

JUBILEE YEAR OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

January 10, 2026 ~ January 10, 2027

Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a special Jubilee Year of Saint Francis of Assisi from January 10, 2026 to January 10, 2027 in honor of the eighth centenary (800 years) of Francis's passing into eternal life (3 October 1226). **This Jubilee is a gift and a spiritual opportunity for the whole Catholic Church, not just the Franciscan family, to renew faith, holiness, peace, and charity in imitation of Francis's life.**

A formal decree by the Apostolic Penitentiary establishes this jubilee and explains how the faithful can participate through prayer, pilgrimage, and sacramental life.

Pope Leo emphasizes that this Jubilee is not a mere nostalgic celebration of a saint from the distant past, but a call to personal and communal renewal.

Francis of Assisi is presented as an “alter Christus” (another Christ): a model of evangelical life, poverty, humility, and joy that remains urgently relevant today. Our times — marked by social discord, superficial interactions, conflict, and environmental degradation—reflect some of the same challenges Francis faced. The Jubilee invites believers to respond with genuine Christian charity, reconciliation, and lived peace. In a letter to the ministers general of the Franciscan family, **Pope Leo explains that Francis's greeting, “The Lord give you peace,” expresses a vision of peace that includes: Peace with God, Peace among people, and Peace with creation.** This holistic vision challenges Christians today to be builders of peace and bridges of reconciliation in a world of division and conflict.



How the Jubilee Is Observed

The Jubilee includes the opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence, under the customary conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion, and prayer for the pope's intentions):

- **by making a pilgrimage** to a Franciscan conventual church* or place of worship dedicated to St. Francis anywhere in the world. **St. Paul Church, Kensington is a site for visitation to fulfill the requirements of the plenary indulgence offered.*
- Or, for those unable to travel (the elderly, sick, caregivers), **by uniting spiritually** with Jubilee celebrations and offering prayers, sufferings, and intentions to God with sincere detachment from sin.

The Jubilee is intentionally inclusive, inviting all faithful, not only Franciscans, to participate in prayer, meditation, peace-building, and charity.

Spiritually, Pope Leo's Jubilee message calls believers to:

- Imitate Francis's radical trust in God, simplicity, and joy in the Gospel.
- Live peace concretely— not as a vague ideal, but in everyday relationships, communities, and care for creation.
- Convert daily life into a witness of charity, mercy, reconciliation, and humble service.

He says it is not merely time for celebration it a move to mature discipleship — letting the fruits of faith translate into action, mercy, and renewed evangelical witness in the world.



A Prayer of Trust in the Spirit of Saint Francis before the Cross of San Damiano

Most High and glorious Lord,
From your wounded side You speak,
and though my heart is slow and clouded,
Your voice pierces even my confusion.

You call me by name
when I do not yet know my path.

Lord Jesus Christ,
I am small, and Your house is great;
I am poor, and Your Church is wounded.

Yet if You ask it of me,
I will take up the smallest stone.
Not because I understand,
but because You have spoken.

Give me, O Lord, a heart that does not delay,
hands ready for the work before me,
and a will that does not seek its own way.

If I must begin with broken walls, let me begin.

If I must begin in ignorance, let me begin.

Only remain with me, Crucified Love,
and speak again when I falter.

For Your house is Yours to restore,
and I am only Your little servant.

Amen

Image: Francis before the San Damiano Cross.

This episode, describes one of the most decisive mystical moments in the life of Francis of Assisi.

If the later episode of Francis receiving the Gospel directive giving Francis the form of his life, the encounter at San Damiano gave it its heart: a personal, loving obedience to the Crucified Christ.

What this moment meant for Francis. Celano carefully shows that Francis was already “perfectly changed in heart” but not yet fully configured in body and mission. At San Damiano, something qualitatively new occurs. Francis does not simply meditate on Christ; he is addressed by Him. The Crucified calls him by name and entrusts him with a task.

Several elements are spiritually decisive.

First, Francis approaches in humility and supplication. The initiative is God’s. Francis is receptive soil. This becomes a permanent Franciscan posture: listening before acting.

Second, the command is concrete: “Go, repair my house.” Francis initially understands this literally and begins rebuilding the dilapidated chapel stone by stone. This literal obedience is not a mistake but part of his formation. God trains him through small, visible acts of fidelity before entrusting broader renewal.

Third, and most important, Celano notes that from this moment “compassion for the Crucified was rooted in his soul.” This is the deepest fruit of San Damiano. Francis is not merely given a mission; he is inwardly configured to the suffering love of Christ. The whole later Franciscan spirituality—poverty, humility, joy in suffering, love of the poor—flows from this interior union with the Crucified.

What it meant for the Franciscan movement

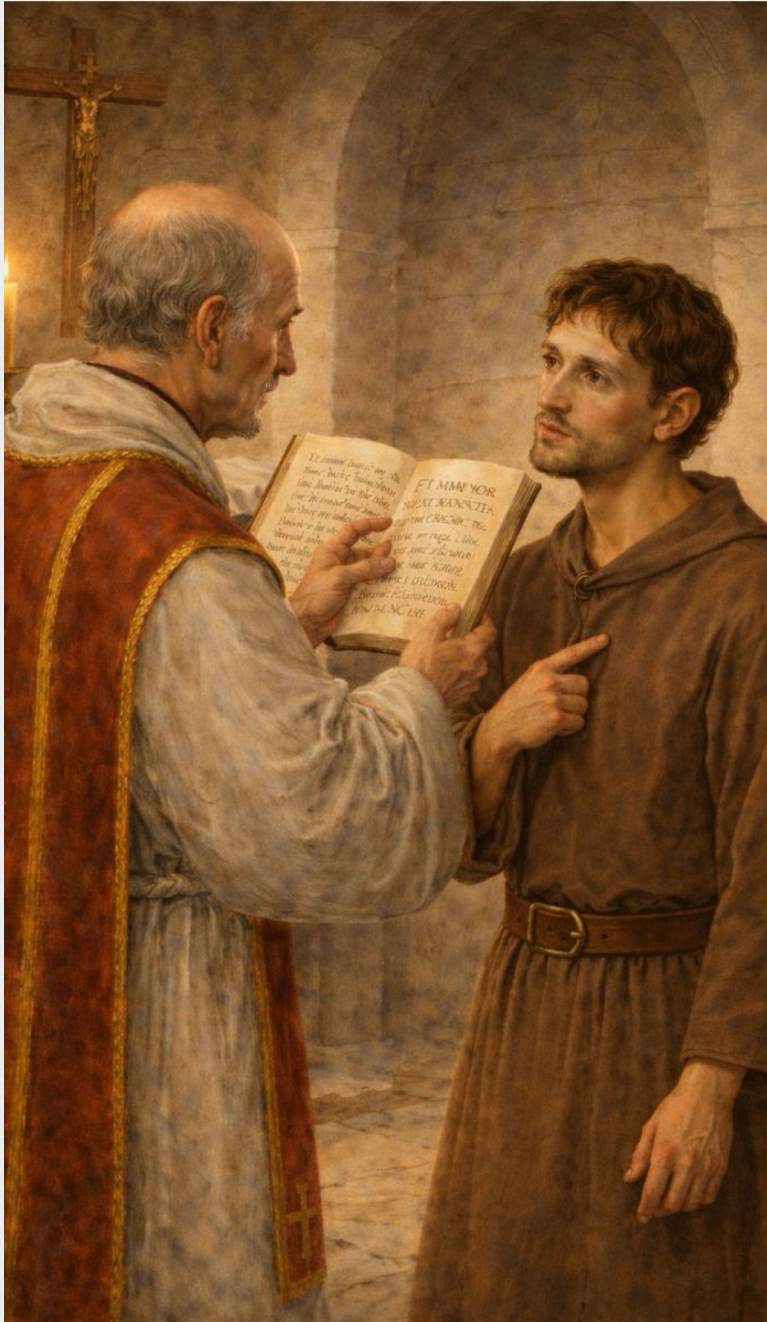
Historically, San Damiano becomes the wellspring of the Franciscan charism. Three enduring features emerge here.

Christocentric obedience. The Order will always understand itself as directly obedient to Christ speaking through the Gospel and the Church. *Reform beginning from below.* Francis does not start by criticizing structures. He starts by repairing a broken chapel with his own hands. The Franciscan movement will repeatedly renew the Church through lived witness rather than institutional power. *Compassion as mission.* Because Francis’s heart is pierced by the Crucified, the movement that grows from him will instinctively gravitate toward the poor, the leper, the abandoned, and the spiritually forgotten. San Damiano, therefore, is not just a private mystical event; it is the spiritual DNA of the Franciscan family.

What it says to us in this Jubilee year

In a Jubilee commemorating Francis’s passing, this scene speaks with particular urgency. **First**, it reminds us that renewal of the Church begins with **personal encounter with Christ crucified**. Programs and plans cannot substitute for hearts converted in prayer. **Second**, Francis models **obedience without full comprehension**. He acts on what he understands now and trusts God for the rest. In our time, often paralyzed by analysis, this is a needed corrective. **Third**, the command to “repair my house” remains perennially relevant. Every age of the Church experiences forms of wear, fracture, or fatigue. The Jubilee invites believers not to stand at a distance in criticism but to ask: **What small, concrete repair is Christ asking of me?**

In sum At San Damiano, Francis moves from generic conversion to personal commission. Rooted in compassion for the Crucified, he begins the humble work that will eventually renew far more than a crumbling chapel. In this Jubilee year, the Church hears again the same voice: renewal begins with prayerful encounter, humble obedience, and the willingness to start repairing, stone by stone, whatever Christ places before us.



A Prayer for Gospel Obedience in the Spirit of Saint Francis

Lord Jesus you are the Word made Flesh.
When Your Gospel was spoken, Francis was
struck to the heart—not by lightening,
but by a command simple enough to obey.

You sent him with nothing but trust,
to proclaim that the Kingdom was near,
to give freely what he had freely received,
to walk unencumbered, relying on You alone.

What You asked, he already desired,
before he had words for it.

Your Word revealed the path his soul
was already turning toward.

Lord Jesus, strip from me what is not of You.
Free my mind, lighten my steps, quiet my fears.

Give me the joy of spontaneous obedience.
Let me live the Gospel without excuses,
so that my life may follow
what your lips have spoken.

This is what I want. This is what I seek.
This is what I desire with all my heart.

Amen

Image: Francis hears the Gospel.

Francis hears at Mass the Gospel of Matthew 10:7–10) “As you go, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand.Take no gold, nor silver, nor money in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staff...” This episode captures the moment when Francis of Assisi’s conversion takes definitive form. It is not yet the founding of the Franciscan Order, but it is the instant when the Gospel becomes a personal communication from God to be lived.

What it meant for Francis Up to this point, Francis was a man in transition, drawn to God but unsure how to proceed. *The decisive feature of this scene is his humility as a listener.* He hears the Gospel, recognizes he does not fully grasp it, and asks the priest for explanation. This already reveals his core spiritual posture: *Francis does not invent a path; he receives one.*

When he understands that Christ sent the disciples out in radical poverty, his reaction is immediate and joyful: “This is what I wish... what I long to do with all my heart.” For Francis, the Gospel is not an ideal to admire but a personal invitation from God to embody. Celano a biographer of Francis stresses that he “did not suffer any delay.” Francis recognizes in the words of Christ the concrete shape of his vocation. By removing his shoes, staff, and belt, and by adopting the poor, cross-shaped tunic, Francis performs an outward act that expresses an inward surrender. *This is the birth of his evangelical poverty*, not primarily as asceticism, but as freedom to follow Christ without reserve. From this moment forward, his life will be patterned directly on the lived Gospel.

What it meant for the Franciscan movement Historically, this episode becomes the seed of the entire Franciscan form of life. What Francis does personally will soon attract companions and eventually receive ecclesial recognition. Three features of the future Order are already present here: Literal fidelity to the Gospel (living “according to the form of the holy Gospel”), *Radical poverty and simplicity and Mission of preaching penance and the Kingdom*

Importantly, Francis does not begin with institutional reform. *Renewal begins with one man who hears and obeys.* The Order grows organically from lived witness, not strategic planning. This is why the early *Franciscan movement carried such evangelical power: it was visibly rooted in the words of Christ.*

What it says to us in this Jubilee year In a Jubilee commemorating Francis’s passing, this scene speaks with unusual relevance. It confronts a perennial danger for believers: becoming familiar with the Gospel without being changed by it.

First, Francis models **docile listening**. He assumes he must still learn the Gospel more deeply. The Jubilee invites the Church to recover this humility, to hear Christ’s words again as personally addressed.

Second, Francis embodies **holy immediacy**. He does not postpone obedience until conditions are ideal. In every age, including ours, the temptation is delay, qualification, or spiritualizing the Gospel’s demands. Francis reminds us that renewal begins when the Word of God acts upon the soul of the believer and is acted upon concretely in every day life.

Third, the passage highlights **evangelical freedom through poverty of spirit**. While the exact external form may differ today, the interior question remains urgent: what attachments prevent us from moving lightly and generously for the Kingdom?

In sum This moment marks the birth of Francis’s Gospel-shaped life and the germ of the Franciscan movement. For the Church in this Jubilee year, it stands as a clear summons: to listen again with humility, to obey without delay, and to allow the Gospel, heard afresh, to renew both our lives and the Church itself.



A Prayer for an Undivided Heart in the Spirit of Saint Francis

Most High and all-powerful Father,
You alone are worthy of my whole heart.

I thank You for the gift of life,
for family and friends,
and for every joy, sorrow, and turning point
through which You have shaped my destiny.

Grant me the grace to be freed
from every attachment that binds me to this world
and distracts me from the unique mission
You have entrusted to me.

Heavenly Father increase my trust in Your divine
providence and deepen my love for Your Truth.

Temper in me the desire for human approval
and the craving for earthly comfort.
Teach me to love those You have placed in my care
in You and never apart from You.
May I serve You without fear and walk in peace
even when I am misunderstood for Your sake.

Like Francis, I choose You as my Father.
You are enough for me.
In losing myself for love of You,
let me find true life. Amen.

Image: Francis stripping himself before the bishop and the townspeople.

This episode is one of the most theologically dense moments in his life.

What it says about Francis: A complete transfer of fatherhood. When Francis lays his clothes at his father's feet, he is not rejecting paternity itself, but redefining it. In medieval society, a father's authority was total: legal, economic, and social. By renouncing his inheritance, Francis declares: "*From now on I say freely: Our Father who art in heaven.*" This is not rebellion; it is obedience at a deeper level. Francis moves from the protection of a human father—whose worldly values are commerce, honor, security—to the protection of God the Father, whose values are poverty, trust, and love.

Francis' Poverty as vulnerability, not ideology. Francis does not argue, negotiate, or justify himself. He exposes himself. His nakedness is theological: it proclaims that he will no longer shield himself with status, wealth, or self-made identity as his father would do. Poverty here is not romantic—it is radical dependence on the Father's Providence.

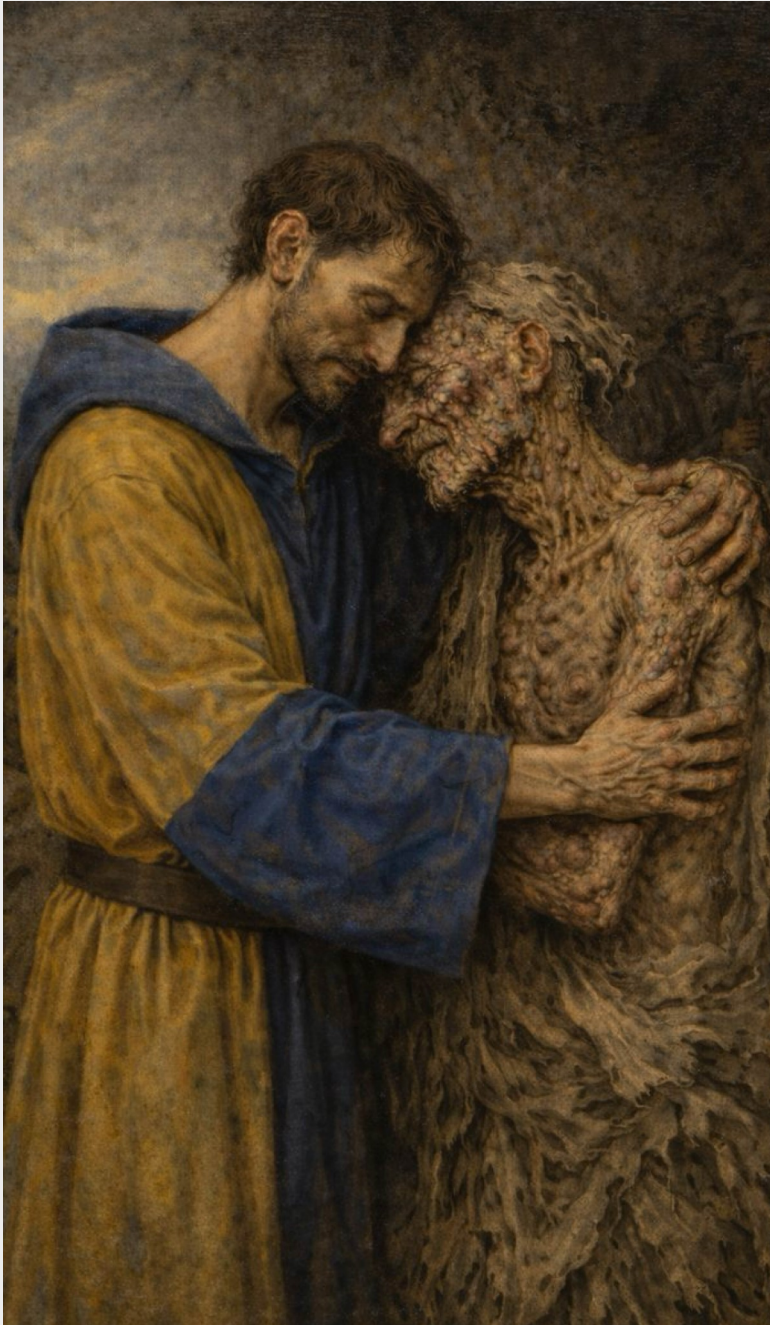
For Francis the Church represented by the Bishop of Assisi, is a shelter. The bishop covering Francis with his cloak is crucial. Francis' spiritual journey does not walk away from the Church; he places himself within it. The Church, like a parent protects him while he belongs wholly to God. This is humility on both sides: Francis submits, and the Church will parent him to God.

What this says to us — especially in this Jubilee Year of St. Francis. A Jubilee is always about release, restoration, and return to what truly matters. Pope Leo's call to reflect on Francis now is deeply timely. What "fatherhood" are we living under? Francis forces us to ask: What voices define my worth? What do I fear losing most? Whose approval do I unconsciously serve? Many of us still live under the "fatherhood" of success, security, reputation, productivity, or control. Francis reminds us that these can never truly protect us. Francis does not know what comes next when he disrobes. That is the point. Jubilee grace invites us to loosen our grip—on money, plans, grievances, self-image—and trust that God's Fatherhood is not abstract but active and protective.

A call to spiritual nakedness. For us, this may not mean literal poverty, but it does mean: honesty in prayer; simplicity in life-style; mercy over judgment; reliance on grace rather than self-justification.

In short Francis's renunciation proclaims this enduring truth:

You are safest when you belong entirely to God. You are freest when you trust the Father more than the world. You are richest when you carry nothing but His Truth and love. That is the heart of Francis—and the heart of this Jubilee



**A Prayer for Conversion to Love
in the Spirit of Saint Francis**

Most High and loving God,
as You led Francis from fear to freedom,
lead us also.

Open what is closed within us.
Teach us to remain where love feels costly,
to recognize Your face
in the wounded and rejected.

Turn our bitterness into sweetness,
our fear into joyful compassion.

Heal our families, our Church, and our world.

Make us humble, merciful, and brave in love.

Lead us where we would not choose to go,
so we may become who You call us to be;
true sons and daughters of the Most High.

For in embracing the least,
we embrace You. Amen

Image: Francis with the leper.

This episode captures one of the most decisive interior moments of Francis's conversion—the moment that quietly turns his life inside out.

Francis moves from revulsion to recognition. Early Francis recoiled from lepers. They embodied everything he feared: decay, poverty, loss of control, the end of beauty and status. In embracing the leper, Francis is not performing charity as a “good deed”; he is crossing a threshold. What he discovers is astonishing: the face he feared is the face where Christ waits. This is why later Francis would say that “what once seemed bitter became sweetness of soul and body.”

Francis would be serving the Master by serving the Least. Francis realizes that when he serves those the world calls “servants”, “burdens”, or “wastes”, he is not lowering himself; he is finally serving the true Master. The leper is not a symbol of misery here; he is a sacrament of Christ's hidden presence. Francis is learning Christ's logic: “*What you did to the least of these, you did to Me.*” (Matthew 25)

Francis moves from desiring worldly prestige to evangelical humility. Notice how Francis leans inward, forehead to forehead. This is not condescension; it is equality. He does not stand above the leper; he meets him. This is the beginning of Francis' life-long humility: not thinking less of himself, but thinking as a lover of Christ, and a brother to all Jesus Christ longs to save.

What this says to us especially in this Jubilee Year of St. Francis: A Jubilee always invites us to cross thresholds, to leave behind habits that seem to enslave us or makes run in the wrong direction and to turn toward living toward Mercy Himself.

Where do we still avoid Christ? The leper asks us a hard question: Who do I avoid? Whose suffering makes me uncomfortable? Where do I sentimentalize love instead of stepping out and risking encounter? Jubilee grace calls us not to admire Francis from a distance, but to imitate his courage to step forward even if in the smallest of ways.

Conversion begins with encounter, not perfection. Francis is not yet the saint of sermons, canticles, or the stigmata. He is a young man still learning how to “serve the Master” and to love rightly. Jubilee reminds us that holiness begins before we feel ready, often in moments that unsettle us.

Christ is found where the world looks away. In a culture that prizes efficiency, beauty, and control, Francis teaches us that Christ often hides in what appears unproductive, broken, or inconvenient. Jubilee mercy widens our vision so we can see again.

In this Jubilee Year, Francis invites us to the same discovery: that when we dare to love where love costs us something, we meet not a servant—but the Lord Himself.