

149// HERE FOLLOWETH THE LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS, FIRST BEGINNER OF THE FRIARS MINOR

Francis, servant and friend of Almighty God, was born in the city of Assisi, and was made a merchant unto the twenty-fifth year of his age, and wasted his time by living vainly, whom our Lord corrected by the scourge of sickness, and suddenly changed him into another man, so that he began to shine by the spirit of prophecy. For on a time he with other men of Perugia was taken prisoner, and were put in a cruel prison, where all the others wailed and sorrowed, and he only was glad and enjoyed. And when they had reproved him thereof, he answered: Know ye, said he, that I am joyful, for I shall be worshipped as a saint through all the world.

With the Beggars in Rome

On a time he went to Rome because of devotion, and he took off all his clothes and clad him with the clothes of a beggar, and sat among the poor men tofore the church of St. Peter, and as one of them, begged and ate eagerly with them, and much oftener would have done, but the shame of being known of people letted him.

Threatened by the Old Enemy

The old enemy the devil enforced him to let him of his holy purpose, and showed to him a woman monstrous and horribly disfigured, crookbacked and lame, which was in that city, and he said to him if he left not that he had enterprised, he would make him semblable and like unto her. But he was comforted of our Lord, which heard a voice saying to him: Francis, take these bitter things for the sweet, and despise thyself if thou desire to know me.

Francis was first named John, but after his name was changed and was called Francis. The cause of changing of his name was manifold. First, for the reason of his marvellous changing, for it is known that he received of God by miracle the French tongue, and it is said in his legend that when he was replenished of the grace of God, and of the ardour of the Holy Ghost he pronounced out burning words in French. Secondly, by the reason to publish his office, whereof is said in his legend that, the divine providence gave to him that name, because of his singular and inaccustomed name, the opinion of his mystery might be known throughout all the world. Thirdly, by reason of his office in effect, whereupon was given to understand that by him and by his sons he should make many servants of the devil and bond to sin, free. Fourthly, by reason of great courage and magnanimity of heart. For Frenchmen be said of fierceness, for in them is natural fierceness and great courage of heart. Fifthly, by reason of virtuosity in speaking, for his word carved away the vices like an axe. Sixthly, by reason that he chased away commonly the devils. Seventhly, by reason of honesty in his conversation, and of perfection of work. And it is said that some signs that were borne in Rome tofore the consuls, which were in terror of the people and in worship, were called Franciscas.

Among the Lepers

On a time he met a leper whom naturally men abhor, but he remembered him of the word that was said of God, and ran to him and kissed him, and anon the lazar vanished away, wherefore he

went to the habitation of the lazars and kissed devoutly their hands, and gave to them money, and let them have no need of such as he might do.

“Repair My House”

On a time he entered into the church of St. Damian for to make his prayers, and the image of Jesu Christ spake unto him and said: Francis, go and repair my house which is all destroyed as thou seest.

And from that hour the soul of him liquefied, and the passion of Jesu Christ was marvellously infixed in his heart. And then he did great pain, and was busy in repairing the church, and sold all that he had, and gave the money thereof to a priest, and he [the priest] durst not receive it for fear of his [St. Francis’s] parents and kin. Then he, casting it away tofore the priest as dust, setting not thereby.

The Break with His Father

Wherefore he was taken of his father and bound, and he [Francis] restored to him his money, and resigned also his clothes, and so naked he fled to our Lord, and clad him with hair [i.e. a hairshirt]. And then the blessed Francis went unto a simple man, whom he took instead of his father, and prayed him that like as his father doubled on him his curses, that in contrary he should bless him.

Mocked by His Brother

His own brother germane seeing him in a winter time have on him but foul and few clothes, and that he trembled for cold and was entending to his prayers, said to his fellow: Go to Francis and say to him that he sell to thee a pennyworth of his sweat. And when he heard it he answered with a glad cheer: I will sell it unto my Lord God.

Apostolic Poverty

On a day he heard in the church that which our Lord said to his disciples when he sent them to preach, and anon he addressed him with all his might to do and keep all those things; he did off his hosen and shoon from his feet and clad him with a foul coat, and took a cord for his girdle.

Villain Messenger of God

He went on a time in a snow by a wood, and was taken by thieves, and they demanded him what he was, and he said that he was the messenger of God, and anon they took him and cast him in the snow, saying to him: Lie there, thou villain messenger of God.

FORMATION OF THE FRIARS MINOR

Many noble and unnoble clerks and laymen had despised the world and begun to follow him, and the holy father enseigned and taught them the perfection of the gospel, which was for

to be in poverty, and that they should go by the way of simpleness. He wrote then a rule, after the gospel, to himself and his brethren, had and to be had, which Pope Innocent confirmed. And from then forthon he began to spread more ardently the seeds of the Word of God, and went about cities and castles by a fervent and marvellous desire.

The Friar Who Kept Silence

There was a friar which seemed outward of marvellous holiness, and kept silence so straitly that he would not be shriven by words but by signs, and every man praised him as a saint. This holy man Francis came thither and said: Leave ye brethren to praise him, for I shall not yet praise him lest it be by feigtise of the devil, let him be warned to be shriven twice in the week by word and speaking, and if he do it not, this is but temptation of the devil and fraudulent deceit. And then the friars warned him so to do, and he put his finger to his mouth, and shook his head, and showed that in no wise he would confess him. And anon after he returned again to worldly life as a hound to his vomit, and went out of his order, and finished his life in sinful acts and works.

St. Francis and Leonard

On a time St. Francis was weary of going, and rode upon an ass, and his fellow, one Leonard of Assisi, was also weary of going, and St. Francis began to think thus and to say in himself: His kin and my kin were not like, and incontinent he alighted down, and said to the friar: It appertaineth not to me to ride and thee to go afoot, for thou art more noble than I am. And the friar was abashed, and kneeled down and required pardon.

The Woman Whose Husband Was a Hindrance to Virtue

On a time, as he passed by a place, a noble lady ran so hastily against him that she might not speak for weariness, and he asked of her what she would. And she said: Pray for me, father, for I may not perform the purpose of health [i.e., vow to live a virtuous life] which I have begun, for my husband, which letteth me, doth to me many adversities in the service of God.

And he said to her: Go thy way, daughter, for thou shalt have anon comfort of him, and say to thine husband, in God's name and mine, that now is the time of health, and hereafter shall be time of equity and right.

And when she had said so to her husband, the man was suddenly changed and avowed to God continence and chastity.

Prayer for a Fountain

On a time a poor labourer was almost lost in a wood for thirst. and this holy saint impetred [prayed for] a fountain by his prayers.

No Famines During His Lifetime

He said on a time to a friar, that was familiar with him, this secret which was showed to him by the Holy Ghost. There is a servant of God living in the world on this day, for whose sake, as long as he shall live, our Lord shall suffer no famine among the people. But without doubt it is said that, when he was dead all that condition was changed to the contrary, for after his blessed death he appeared to the same friar and said to him: Lo! now is the famine come, which as long as I lived upon earth, our Lord would not suffer to come.

The Table Arrayed and Adorned

On an Easter day the friars Greek that were in desert had laid their table more curiously than in another time, and had made ready the glasses and set them on the board. And when St. Francis saw that he anon withdrew him, and set on his head the hat of a poor man which was there, and bare his staff in his hand, and went out and abode at the gate. And when the friars ate at dinner, he cried at the door that they should give for the love of God an alms to a poor sick man. Then the poor man was called in and entered and sat down alone upon the earth, and set his dish in the dust, which when the friars saw they were abashed and were sore aghast. And he said to them: I see the table arrayed and adorned, and I know well that it is not for poor men that seek their meat from door to door.

The Riches of Poverty

He loved poverty in himself and in all others, so that he always called poverty his lady, but when he saw one more poor than himself he had thereof envy, and doubted to be overcome of him. On a day he saw a poor woman and he showed her to his fellow and said: The poverty of this woman doth to us shame, and reproveth strongly our poverty, for, for my riches I have chosen my lady poverty, and she shineth more in this woman than in me.

A Sin Against the Poor

When on a time a poor man passed tofore him, and the holy man was moved with inward compassion, his fellow said to him: Though this man be poor, peradventure there is not a richer of his will [i.e. as rich as he would like to be] in all the province.

Then St. Francis said to him anon: Despoil thee of thy coat and give it to the poor man, and knowledge thyself culpable and kneel down to his feet, to whom anon he obeyed and did so.

Three Like Women

On a time three women like of visage and all things, and of habit, entered and met him, and saluted in this manner: Welcome my lady poverty, and anon they vanished away and were no more seen.

A Mortal Battle in Arezzo

On a time as he came to the city of Arezzo, and a mortal battle was moved in the city, this holy man saw within the burgh, on the ground, the devils making joy and were glad. Then he called his fellow named Silvester, and said to him: Go to the gate of the city and command to these devils in God's name, that is Almighty, that they go out of the city.

Then he went hastily and cried strongly: All ye devils depart from hence in the name of God and by the commandment of Francis our Father.

And they went away, and then the citizens anon became to accord.

Sylvester's Vision of the Golden Cross

The foresaid Sylvester when he was yet a secular priest saw in his sleep a golden cross issue out of the mouth of St. Francis, of the which the over end touched heaven and the arms of the cross stretched forth from that one to that other part of the world. Then this priest had compunction and left the world, and followed perfectly this holy man Francis.

Francis is Tempted by the Devil

And on a time as this holy man was in prayer, the devil called him thrice by his own name. And when the holy man had answered him, he said: None in this world is so great a sinner, but if he convert him our Lord would pardon him, but who that slayeth himself by hard penance shall never find mercy.

And anon this holy man knew by the revelation the fallacy and deceit of the fiend, how he would have withdrawn him for to do well.

And when the devil saw that he might not prevail against him, he tempted him by grievous temptation of the flesh, and when this holy servant of God felt that, he despoiled him of his clothes and beat himself right hard with a hard cord, saying: Thus, brother ass, it behoveth thee to remain and to be beaten.

And when the temptation departed not, he went out and plunged himself in the snow all naked, and made seven great balls of snow and purposed to have taken them into his body and said: This greatest is thy wife, and of these four, two be thy daughters, and two thy sons, and the other twain, that one thy chamberer, and that other thy varlet or yeoman; haste thee and clothe them, for they all die for cold, and if thy business that thou hast about them grieve thee sore, then serve our Lord perfectly.

And anon the devil departed from them all confused, and St. Francis returned again into his cell glorifying God.

An Interrupted Visit with a Cardinal

And as he dwelled on a time with Leo the cardinal of St. Cross, in a night the devils came to him and beat him right grievously. Then he called his fellow and said to him: These be devils, jailers of our Lord, whom he sendeth to punish the excesses, but I can remember me of none offences that I have done, but by the mercy of God I have washed them away by satisfaction. But peradventure he hath sent me them because he will not suffer me to fall, because I dwell in the courts of great lords, which thing peradventure engendereth not good suspicion to my right poor brethren, which suppose I abound in delices. And early in the morning he arose and departed thence.

Devils on the Roof

On a time, as he was in his prayers, he saw upon the covering of the house assemblies and companies of devils which ran hither and thither with great noise, and he went out, and signed him with the sign of the cross, and said: I say to you in the name of Almighty God that ye devils do to my body all that is suffered to you to do, and I shall suffer it patiently. For I have no greater enemy than my body, and ye shall avenge me of mine adversary, whiles ye take on it vengeance by my life. Then they vanished away all confused.

The Humility of St. Francis

There was a friar which was fellow of St. Francis was on a time ravished, and saw in spirit the glorious place in heaven, wherein he saw, among other seats, a right noble seat, shining of more noble glory than all the others. And as he marvelled for whom this noble seat was kept, he heard that it was said that this seat belonged sometime to one of the princes that fell, and is now made ready to the meek and humble Francis.

And when St. Francis issued from his prayers, that friar demanded him: Father, what weenest thou of thyself? And he said: I ween that I am greatest of all sinners. And anon the spirit came into the heart of the friar and said: Behold what was the vision that thou sawest, for humility shall lift up the most meek man unto the seat lost by pride.

He Receives the Stigmata

This holy man St. Francis saw in a vision above him, Seraphin crucified, the which emprinted in him the signs of his crucifying, that him seemed that he was crucified, and that in his hands, his feet, and in his side, him seemed were the sign of the wounds of the crucifying, but he did hide these tokens as much as he might, that no man should see them. And yet nevertheless some saw them in his life, and at his death they were seen of many, and were showed by many miracles that those signs were true.

Of which miracles twain shall suffice for to be set here.

There was a man named Rogier, and was in Apulia tofore the image of St. Francis, and began to think and say: May this be true that this man was so ennobled by such miracle, or was

this an illusion or an invention dissimuled of his brethren the friars? And as he thought this, he heard suddenly a sound like as a quarel [square-headed arrow] had been shot out of an arbalaste or a crossbow, and he felt him grievously hurt in his left hand, but there appeared no hurt in his glove, and then he took off his glove, and saw in the palm of his hand a wound as it had been of an arrow, out of which wound there issued so great pain of ache and burning, that almost he died for sorrow and pain.

And then he repented him, and said that he believed right verily the signs and tokens of St. Francis; and when he had prayed by two days St. Francis by his holy signs and stigmata, he was anon delivered of his pain and made all whole.

In the realm of Castile there was a man devout to St. Francis which went on a time to compline to the church of St. Francis. And men lay in await for to slay him, and instead of another man he was taken by error and ignorance, and was wounded and left as half dead; and after, the cruel murderer stuck his sword in his throat, and left it therein, and might not draw it out, but went his way.

And then men cried and ran hither and thither, and the man was bewailed like as he had been dead. And when they rang to matins at midnight at the church of the friars, the wife of the man began to cry: Arise up, sire, and go to matins, for the bell calleth thee.

And anon he lifted up his hand to show that some man should take away the sword from his throat, and anon in the sight of them all the sword sprang out afar as it had been thrown of a strong champion, and anon the man arose perfectly whole, and said that St. Francis came to him and “joined his stigmatas to my wounds, and anointed them with the sweetness of his signs and sewed them together marvellously by his touching. And when he would have gone, I showed him that he should take away the sword for else I should not con speak, and anon he took it out, and threw it away far from him, and healed me with touching my throat with his signs.”

No Friars To Be Bishops or Prelates

The two clerks, great luminaries of the world, that is to say St. Dominic and St. Francis, were in the city of Rome tofore the Lord Hostience, which afterward was pope of Rome. And this bishop said to them: Wherefore make ye not of your friars bishops and prelates, which should prevail more by teaching and example giving? And there was long contention between them who should first answer, and humility overcame Francis that he would not speak tofore that other, and then St. Dominic humbly obeyed and said: Sire, our brethren be lifted up in good degree if they know it, and I shall never suffer to my power that ever they shall hope to have any higher dignity.

After that answered St. Francis: Sire, my brethren be called minors, because they would not be made greater.

He Called All Beasts His Brethren

And the blessed St. Francis full of right great simplicity admonished and warned all creatures to love their creator. He preached to birds and was heard of them, they suffered him to touch them,

and without licence they would not return ne flee from him. And on a time when he preached, the swallows chattered and sang, and anon by his commandment they were still.

There was also, on a time, a bird on a fig-tree beside his cell which sang oft full sweetly. And St. Francis put forth his hand and called that bird, and anon the bird obeyed and came upon his hand. And he said to her, Sing my sister and praise thy Lord, and then anon she sang, and departed not till she had licence.

He spared to touch lights, lamps, and candles, because he would not defile them with his hands. He went honourably upon the stones for the worship of him that was called Stone. He gathered the small worms out of the way because they should not be trodden with the feet of them that passed by. He commanded in winter to give honey unto bees, that they should not perish for hunger. He called all beasts his brethren. He was replenished of marvellous joy for the love of his Creator. He beheld the sun, the moon, and the stars, and summoned them to the love of their Maker. He defended for to make him a great crown, saying: I will that my simple brethren have part in my head.

The Secular Man's Vision of St. Francis

There was a secular man which saw St. Francis, the servant of God, preaching at St. Severin's, and saw by revelation of God, that St. Francis was stretched on a cross made of two clear swords, of which that one came from his head to his feet, and that other stretched from that one hand to that other, so that he never had seen such a demonstration. Then he was moved in his heart, and entered into the order, and finished goodly his life.

His Eyes

On a time, as St. Francis was sick on his eyes for continual weeping, his brethren said to him that he should refrain him from weeping, and he answered: The visitation of the light perdurable is not to be put away for the light that we have here with the flies. And when his brethren constrained him to take a medicine for his eyes, and the surgeon held a burning iron in his hand, the blessed Francis said: My brother fire, be thou to me in this hour debonair and curable: I pray to our Lord that made thee, that thou attemper my heat.

And then he made the sign of the cross against the fire, and the fiery iron was put in his tender flesh from his ear unto his eyelids, and he felt no pain.

He Changes Water into Wine

He was strongly sick in the desert of St. Urban, and when he felt that nature failed in him he asked for to drink wine, and there was none. And they brought to him water, and he blessed it and made the sign of the cross thereon, and it was converted and turned into right good wine. And the holy man gat of our Lord that which the poverty of the desert might not get. And as soon as he had tasted it, he became strong and was all whole.

True Words

He had liefer hear blame of himself than praising, and for because that the people praised in him anything of merit of holiness, he commanded to some brother to say to him in his ear some villainy in blaming him and defouling. And when such a brother, so constrained against his will, called him villain merchant, and unprofitable fool, then was he glad and blessed him, and said: God bless thee, for thou sayest right very true words, and this thing appertaineth to me for to hear.

His Refusal to Wield Authority

And this holy St. Francis would never be more master ne governor, but he would be more subject, ne so willingly command as obey. And therefore he left for to be general, and demanded to be under the warden, to whose will he always submitted himself in all things. He promised always obedience to the friar with whom he went, and kept it.

Dealing with the Disobedient

When a friar had done something against the rule of obedience, and had sign of penance, yet this holy St. Francis, for to fear others, commanded to cast the hood of him into the fire, and when it had been a while in the fire, he commanded to take it out and give it again to the friar, and the hood was taken out of the fire without hurt.

Singing with the Birds

He went on a time by the morass of Venice and found there a great multitude of birds singing and he said to his fellows: Our sisters, these birds, give laud to their Maker, let us go in the middle of them, and sing we our hours canonical to our Lord.

And they entered in among them and they moved not, but because they might not hear each other for the chittering and noise of birds he said: My sister birds, cease your songs till we have yielded unto our Lord due praisings. And then they held them still, and when they had finished their lauds, he gave to them licence to sing again, and anon they reprised their song after their custom.

The Knight's Last Confession

He was on a time harboured with a knight, and St. Francis said to him: Brother, fair host, agree to that I shall say to thee, confess thy sins, for thou shalt soon eat in another place. And anon he granted that to him, and ordained for his meiny, and took penance of health. And also soon as they went to the table the host died suddenly.

He Preaches to the Birds

On a time he found a great multitude of birds, and then he said to them: My brethren, ye ought strongly to praise and give laud to your Maker which hath clad you with feathers and hath given

to you pens for to fly and hath granted you the purity of the air and governed you without charge or business.

And the birds turned their beaks or bills to him and spread their wings, and stretched their necks and addressed their heads and beheld him intently. And he passed forth by the middle of them so nigh that he touched them with his coat, and none of them arose out from his place till he gave to them leave that they flew together.

The Swallows Let Him Speak

On a time when he preached at the castle Almarye, and he might not be heard for the swallows which made their nests, to whom he said: My sister swallows, it is time that I speak, for ye have said enough, be ye now still till the word of God be accomplished. And they obeyed and were still anon.

The Purse and the Serpent

And as this holy man St. Francis passed through Apulia, he found in his way a purse full of money, and when his fellow saw it, they would have taken it for to have given it to the poor people, but he would not suffer him in no manner, and said to him: Son, it appertaineth not to thee to take the goods of others.

And when his fellow hasted to take it St. Francis prayed a little, and after, commanded him to take the purse, which then found therein a great adder, instead of money. And when the friar saw that he began to doubt, but he would obey and took the purse in his hands, and there sprang out anon a serpent venomous. And then St. Francis said to him: Money is none other thing to the servant of God but the devil, which is a serpent venomous.

A Friar Grievously Tempted

There was a friar grievously tempted, and he began to think that if he had anything written with the hand of their father St. Francis, that that temptation should be chased away anon, but he durst in no wise discover this thing. On a time St. Francis called him and said: "Son, bring to me parchment and ink, for I will write something praising to God." And when he had written he said: "Take this charter and keep it unto the day of thy death diligently." And anon all his temptation went away.

And the same friar, when St. Francis lay sick, began to think: Our Father approacheth the death, and if I might have, after his death, his coat I should be greatly comforted. And after this the saint called him and said: I give to thee this my coat; if thou have thereto, after my death, plain right.

The Capon and the Fish

He was lodged on a time in Alexandria, in Lombardy, with an honest man, which demanded him, if for the observance of the gospel he should eat of all that which was set tofore him, and he

consented to the devotion of the host; and then the host did do make ready a capon of seven years old. And as they ate there came an untrue man which demanded alms for the love of God, and anon when this blessed man heard that blessed name, he sent to him a member of the capon, and the cursed man kept it. And on the morn when the holy man preached, he showed that piece of the capon, and said, Lo! see here what flesh this friar eateth whom ye honour as a saint, for he gave it to me yester even.

But this piece of the capon was seen of all the people as it were fish, and that man was blamed of all the people, and said that he was mad, and when he understood it, he was ashamed and demanded pardon; and when this man came again to his good thought, the flesh returned again to his own kind and form.

Eating on the Floor

On a time as he sat at the table, and collation [a discourse] was made of the poverty of the Blessed Virgin our Lady, anon St. Francis arose and began to weep and sob sorrowfully, so that his visage was all wet of tears, and began to eat the remnant of his bread upon the ground.

Reverence for the Priesthood

He would also that right great reverence should be done to the hands of priests, to whom was given power to sacre the blessed sacrament of our Lord. And then he said oft: If it happed me to meet any saint coming from heaven, and also a poor priest, I would first go kiss the priest's hands, and would say to the saint: Holy saint, abide a while, for the hands of this priest have handled the son of life, and hath performed a thing above humanity.

HIS DEATH

He was ennobled in his life by many miracles, for the bread that was brought to him to bless gave health to many sick men. He converted the water into wine, of which a sick man anon tasted and received anon health, and also did many other miracles.

And when his last days approached, and he was grieved by long infirmity; then he made himself to be laid upon the bare ground, and did do call all the friars that were there, and when they were all present he blessed them. And like as our Lord fed his disciples at supper on Shere-thursday, he gave to each of them a morsel of bread, and warned them, as he was wont to do, to give laud to their Maker.

And the very death which is to all men horrible and hateful, he admonished them to praise it, and also he warned and admonished death to come to him, and said: Death, my sister, welcome be thou; and when he came at the last hour, he slept in our Lord. Of whom a friar saw the soul in the manner of a star, like to the moon in quantity, and to the sun in clearness.

MIRACLES OF ST. FRANCIS

A Vision of St. Francis

There was a friar named Augustin, which was minister and servant in the labour of the earth, and as he was in his last end, and had lost his speech, he escried suddenly and said: Abide me, father, abide, I shall go with thee. Then the friars demanded him what he said, and he said: See ye not our father Francis that goeth unto heaven, and anon he slept in peace, and followed his holy father.

The Lady Saved From Hell's Cruel Prison

A lady which had been devout to the blessed Francis died, and the clerks and priests were at the bier for to sing the exequies of her. She arose up suddenly off the bier, and called one of the priests that were there and said: Father, I would confess me; I was dead, and should have been put in a cruel prison, because I had not shriven me of a sin that I shall say, but St. Francis prayed for me, that this confessed and showed I shall have forgiveness, and anon as I shall have said and confessed it to thee I shall rest in peace tofore you all. And then she was confessed and assoiled, and rested anon in our Lord.

The Man Who Would Not Lend His Cart

The friars of Viterbo would have borrowed a cart of a man, and he answered in despite: I had liefer see two of you flayed with St. Francis than I should lend you my cart, but he came again to himself and reprov'd himself, and repented him of the blame that he had said, and doubted the ire of God.

And anon his son was sick and died, and when he saw his son dead he slept on the earth weeping, and called St. Francis and said: I am he that sinned, thou shouldest have beaten me, give again to me, holy saint, praying devoutly to thee, whom thou hast taken away from me, blaming thee and blaspheming wickedly.

And anon his son revived and said: When I was dead St. Francis led me by a long way and dark, and at the last he brought me unto a right fair green, and after said to me: Return to thy father, I will no longer hold thee.

The Poor Man in Debtor's Prison

There was a poor man which owed unto a certain rich man a quantity of money, and prayed him, for the love of St. Francis, he would prolong the term of payment. To whom he answered proudly: I shall set thee in such a place that neither Francis ne none other shall help thee. And anon he took and bound him, and set him in a dark prison, and anon after, St. Francis came thither and brake up the prison, and loosed his bonds and brought the man all safely to his own house.

The Knight Who Doubted

There was a knight which detracted the works and miracles of St. Francis, and on a time as he played at the dice, he being all enraged, and full of woodness and cruelty, said to them that stood by him: If St. Francis be a saint, let come eighteen on the dice.

And anon came in three dice in each of them six, and so it appeared nine times, at every time three sixes at each cast, and then he adjusting [adding] woodness to woodness, he said: If it be true that Francis be a saint, let a sword rive me through my body this day, and if he be no saint, that it escape safely.

And when the playing at dice was ended, because he had made that prayer in sin, he said injury to his nephew, and he took his sword and stuck it through his belly and slew him anon.

The Sign of the Tau [τ]

There was a man that had lost his thigh that he could not move it, and cried to St. Francis thus, saying: Help me, St. Francis, remember thee of the devotion and of the service that I have done to thee, for I carried thee upon mine ass, and kissed thy feet, and thy hands, and now I die for pain of this right hard torment.

Then the holy man appeared to him with a little staff that he held, which had the sign of Thau, and touched therewith the place of his pain, and the postume brake, and he received anon full health, but the sign of Thau abode alway in the same place. With that sign St. Francis was wont always to sign his letters.

A Maid of Apulia Recalled to Life

There was a maid which dwelled in the mountains of Apulia in a castle, and her father and mother ne had but only this daughter, and she died, and her mother was much devout toward St. Francis, but then she was full of heaviness, and St. Francis appeared to her and said: Weep no more, for the light of thy lantern is quenched, and it appertaineth not that I yield her again to thee by thy prayer.

But yet the mother had affianced and trust in the saint, and would not suffer to bear away the body, but in calling St. Francis, she took her daughter that was dead and raised her up alive and whole.

The Child Who Fell From a Window

There was a little child in Rome fallen out of a window to the ground and died forthwith, and they called to St. Francis for help, and he was anon restored to life.

The Child of Suessa

In the city of Suessa, it happened that a house fell and slew a child, and when they had put the corpse in a chest for to bury, the mother called on St. Francis with all her devotion, and about midnight the child coughed and arose all whole, and began to praise God.

The Friar Who Fell in the River

Friar James of Reaten had passed a flood [i.e., crossed a river] in a vessel with other friars which were set afloat, and he hasted so sore after to go out because he was last, and the ship recoiled backward into the water, so that he fell down into the deepest of the flood, and then all the friars prayed St. Francis for him. And he himself, as he might, with like devotion, called the holy saint unto his aid and help, in his heart.

And that same friar began to go [i.e., walk] in the bottom of the water, as dry as he had gone on the earth, and caught the boat, which was drowned, and brought it to the bank, and came up without wetting of his clothes that he wore, no never drop of water touched his coat no wet nothing on him.

Then let us devoutly pray this holy father, St. Francis, to be our succour and aid in our adversities and perils, and help, that by his merits we may after this short life come into everlasting life in heaven. Amen.

The [iconography of Saint Francis of Assisi](#) is available at the [Christian iconography website](#).

For other saints, see the [index to this Golden Legend website](#).

Scanned by Robert Blackmon. bob_blackmon@mindspring.com.

This text was taken from the [Internet Medieval Source Book](#). The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts related to medieval and Byzantine history.

Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use.

E-text © Paul Halsall, September 2000
halsall@fordham.edu

Reformatted with paragraphs, rubrics, italics, and explanatory insertions by Richard Stracke, rstracke@aug.edu