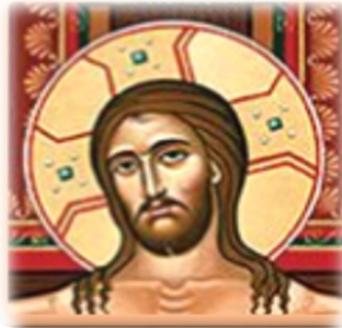


For Personal Reflection and Prayer

At this moment in my life what I honestly want and desire for my relationship with Jesus is...



Jesus is the Human image of our loving Father and the qualities in Jesus which attract me most Include...

I want to say to Jesus...

To help me be a true disciple of Jesus and become my authentic self I need to open myself to the Holy Spirit in these ways...

I resolve to...

In my relationship with others I express my love and concern when I...

To be more Christ Like in my relationships I need to...

I give thanks for the grace of Jesus in my life especially for...

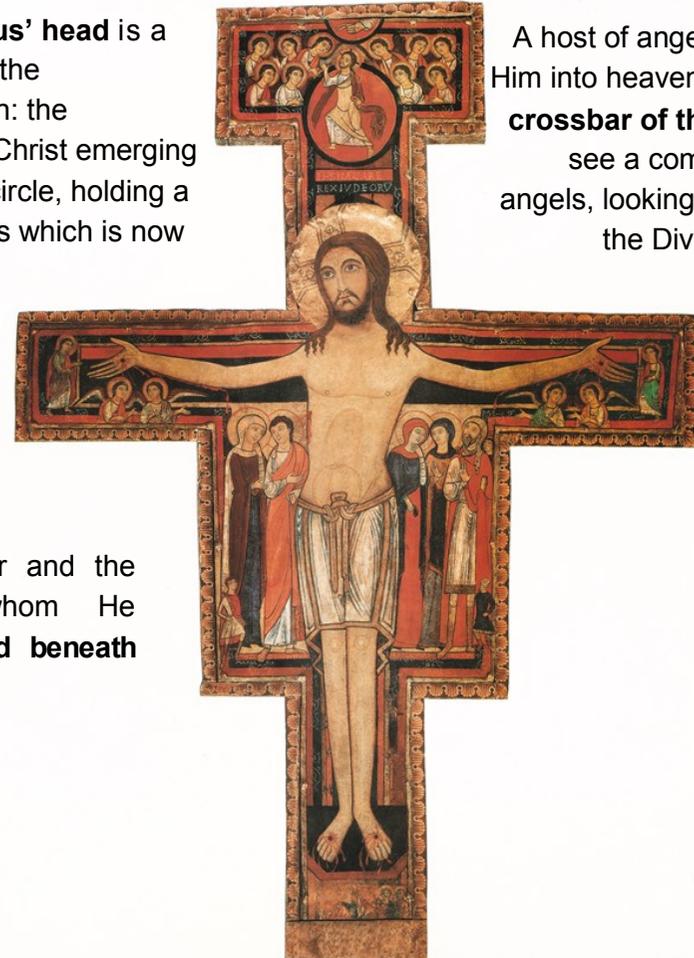


“ Rebuild My Church.”

When the image of Christ in the Crucifix at San Damiano miraculously spoke these words to Saint Francis, he was awakened to a new zeal.

Above Jesus' head is a portrayal of the Resurrection: the triumphant Christ emerging from a red circle, holding a golden cross which is now His sceptre.

A host of angels welcomes Him into heaven. Around the **crossbar of the cross**, we see a company of holy angels, looking in awe upon the Divine Sacrifice.



“His Mother and the disciple whom He loved” **stand beneath the Cross.**

Standing on the cross in His full stature, Jesus' hands are spread out serenely in an attitude of both supplication and blessing.

Reflection Inspired by the San Damiano Cross

At San Damiano the Crucified Christ challenged St. Francis to “Rebuild my Church” At first Francis interpreted this literally, doing all he could with stones and mortar, to rebuild the dilapidated church of San Damiano. Francis quickly realized that the rebuilding process had to include **the transformation of his heart, of his inner self, to rebuild his life in Christ.**

Focused on Christ

How did Francis go about this? The process slowly unfolded from his *gazing* upon the Crucified Saviour over time. What were the steps? St. Clare, a companion of Francis, described it best when she wrote to Agnes of Prague: **“Gaze upon Christ, consider Christ, contemplate Christ, and imitate Christ.”** Those four steps would become the pathway into the discovery of a new heart, a new power and a new self.

The Incarnation Is Key

The Incarnation showed us the face of God. But what does this image portray? What do we see? What Francis saw in the person of the Incarnate Christ was humility, poverty and charity. The most visible, tangible expression of this was the cross.

All-embracing Love

The other element that the image of Christ on the cross portrayed was that of charity, compassionate love. Jesus’ outstretched arms drew in all humanity, welcoming every creature into the embrace of God’s tender love through mercy, forgiveness and acceptance of all. This meant recognizing and accepting the worth and dignity of each one. As we internalize the same, we are slowly transformed into the image of Jesus, which is the image of our true self.

The path into this discovery of self is the cross.

The cross is a mirror. In seeing myself in that mirror, I see Christ Crucified, and in seeing Christ Crucified, I see my most authentic self. As I am transformed into that image, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” (Galatians 2:20) Then I am my true and genuine self.

As we embrace this process, we take a major step towards discovering who we are as a disciple of Christ; we are also well on the way to rebuilding our inner life and ultimately rebuilding the house of God.

How can we make this real and concrete?

We must come to a moment in life when, like Francis, we say: “This is what I *want* and *desire* with all my heart.” Once that is clear, then a rhythm of daily prayer is essential. We need to beg God for the kind of transformation of heart needed to have a dwelling place for humility and poverty and charity. We cannot achieve this on our own power. It is God’s project, God’s work, and only grace can make it happen.

The other arena is that of relationships, whether among friends, in the family, community life or one’s workplace. It is here that humility, poverty and compassionate charity are brought to life and nowhere else. When people met up with Francis or heard him preach, they saw these realities in his very person. They found themselves in the living presence of forgiveness, peace, faith and love, because the image of Christ in Francis was very real, in the words of Thomas of Celano.

“Francis was always with Jesus:

Jesus in his heart,

Jesus in his mouth,

Jesus in his ears,

Jesus in his eyes,

Jesus in his hands,

he bore Jesus always

in his whole body....

With amazing love he bore

in his heart and always held onto Christ Jesus, and Him crucified.”

Let the Crucifix of San Damiano Speak to You

Allow the Holy Spirit to transform your life.

Adapted from an internet article by Fr. Roch Niemier, OFM,