

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Preparing for the Solemnity of St. Francis, I would like to share with you a few of the special life experiences that took place in Francis' life. The first is when Francis came in contact with a leper. Francis approached the leper, embraced him and kissed him. Francis then came to realize that he had actually embraced none other than the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Sometime later, Francis was praying alone in front of the crucifix in the abandoned chapel of San Damiano. While praying, Francis heard these words: "Francis, repair my house, which is falling into ruin." As Francis was repairing the chapel, Francis was brought before the Bishop by his father. As Francis gave back to his father all that he had taken including his clothes, Francis' heart overflowed with joy because His heavenly Father had set him free of all attachment to earthly things.

While Francis was praying two years before his passing, a seraph appeared. Francis rejoiced because of the gracious way Christ looked upon him under the appearance of a seraph. When the vision disappeared, imprints on Francis' body were markings that were no less marvelous than those of the Lord. These markings were the stigmata—the five wounds of Christ.

Finally, when Francis' days on earth were growing short, the saint instructed his brothers, "When I am dying, lay me naked on the ground . . . Francis' brothers honored his request. Then, as Francis fell asleep in the Lord, one of his brothers saw his soul under the appearance of a radiant star being carried aloft on a direct path into heaven.

These are just a few moments for us to look into St. Francis' life and prepare us for our celebration of The Solemnity of St. Francis, October 4th, here at Our Lady of Grace Church and Transfiguration Church.

The Transitus (The Wake Service for St. Francis) will take place on October 3rd at Transfiguration Church at 7:00 PM.

The Blessing of Animals will take place on October 4th at 11:00AM at Our Lady of Grace Church and at Transfiguration Church on Sunday, October 5th at 2:00PM.

The Celebration of the Eucharist in honor of St. Francis of Assisi will take place on October 4th at Our Lady of Grace Church at the 8:15AM and 5:00PM Masses and at Transfiguration Church at 4:00 PM.

Please join us in the Celebration of this Great Saint's Feast!

-Fr. Raphael