

Peacemaking and St. Francis



What can we learn about peacemaking from Saint Francis?

Gospel Beatitude: “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5); at the Last Supper, Jesus gave the gift of his peace to his disciples; the risen Christ’s first greeting to his disciples: “Peace be with you.”

In Francis’ *Testament*: “The Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’”

In his *Rule of Life* he commanded his followers: “I counsel, admonish and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ not to quarrel or argue or judge others when they go about in the world, but let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle and humble, speaking courteously to everyone.” “When you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your own heart.”

In 1219, during the 5th Crusade, he visited the Moslem Sultan of Egypt Malik Al-Kamil.

In 1226, when he became aware of a bitter feud between the Bishop of Assisi and the Podesta or Mayor, he wrote another verse to his *Canticle of the Creatures*: “Praised be you, my Lord, through those who give pardon for love of You and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.”

What does it mean to be “an instrument of peace?”

The famous “*Peace Prayer of St. Francis*” should probably be titled the *Saint Francis Peace Prayer*! It has a connection to the 27th *Admonition* which Francis actually dictated:

“Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor disturbance. Where there is poverty with joy, there is neither covetousness nor avarice. Where there is inner peace and meditation, there is neither anxiousness nor dissipation. Where there is mercy and discernment, there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.”

The last phrase of the Peace Prayer, “and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life,” is certainly inspired by the final verse of the *Canticle of the Creatures* which Francis added in 1226 just shortly before his death: “Praised be You, my Lord, for our Sister Bodily Death, from whose embrace no living man can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin. Blessed are those whom death will find in your most will, for the second death shall do them no harm.”

To be an instrument is to allow ourselves to be used by God as a vehicle, a means, an agent for peace, healing and reconciliation.