

## 'Let us begin, at last'

OFS Monthly Formation

February 2023

### Saint Francis

“Francis being thus crucified with Christ, both in the flesh and in the spirit, not only burned with seraphic love towards God, but thirsted with Christ crucified for the salvation of a multitude of souls....For he was wont to say to his brethren: ‘Let us begin, at last, my brethren, to serve the Lord our God, for hitherto we have done but little.’ ...And he proposed, by the help and guidance of Christ, to do great things; and while his members seemed weary and feeble, being strong and fervent in spirit, he hoped to wage a fresh warfare against the enemy, and to attain a glorious triumph”.  
(The life of St Francis of Assisi by St Bonaventure, Chapter XIV).



Sculpture of Saint Francis in front of the Basilica of Ss. Cosmas and Damian, Rome, Italy.

### Reflection:

Despite the painful wounds of the stigmata, such was the zeal of our Seraphic Father Saint Francis. Having entered now into a New Year it may be timely to reflect upon his words above and the wise words below, of another great Saint (and also an early Father and Doctor of the Church), Saint Augustine. His discourse on Psalm 33 (32) so aptly expresses the song of St. Francis's heart and resounds with the Franciscan Spirit:

*“Praise the Lord with the lyre, make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song. Rid yourself of what is old and worn out, for you know a new song. A new man, a new covenant – a new song. This new song does not belong to the old man. Only the new man learns it: the man restored from his fallen condition through the grace of God, and now sharing in the new covenant, that is, the kingdom of heaven. To it all our love now aspires*

and sings a new song. Let us sing a new song not with our lips but with our lives.

*Sing to him a new song, sing to him with joyful melody.* Every one of us tries to discover how to sing to God. You must sing to him, but you must sing well. He does not want your voice to come harshly to his ears, so sing well, brothers!”

Source: Divine Office, Office of Readings, Second Reading, November 22 (Ps.32, sermo 1,7-8: CCL 38, 253-254)

## Scripture: Rom. 13:11-12 (St Paul’s urgent appeal to the Romans)



Sculpture of St Francis, Assisi.

“Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...”

### **OFS Rite of Profession:**

“Especially today, after the example of Christ and in union with his own act of thanksgiving, we are invited to present ourselves before the Father as living sacrifices of praise for the life of the world”.

**Let us consider** what the above words from the admonition within the Mass for Profession, might mean for each one of us as we embrace a new year as OFS, called by God to be leaven in this world.

Inspired by the example of, and in the Spirit of Saint Francis; “therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb.12:1-2).

**Let us pray** dearest Lord that the words of Saint Paul to the Romans and the Hebrews, penetrate our heart and soul. May these words, reflecting his apostolic zeal and missionary spirit, come to life in our day as they once did for St. Francis and so many of the faithful in the Franciscan family, throughout the centuries, who were called by God to arise to a new day and begin again, for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, Amen.