rocks and snow until morning, than he had ever slept in his own bed. Thereafter, on the next day, they continued their journey and came to Santa Maria degli Angeli; and, when they were nigh thereunto, Friar Leo lifted up his eyes and looked

toward the said Place of Santa Maria degli Angeli, and saw an exceeding beautiful Cross, whereon was the figure of the Crucified, going before St. Francis, even as St. Francis was going before Him; and on such wise did the said Cross go before the face of St. Francis that when he stopped it stopped too, and when he went on it went on; and that Cross was of such brightness that, not only did it shine in the face of, St. Francis, but all the road about him also was lighted up; and it lasted until St. Francis entered into the Place of Santa Maria degli Angeli. St. Francis, then, having arrived with Friar Leo, they were welcomed by the friars with very great joy and charity. And from thenceforward, until his death, St. Francis dwelt for the greater part of his time in that Place of Santa Maria degli Angeli. And the fame of his sanctity and of his miracles spread continually more and more through the Order and through the world, although, by reason of his profound humility, he concealed as much as he might the gifts and graces of God, and ever called himself the greatest of sinners. Wherefore, on a time, Friar Leo, marvelling within himself and thinking foolishly, said in his heart: "Lo, this man calleth himself a very great sinner in public, and becometh great in the Order, and is so much honoured of God, yet, in secret, he never confesseth any carnal sin. Can it be that he is a virgin?" And therewith he began to desire very earnestly to know the truth; and, fearing to ask St. Francis touching this matter, he betook himself to God; and urgently beseeching Him that He would certify him of that which he desired to know, through the much praying and merit of St. Francis, he was answered and certified, through this vision, that St. Francis was verily a virgin in body. For he saw, in a vision, St. Francis standing in a high and excellent place, whereunto none might go up nor attain to bear him company; and it was told him in spirit that this so high and excellent place signified that perfection of virginal chastity in St. Francis which was reasonable and fitting in the flesh that was to be adorned with the most holy Stigmata of Christ. St. Francis, seeing that, by reason of the stigmata of Christ, his bodily strength grew gradually less and that he was not able any more to take charge of the government of the Order, hastened forward the General Chapter of the Order; and, when it was assembled, he humbly excused himself to the friars for the weakness which prevented him from attending any more to the care of the Order, as touching the duties of General; albeit he renounced not that office of General because he was not able to do so, inasmuch as he had been made General by the Pope; and therefore he could neither resign his office nor appoint a successor without the express leave of the Pope. Nevertheless he appointed as his Vicar Friar Peter Cattani, and commended the Order unto him and unto the

Ministers of the Provinces with all possible affection. And, when he had thus done, St. Francis, being comforted in spirit, lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven and spake thus: "To Thee, my Lord God, to Thee I commend this Thy family, which unto this hour Thou has committed unto me; and now, by reason of my infirmities, which Thou my most sweet Lord knowest, I am no longer able to take charge thereof. Also do I commend it to the Ministers of the Provinces; and if, through their negligence or through their bad example or through their too harsh correction, any friar shall perish, may they be held to give account thereof to Thee on the Day of Judgment." And in these words, as it pleased God, all the friars of the Chapter understood that he spake of the most holy Stigmata, to wit in that which he said excusing himself by reason of his infirmity: and for devotion none of them was able to refrain from weeping. And from thenceforward he left all the care and government of the Order in the hands of his Vicar and of the Ministers of the Provinces; and he was wont to say: "Now that, by reason of my infirmities, I have given up the charge of the Order, I have no other duty than to pray God for our Religion and to set a good ensample to the friars. And of a truth, I know well that, if my infirmity should leave me, the greatest help which I could render to the Religion would be to pray continually to God for it, that He would defend and govern and preserve it." Now, as hath been said above, albeit St. Francis, as much as in him lay, strove to hide the most holy Stigmata, and, from the time when he received them, always went with his hands bandaged and with stockings on his feet, yet, for all that he could do, he could not prevent many of the friars from seeing and touching them in divers manners, and particularly the wound in his side, the which he endeavoured with special diligence to hide. Thus a friar, who waited on him, induced him, by a pious fraud, to take off his habit, that the dust might be shaken out of it; and, since he removed it in his presence, that friar saw clearly the wound in his side; and, swiftly putting his hand upon his breast, he touched it with three fingers and thus learned its extent and size; and in like manner his Vicar saw it at that time. But more clearly was Friar Ruffino certified thereof; the which was a man of very great contemplation, of whom St. Francis sometimes said that in all the world there was no more holy man than he; and by reason of his holiness he loved him as a familiar friend, and was wont to grant him all that he desired. In three ways did this Friar Ruffino certify himself and others of the said most holy Stigmata. The first was this: that, it being his duty to wash the breeches of St. Francis, which he wore so large that, by pulling them well up, he covered therewith the wound in his right side, the said Friar Ruffino examined them and

considered them diligently, and found that they were always bloody on the right side; whereby he perceived of a surety that that was blood which came from the said wound; but for this St. Francis rebuked him when he saw that he spread out the clothes which he took off in order to look for the said token. The second way was this: that once, while the said Friar Ruffino was scratching St. Francis' back, he deliberately let his hand slip and put his fingers into the wound in his side; whereat, for the pain that he felt, St. Francis cried aloud: "God forgive thee, O Friar Ruffino, that thou hast done this". The third way was that he once begged St. Francis very urgently, as an exceeding great favour, to give him his habit and to take his in exchange, for love of charity. Whereupon the charitable father, albeit unwillingly, yielded to his prayer, and drew off his habit and gave it to him and took his; and then, in that taking off and putting on, Friar Ruffino clearly saw the said wound. Friar Leo likewise, and many other friars, saw the said most holy stigmata of St. Francis while yet he lived; the which friars, although by reason of their sanctity they were worthy of credence and men whose simple word might be believed, nevertheless, to remove doubt from every heart, sware upon the Holy Book that they had clearly seen them. Moreover, certain cardinals, who were intimate friends of St. Francis, saw them; and, in reverence for the aforesaid most holy Stigmata, they composed and made beautiful and devout hymns and psalms and prose treatises. The highest pontiff, Pope Alexander, while preaching to the people in the presence of all the cardinals (among whom was the holy Friar Buonaventura, who was a cardinal) said and affirmed that he had seen with his own eyes the most holy Stigmata of St. Francis, when he was yet alive. And Madonna Jacopa di Settensoli of Rome, who was the greatest lady of her time in Rome and was most devoted to St. Francis, saw them before he died, and, after his death, saw and kissed them many times with great reverence; for she came from Rome to Assisi, by Divine revelation, to the death-bed of St. Francis; and her coming was after this manner. For some days before his death, St. Francis lay sick at Assisi in the palace of the Bishop, with some of his companions; and, notwithstanding his sickness, he often sang certain lauds of Christ. One day, one of his companions said unto him: "Father, thou knowest that these citizens have great faith in thee, and hold thee for a saintly man, and therefore they may think that, if thou art that which that they believe thee to be, thou shouldest, in this thine infirmity, think upon thy death, and rather weep than sing, in that thou art so exceeding sick; and know that thy singing and ours, which thou makest us to sing, is heard of many, both within and without the palace; for this palace is guarded on thy account by many armed men, who perchance

may take bad ensample therefrom. Wherefore I believe (said this friar) that thou wouldest do well to depart hence, and that we should all of us return to Santa Maria degli Angeli; for this is no place for us, among seculars." St. Francis answered him: "Dearest friar, thou knowest that two years ago, when we abode at Foligno, God revealed unto thee the term of my life; and in like manner also He revealed unto me that, a few days hence, the said term shall end, in this sickness; and in that revelation God made me certain of the remission of all my sins, and of the bliss of paradise. Until I had that revelation I bewailed death and my sins; but, since I have had that revelation, I am so full of gladness that I can weep no more; and therefore do I sing, yea, and will sing unto God, who hath given me the blessing of His grace and hath made me sure of the blessings of the glory of paradise. As touching our departure hence, I consent thereunto and it pleaseth me; but do ye find means to carry me, because, by reason of mine infirmity, I cannot walk." Then the friars took him up in their arms and so carried him; and many of the citizens accompanied them. And, coming to a hospice, which was by the way, St. Francis said unto those who carried him: "Set me down on the ground, and turn me toward the city". And, when he was set with his face toward Assisi, he blessed the city with many blessings, saying: "Blessed be thou of God, O holy city, for through thee many souls shall be saved, and in thee shall dwell many servants of God, and from thee many shall be chosen unto the Kingdom of Life Eternal". And, when he had said these words, he caused them to carry him on to Santa Maria degli Angeli. And, when they arrived at Santa Maria degli Angeli, they bore him to the infirmary and there laid him down to rest. Then St. Francis called unto him one of the companions and spake unto him thus: "Dearest friar, God hath revealed unto me that, of this sickness, on such a day, I shall depart from this life; and thou knowest that the well-beloved Madonna Jacopa di Settensoli, who is devoted to our Order, if she knew of my death and had not been present thereat, would be sore grieved; and therefore do thou send her word that, if she would see me alive, she come hither at once". The friar made answer: "Father, thou sayest rightly; for in truth, by reason of the great love which she beareth thee, it would be most unseemly if she were not present at thy death". "Go, then," said St. Francis, "and bring me inkhorn and paper and pen, and write as I bid thee." And, when he had brought them, St. Francis dictated the letter on this wise: "To Madonna Jacopa, the servant of God, Friar Francis, the mendicant of Christ, greeting and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost in our Lord Jesus Christ. Know, well beloved, that Christ the blessed hath, of His grace, revealed unto me that the end of my life is at hand.

Therefore, if thou wouldst find me alive, when thou hast seen this letter, arise and come to Santa Maria degli Angeli; for, if thou art not come by such a day, thou wilt not find me alive; and bring with thee hair-cloth to wrap my body in, and the wax which is needed for my burial. Also I beseech thee to bring me some of that food which thou wast wont to give me to eat, when I was sick in Rome." And, while this letter was being written, it was revealed of God to St. Francis that Madonna Jacopa was coming to him and was already nigh unto the place, and brought with her all those things which he was sending to ask for by the letter. Wherefore, when he had had this revelation, St. Francis told the friar who was writing the letter, not to write further, because there was no need thereof, but to lay aside the letter; whereat the friars marvelled greatly, because he finished not the letter and would not have it sent. And, while they continued thus, lo, after a little while, there was a great knocking at the door of the Place, and St. Francis sent the doorkeeper to open it; and, when he had opened the door, behold, there was Madonna Jacopa, the noblest lady of Rome, with two of her sons, Senators of Rome, and with a great company of men on horseback; and they entered in; and Madonna Jacopa gat her straight to the infirmary, and came unto St. Francis. Of whose coming St. Francis had great joy and consolation, and she likewise, seeing him alive and speaking with him. Then she told him how God had revealed unto her in Rome, while she was praying, the short span of his life, and how he would send for her, and ask for those things, all of which she said that she had brought; and she caused them to be brought to St. Francis and gave him to eat thereof; and, when he had eaten and was much comforted, this Madonna Jacopa kneeled down at the feet of St. Francis, and took those most holy feet, marked and adorned with the wounds of Christ, and kissed and bathed them with her tears, with such limitless devotion that to the friars which were standing by it seemed that they verily beheld the Magdalene at the feet of Jesus Christ; and on nowise might they draw her away from them. And finally, after a long time, they raised her up and drew her aside, and asked her how she had come so duly and so well provided with all those things which were necessary for St. Francis while yet he was alive, and for his burial. Madonna Jacopa replied that, while she was praying one night in Rome, she heard a voice from heaven, which said: "If thou wouldst find St. Francis alive, get thee to Assisi without delay, and take with thee those things which thou art wont to give him when he is sick, and those things which will be necessary for his burial; and I (said she) have done so". So the said Madonna Jacopa abode there until St. Francis passed from this life and was buried; and at his burial she did him very great

honour, she and all her company; and she bore all the cost of whatsoever was needed. And thereafter, this noble lady returned to Rome; and there, within a little while, she died a holy death; and for devotion to St. Francis she commanded that her body should be borne to Santa Maria degli Angeli and buried there; and so was it done.

HOW MESSER JEROME TOUCHED AND SAW THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA OF ST. FRANCIS, WHEREIN AT FIRST HE DID NOT BELIEVE

AT the death of St. Francis, not only did the said Madonna Jacopa and her sons together with all her company see and kiss his glorious and holy Stigmata, but also many citizens of Assisi; among whom was a knight of wide renown and a great man, who was named Messer Jerome, the which doubted much thereof and was incredulous concerning them, even as was St. Thomas concerning those of Christ; and to certify himself and others, in the presence of all the friars and the lay folk, he boldly moved the nails in the hands and feet, and touched the wound in the side before them all. Whereby he was thereafter a constant witness of that verity, swearing upon the Book that so it was, and so he had seen and touched. St. Clare, likewise, beheld and kissed the glorious and sacred Stigmata of St. Francis, together with her nuns, which were present at his burying.

OF THE DAY AND OF THE YEAR OF THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS

THE glorious confessor of Christ, Messer St. Francis, passed from this life in the year of our Lord M.CC.XXVI., (1226) on the fourth day of October, on Saturday, and was buried on Sunday. That year was the twentieth year of his conversion, to wit when he began to do penance, and was the second year after the imprinting of the most holy Stigmata; and it was in the forty-fifth year from his birth.

OF THE CANONISATION OF ST. FRANCIS

THEREAFTER was St. Francis canonised in M.CC.XXVIII., (1228) by Pope Gregory IX., who came in person to Assisi to canonise him. And this sufficeth touching the fourth consideration.

OF THE FIFTH AND LAST CONSIDERATION OF THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA

THE fifth and last consideration is touching certain visions and revelations and miracles which God wrought and showed forth after the death of St. Francis, in confirmation of his most holy Stigmata, and for a declaration of the day and the hour whereon Christ gave them unto him. And as touching this matter, it is to be considered that, in the year of our Lord M.CC.LXXXII., (1282) on the . . . day of the month of October, Friar Philip, Minister of Tuscany, at the commandment of Friar John Buonagrazia, Minister-General, in the name of holy obedience, asked Friar Matthew of Castiglione Aretino, a man of great devotion and sanctity, to tell that which he knew concerning the day and the hour whereon the most holy Stigmata were imprinted by Christ on the body of St. Francis; because he heard that he had had a revelation touching the same. Whereupon Friar Matthew, constrained by holy obedience, answered him after this manner: "While I was in the community of Alvernia, last year in the month of May, I one day betook myself to prayer in my cell, which is on the spot where it is believed that that seraphic vision took place. And in my prayer I besought God most devoutly that He would vouchsafe to reveal unto some person the day and the hour and the place wherein the most holy Stigmata were imprinted upon the body of St. Francis; and, when I had continued in prayer and i in this petition beyond the first watch, St. Francis appeared to me with very great radiance, and said unto me: 'Son, for what dost thou pray to God?' And I said unto him: 'Father, I pray for such and such a thing'. And he said unto me: 'I am thy Father Francis. Dost thou know me well?' 'Father,' I said, 'yes.' Then he showed me the most holy Stigmata in his hands and feet and side, and said: 'The time hath come when God wills that that, which afore-time the friars have not been curious to know, shall be made manifest for His glory. Know thou then that He which appeared unto me was not an angel, but was Jesus Christ, in the form of a Seraph, who, with his own hands, imprinted on my body these wounds, even as He received them in His body on the Cross. And it was after this manner: On the day before the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, an angel came unto me, and, in God's name, bade me make me ready unto patience and to receive that which God might will to send me. And I made answer that I was ready to receive and to endure everything which might be God's good pleasure. Thereafter, on the following morning, to wit the morning of [the festival of the] Holy Cross, the which that year fell upon a Friday; at daybreak I came forth from my cell, in very great fervour of spirit, and went to pray in this place where

thou now art and where I oftentimes prayed, and, as I prayed, lo, through the air, there came down from heaven, with great swiftnes, a young man crucified, in the form of a Seraph with six wings; at which marvellous sight I humbly kneeled me down and began to contemplate devoutly the boundless love of Jesus Christ crucified, and the boundless pain of His passion; and the sight of Him engendered in me such pity that I verily seemed to feel His passion in my own body; and, at His presence, all this mountain shone as doth the sun; and, so descending, He came nigh unto me. And, standing before me, He said certain secret words unto me, the which I have not yet revealed unto any man; but the time draweth nigh when they shall be revealed. Then, after a while, Christ departed, and returned into heaven, and I found myself thus marked with these wounds. Go then,' said St. Francis, 'and tell these things to thy minister nothing doubting; for this is the operation not of man but of God.' And, when he had said these words, St. Francis blessed me and went back to heaven with a great multitude of youths, exceeding bright." All these things the said Friar Matthew said that he had seen and heard, not sleeping but awake. And he sware that he had of a truth told these things to the said minister in his cell at Florence, when he inquired of him concerning the same for obedience' sake.

HOW A HOLY FRIAR, READING THE LEGEND OF ST. FRANCIS IN THE
CHAPTER OF THE MOST HOLY STIGMATA, PRAYED SO MUCH TO GOD
CONCERNING THE SECRET WORDS, WHICH THE SERAPH SPAKE TO ST.
FRANCIS. WHEN HE APPEARED UNTO HIM, THAT ST. FRANCIS REVEALED
THEM UNTO THE SAID FRIAR

UPON another time, a devout and holy friar, while reading the legend of St. Francis in the chapter of the most holy Stigmata, began with great travail of spirit to consider what those so secret words could have been, which St. Francis said that he would not reveal to any one while he lived; the which the Seraph had spoken to him when He appeared unto him. And this friar said within himself: "St. Francis willed not to speak those words to any one during his lifetime; but now, after his bodily death, perchance he would tell them, if he were prayed devoutly so to do". And from thenceforward, the devout friar began to pray God and St. Francis that they would vouchsafe to reveal those words; and this friar continuing eight years in this prayer, in the eighth year he merited to be heard on this wise: One day, after eating, thanks having been given in the

church, he was in prayer in a certain part of the church, and was praying to God and St. Francis touching this matter, more devoutly than he was wont, and with many tears; when he was called by another friar, who commanded him in the name of the Guardian to bear him company to the town for the good of the Place. For the which cause, he, doubting not that obedience is more meritorious than prayer, as soon as he had heard the commandment of his superior, humbly left off praying and went with that friar that called him. And, as God willed it, he, by this act of ready obedience, merited that which he had not merited by his long praying. Whence, as soon as they had gone forth from the gate of the Place, they met two strange friars, who appeared to have come from a far country; and one of them seemed a young man and the other old and lean; and, by reason of the bad weather, they were all muddy and wet. Wherefore that obedient friar had great compassion for them, and said unto the companion, with whom he was going: "O dearest brother mine, if the business whereon we are going may wait a little, inasmuch as these strange friars have great need to be charitably received, I beseech thee to permit me first to go and wash their feet, and especially those of this aged friar, who hath the greater need thereof; and you will be able to wash those of this younger one; and thereafter we will go about the business of the convent". Then this friar consenting unto the charitable desire of his companion, they went back and received those strange friars very charitably, and took them into the kitchen to the fire to warm and dry themselves; at the which fire eight other friars of the Place were warming themselves. And, after they had been a little while at the fire, they took them aside to wash their feet, even as they had agreed together. And while that obedient and devout friar was washing the feet of the older friar, and removing the mud therefrom, for they were very muddy, he looked and saw that his feet were marked with the most holy Stigmata; and anon, for joy and wonder he embraced them closely, and began to cry aloud: "Either thou art Christ, or thou art St. Francis". At that cry and at those words, the friars, which were at the fire, arose and came thither with great fear and reverence to see those glorious stigmata. And then, at their prayer, this ancient friar permitted them clearly to see and touch and kiss them. And, while they marvelled yet more for joy, he said unto them: "Doubt not and fear not, dearest friars and sons; I am your father Friar Francis, who, according to the will of God, founded three Orders. And seeing that, for eight years, I have been entreated by this friar, who is washing my feet, and to-day more fervently than ever before, that I would reveal unto him those secret words which the Seraph spake unto me when He gave me the stigmata, the which words I resolved never

to reveal in my lifetime, to-day, by the commandment of God, by reason of his perseverance and the ready obedience with which he left the sweetness of contemplation, I am sent by God to reveal unto him, before you all, that which he asks." And then, turning unto that friar, St. Francis spake thus: "Know, dearest friar, that, when I was upon the mountain of Alvernia, wholly absorbed in the remembrance of the passion of Christ in that seraphic apparition, I was by Christ thus marked on my body with the Stigmata, and then Christ said unto me: 'Knowest thou what I have done unto thee? I have given thee the tokens of My passion, so that thou mayest be My standard-bearer. And even as I, on the day of My death, descended into Limbo, and, in virtue of these My Stigmata, drew out thence all the souls which I found there, and took them to Paradise; so to thee do I grant even from this hour, to the end that thou mayest be conformed to Me in death as thou hast been in life, that, after thou shalt have passed from this life, every year on the day of thy death, thou shalt go to Purgatory, and, in virtue of thy Stigmata which I have given thee, shalt draw out thence all the souls of thy three Orders, to wit minors, sisters and continents, and, beyond this, those others whom thou shalt find there, who have borne devotion unto thee, and shalt lead them into Paradise.' And these words I never spake while I lived in the world." And, when he had said these words, St. Francis and his companion suddenly vanished away. Many friars afterwards heard this from those eight friars, who were present at this vision and at these words of St. Francis.

HOW ST. FRANCIS, AFTER HIS DEATH, APPEARED TO FRIAR JOHN OF ALVERNIA, WHILE HE WAS PRAYING

ONCE, upon the mountain of Alvernia, St. Francis appeared to Friar John of Alvernia, a man of great sanctity, while he was praying, and abode and talked with him for a very long time; and, at the last, desiring to depart, he spake thus: "Ask of me what thou wilt". Said Friar John: "Father, I pray thee to tell me that which I have long desired to know, to wit what you were doing, and where you were, when the Seraph appeared unto you". St. Francis made answer: "I was praying in that place where is now the chapel of Count Simon da Battifolle, and I was entreating two graces of my Lord Jesus Christ. The first was that He would grant me to feel, in this life, in my soul and in my body, as far as might be possible, all that pain which He had Himself felt at the time of His most bitter passion. The second grace which I asked of Him was in like manner that I might feel in my heart that intense love wherewith He was enkindled to bear so great

passion for us sinners. And then God put it in my heart that He would grant me to feel both the one and the other, as much as was possible for a mere creature; the which thing was abundantly fulfilled in me at the imprinting of the Stigmata." Then Friar John asked him whether those secret words which the Seraph had spoken unto him had been even such as were rehearsed by that holy friar aforesaid, who declared that he had heard them from St. Francis in the presence of eight friars. St. Francis replied that the truth was even as that friar had said. Thereupon, Friar John, encouraged by the liberality of the granter, took heart to ask yet more, and said thus: "O father, I beseech thee most earnestly that thou wilt suffer me to behold and to kiss thy most holy and glorious Stigmata; not because I doubt thereof at all, but only for my consolation; for for this have I alway yearned". And, St. Francis freely showing them and offering them unto him, Friar John clearly saw and touched and kissed them. And, at the last, he asked of him: "Father, how great consolation had your soul, beholding Christ the Blessed coming unto you to give you the marks of His most holy Passion? Now would to God that I might feel a little of that sweetness!" Then St. Francis made answer: "Seest thou these nails?" Said Friar John: "Father, yes". "Touch yet again," said St. Francis, "this nail which is in my hand." Then Friar John, with great reverence and fear, touched that nail, and immediately, as he touched it, so great a perfume issued therefrom, as it were a thin spiral of smoke after the fashion of incense, and, entering through the nose of Friar John, filled his soul and body with so much sweetness, that forthwith he was rapt in God in ecstasy, and became insensible; and he remained thus rapt from that hour, which was the hour of Terce, even until Vespers. And of this vision and familiar conversation with St. Francis Friar John never spake unto any man, save only to his confessor, until he came unto his death; but, being nigh to his death, he revealed it to many friars.

OF A HOLY FRIAR WHO SAW A WONDERFUL VISION OF ONE OF HIS COMPANIONS WHO WAS DEAD

IN the Province of Rome, a very devout and holy friar saw this marvellous vision. A certain friar, a very dear companion of his, having died one night, was buried, in the morning, before the entrance of the, chapter-house; and, on the same day, after dinner, that friar betook himself into a corner of the chapter-house, to pray God and St. Francis devoutly for the soul of that dead friar his companion. And, as he persevered in prayer with supplications and tears, at noon, when all the others were gone away to sleep, he heard a great noise as of one being dragged through the cloister; whereat immediately

with great fear he turned his eyes toward the grave of his companion, and saw St. Francis standing there at the entrance of the chapter-house, and behind him a great multitude of friars round about the said grave. He looked beyond, and saw in the midst of the cloister a very great flaming fire, and in the flames was the soul of his companion who was dead. He looked round the cloister and he saw Jesus Christ walking round the cloister with a great company of angels and of saints. And, while he gazed upon these things and marvelled much, he saw that, when Christ passed before the chapter-house, St. Francis kneeled down with all those friars and spake thus: "I beseech Thee, my dearest Father and Lord, that, through the inestimable charity which Thou didst show to the human race in Thy incarnation, Thou wilt have mercy on the soul of this my friar, who burneth in yonder flame"; and Christ answered him never a word but passed on. And, when He returned, the second time, and passed before the chapter-house, St. Francis again kneeled him down with his friars, as at the first, and besought Him on this wise: "I pray Thee, merciful Father and Lord, through the boundless charity which Thou didst show to the human race when Thou didst die upon the wood of the cross, that Thou wilt have mercy on the soul of this my friar"; and Christ passed on as before and answered him not. And going round the cloister He returned the third time and passed before the chapter-house, and then St. Francis, kneeling down as before, showed unto Him his hands and his feet and his side and spake thus: "I beseech Thee, merciful Father and Lord, by that great pain and great consolation which I endured when Thou didst set these Stigmata in my flesh, that Thou wilt have pity on the soul of this my friar that is in that fire of purgatory". O wonderful thing! No sooner was Christ prayed that third time by St. Francis in the name of his Stigmata, than He forthwith stayed His steps and, looking upon the stigmata, gave ear unto his prayer and spake thus: "To thee, Francis, I grant the soul of thy friar". And in this, of a surety, He willed to honour and confirm the glorious Stigmata of St. Francis, and openly to signify that the souls of his friars, which go to Purgatory, can in no way be more easily delivered from their pains and brought to the glory of Paradise, than by virtue of his Stigmata, according unto the words which Christ spake unto St. Francis when He imprinted them upon him. Wherefore, as soon as these words had been spoken, that fire in the cloister vanished, and the dead friar came to St. Francis: and, together with him and with Christ, all that blessed company went up into heaven with their glorious King. For the which cause, this friar his companion, who had prayed for him, was exceeding glad when he saw him delivered from his pains and

taken to paradise; and thereafter he told all that vision in order to the other friars, and together with them gave praise and thanks to God.

**HOW A NOBLE KNIGHT, WHICH WAS DEVOTED UNTO ST. FRANCIS,
WAS CERTIFIED OF THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS AND OF HIS MOST
HOLY STIGMATA**

A NOBLE knight of Massa di Santa Piero, by name Messer Landolfo, who bare unto St. Francis very great devotion, and finally received the habit of the Third Order at his hands, was certified upon this wise of the death of St. Francis and of his most holy Stigmata: When St. Francis was nigh unto death, the devil entered into a woman of the said town, and cruelly tormented her; and therewith he caused her to speak with such subtlety of learning that she put to silence all the wise and learned men who came to dispute with her. It befel that the devil departed from her and, for two days, left her free; and, on the third day, returning unto her again, he afflicted her far more cruelly than before. Whereupon, Messer Landolfo, hearing thereof, gat himself to this woman and asked of the devil who dwelt in her, what was the reason that he had left her for two days, and thereafter returning, tormented her more grievously than before. The devil made answer: "When I left her the reason was this, that I, and all my fellows which are in these parts, gathered ourselves together and went in great force to the death-bed of the mendicant Francis, to dispute with him and to take his soul; but because it was surrounded and defended by a multitude of angels, more numerous than we, and was by them carried straight to heaven, we departed in confusion; wherefore do I requite and render unto this wretched woman that which in those two days I left undone". And then Messer Landolfo conjured him in the name of God to speak the truth concerning the sanctity of St. Francis, who he said was dead, and of St. Clare, who was alive. The demon made answer: "Whether I would or no, I will tell thee thereof that which is true. God the Father was so wrath against the sins of the world that it seemed that ere long He would pronounce the final sentence against men and women, and utterly destroy them from the earth if they amended not themselves. But Christ, His Son, praying for sinners, promised to renew His life and His passion in a man, to wit in Francis, mendicant and destitute: by whose life and doctrine He would lead back many, throughout all the world, to the way of truth, and many also to penitence. And now, to make manifest unto the world that which He had wrought in St. Francis, He hath willed that the Stigmata of His passion, the which He had imprinted upon his body in his life,

should now be seen and touched by many in his death. In like manner, the Mother of Christ promised to renew her virginal purity and her humility in a woman, to wit in St. Clare, on such wise that, by her example, she should deliver many thousands of women out of our hands. And thus, God the Father, being appeased by these promises, delayed His final sentence". Then Messer Landolfo, desiring to know certainly whether the devil, who is the storehouse and father of lies, spake the truth in these things, and especially touching the death of St. Francis, sent one of his faithful squires to Assisi, to Santa Maria degli Angeli, to know whether St. Francis were dead or alive; the which squire, on his arrival there, found that St. Francis had actually

departed from this life on the very day and hour which the devil had said; and so returning he reported it unto his lord.

HOW POPE GREGORY IX., WHO DOUBTED TOUCHING THE STIGMATA OF ST. FRANCIS, WAS CONVINCED THEREOF

LEAVING all the miracles of the most holy Stigmata of St. Francis, the which may be read in his Legend, for conclusion of this fifth consideration, it is to be known that to Pope Gregory IX. (doubting somewhat of the wound in the side of St. Francis, even as he afterward related) St. Francis appeared one night and, lifting up his right arm a little, uncovered the wound in his side, and asked of him a phial; and he caused it to be brought; and St. Francis caused it to be set under the wound in his side; and it seemed to the Pope that, of a verity, it was filled even unto the brim with blood mixed with water, which came forth from the said wound; and from thenceforth every doubt departed from him. And thereafter, with the counsel of all the cardinals, he approved the most holy Stigmata of St. Francis, and therefore he gave to the friars a special privilege with the hanging seal; and this he did at Viterbo in the eleventh year of his pontificate; and afterward, in the twelfth year, he gave another more ample. Again, Pope Nicolas III. and Pope Alexander gave ample privileges whereby whosoever should deny the most holy Stigmata of St. Francis, against him might proceedings be taken even as against a heretic. And this sufficeth as touching the fifth consideration of the glorious and most holy Stigmata of our father St. Francis; whose life may God give us grace so to follow in this world that, by virtue of his glorious stigmata, we may merit to be saved with him in paradise. To the praise of Jesus Christ and of the mendicant St. Francis. Amen.