

Second Letter of St. Francis to the Faithful

This writing may have been written upon Francis's return from his journey to the Middle East in the Spring of 1220, for not only does it speak of his weakened condition but also suggests the post-conciliar concerns of Pope Honorius III. At the same time, it recalls Francis's earlier exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance and encourages its observance in light of many of the teachings of the Fourth Lateran Council.

¹In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Brother Francis, their servant and subject, sends esteem and reverence, true peace from heaven and sincere love in the Lord to all Christian religious people: clergy and laity, men and women, and to all who live in the whole world.

²Because I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to administer the fragrant words of my Lord to them. ³Therefore, realizing that I could not visit each one of you personally because of sickness and the weakness of my body, I decided to offer you in this letter and message the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life.

⁴The most high Father made known from heaven through His holy angel Gabriel this Word of the Father—so worthy, so holy and glorious— in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whose womb He received the flesh of our humanity and frailty. ⁵*Though He was rich*, He wished, together with the most Blessed Virgin, His mother, to choose poverty in the world beyond all else.

⁶And as His Passion was near, He celebrated the Passover with His disciples and, taking bread, gave thanks, blessed and broke it, saying: *Take and eat: This is My Body.* ^{Mt 26:26} ⁷And taking the cup He said: *This is My Blood of the New Covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.* ^{Mt 26:28} ⁸Then He prayed to His Father, saying: *Father, if it can be done, let this cup pass from me.* ^{Lk 22:42} ⁹*And His sweat became as drops of blood falling on the ground.* ^{Lk 22:44} ¹⁰Nevertheless, He placed His will in the will of His Father, saying: *Father, let Your will be done; not as I will, but as You will.* ^{Mt 26:42} ^{Mt 26:39} ¹¹His Father's will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should offer Himself through His own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: ¹²not for Himself *through Whom all things were made*, ^{Jn 1:3} but for our sins, ¹³leaving us an example that we might *follow His footprints.* ^{1 Pt 2:21}

¹⁴And He wishes all of us to be saved through Him and receive Him with our heart pure and our body chaste. ¹⁵But, even though His *yoke is easy* ^{Mt 11:30} and His *burden light*, ^{Mt 11:30} there are few who wish to receive Him and be saved through Him. ¹⁶Those who do not wish to taste how sweet the Lord is and who love *the darkness more than the light*, ^{Ps 34:9 [Vulgate, Ps 33:9]}, ^{Jn 3:19} not wishing to fulfill God's commands, are cursed; ¹⁷it is said of them by the prophet: *Cursed are those who stray from your commands.* ^{Ps 119:21 [Vulgate, Ps 118:21]}

¹⁸But how happy and blessed are those who love God and do as the Lord Himself says in the Gospel: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.* ^{Mt 22:37} ^{Mt 22:39} ¹⁹Let us love God, therefore, and adore Him with a pure heart and a pure mind, because He Who seeks this above all things has said: *True adorers adore the Father in Spirit and Truth.* ^{Jn 4:23} ²⁰For all who adore Him



must adore Him in the Spirit of truth. ²¹And day and night ^{Jn 4:24} let us direct praises and prayers to Him, saying: *Our Father, Who art in heaven* ^{Ps 32:4 [Vulgate, Ps 31:4] Mt 6:9} ... for we should pray always and not become weary. ^{Lk 18:1}

²²We must, of course, confess all our sins to a priest and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ from him. ²³Whoever does not eat His flesh and drink His blood *cannot enter the kingdom of God.* ^{Jn 6:54 Jn 6:57 Jn 3:5} ²⁴But let him eat and drink worthily because anyone who receives unworthily, not distinguishing, that is, not discerning, *the Body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself.* ^{1 Cor 11:29}

²⁵In addition, let us produce worthy fruits of penance. ^{Lk 3:8}

²⁶And let us love our neighbors as ourselves. ^{Mt 22:39} ²⁷And if anyone does not want to love them as himself, let him at least not do them any harm, but let him do good.

²⁸Let whoever has received the power of judging others pass judgment with mercy, as they would wish to receive mercy from the Lord. ²⁹For *judgment will be without mercy* for those *who have not shown mercy.* ^{Jas 2:13}

³⁰Let us, therefore, have charity and humility and give alms because it washes the stains of our sins from our souls. ^{Tb 4:11 Tb 12:9} ³¹For, although people lose everything they leave behind in this world, they, nevertheless, carry with them the rewards of charity and the alms they have given for which they will receive a reward and a fitting repayment from the Lord.

³²We must also fast and abstain from vices and sins and from an excess of food and drink and be Catholics. ^{Sir 3:32}

³³We must also frequently visit churches and venerate and revere the clergy not so much for themselves, if they are sinners, but because of their office and administration of the most holy Body and Blood of Christ which they sacrifice upon the altar, receive and administer to others. ³⁴And let all of us know for certain that no one can be saved except through the holy words and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which the clergy pronounce, proclaim and minister. ³⁵And they alone must minister and not others ³⁶Religious, however, who have left the world, are bound to do more and greater things, but not to overlook these.

³⁷We must hate our bodies with their vices and sins because the Lord says in the Gospel: All evils, vices and sins *come from the heart.* ^{Mt 15:18 Mt 15:19 Mk 7:23}

³⁸We must love our *enemies* ^{Mt 5:44} and do good *to those who* ^{Lk 6:27} hate us. ³⁹We must observe the commands and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴⁰We must also deny ourselves ^{Mt 16:24 Mk 8:34 Lk 9:23} and place our bodies under the yoke of servitude and holy obedience as each one has promised to the Lord.

⁴¹And let no one be bound to obey another in anything in which a crime or sin would be committed. ⁴²Instead, let the one to whom obedience has been entrusted and *who is considered the greater* ^{Mt 20:26} *be the lesser* and the servant ^{Mt 20:27} of the other brothers. ^{Mk 10:43 Mk 10:44 Lk 22:26} ⁴³And let him have and show mercy to each of his brothers as he would want them to do to him were he in a similar position. ^{Mt 7:12 Lk 6:31} ⁴⁴Let him not become angry at the fault of a brother but, with all patience and humility, let him admonish and support him.

⁴⁵We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh, ^{1 Cor 1:26} but, instead, we must be simple, humble and pure. ⁴⁶And let us hold our bodies in scorn and contempt because, through our own fault, we are all wretched



and corrupt, disgusting and worms, as the Lord says through the prophet: *I am a worm and not a man, the scorn of men and the outcast of the people.* ^{Ps 22:7 [Vulgate, Ps 21:7]}

⁴⁷We must never desire to be above others, but, instead, we must be servants and subject to every human creature for God's sake. ^{1 Pt 2:13}

⁴⁸And the Spirit of the Lord will rest ^{Is 11:2 Lk 4:18} upon all those men and women who have done and persevered in these things and It will make a home and *dwelling place in them.* ^{Jn 14:23} ⁴⁹And they will be the children of the heavenly heavenly Father, Whose works they do. ⁵⁰And they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. ^{Mt 5:45}

⁵¹We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵²We are brothers, moreover, when we do *the will of* His Father Who is in heaven; ⁵³mothers ^{Mt 12:50 Mk 3:35 Lk 8:21} when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; ^{Mt 12:50 Mk 3:35 1 Cor 6:20} and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example. ^{Mt 5:16}

⁵⁴O how glorious and holy and great to have a Father in heaven!^a

⁵⁵O how holy, consoling, beautiful and wonderful to have such a Spouse! ⁵⁶O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and above all things desirable it is to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ, Who laid down His life for His sheep ^{Jn 10:15} and prayed to His Father, saying: Holy Father, save in your name those whom you have given me. ^{Jn 17:11} ⁵⁷Father, all those whom you have given me in the world were yours and you have given them to me. ^{Jn 17:6} ⁵⁸The words that you gave me, I have given to them; they have accepted them and known in truth that I have come from you and they have believed that you have sent me. ^{Jn 17:8}

I pray for them and not for the world; ^{Jn 17:9} bless and sanctify them. ^{Jn 17:17} ⁵⁹I sanctify myself for them that they may be sanctified in ^{Jn 17:19} being one as we are one. ^{Jn 17:11}

⁶⁰And I wish, Father, that where I am, they may be with me that they may see my glory ^{Jn 17:24} in your kingdom. ^{Mt 20:21}

⁶¹Let every creature
in heaven, on earth, in the sea and in the depths,
give praise, glory, honor and blessing ^{Rv 5:13}
To Him Who suffered so much,
Who has given and will give in the future every good,
⁶²for He is our power and strength,
Who alone is good, ^{Mk 10:18 Lk 18:19}
Who alone is almighty,
Who alone is omnipotent, wonderful, glorious
and Who alone is holy,
worthy of praise and blessing
through endless ages.
Amen.



⁶³All those, however, who are not living in penance, who do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁶⁴who practice vice and sin and walk after evil concupiscence and wicked desires, who do not observe what they have promised, ⁶⁵and who serve the world with their bodies, the desires of the flesh, the cares and anxieties of this world, and the preoccupations of this life ⁶⁶[all these] are deceived by the devil whose children they are and whose works they do. ^{Jn 8:41} They are blind because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁶⁷They do not have spiritual wisdom because they do not possess the Son of God, the true wisdom of the Father, within them. It is said of them: *Their wisdom has been swallowed up.* ^{Ps 107:27 [Vulgate, Ps 106:27]} ⁶⁸They see, recognize, know, and do evil; and, knowingly, they lose their souls.

⁶⁹See, you blind ones, deceived by your enemies, that is, the flesh, the world, and the devil, for it is sweet for the body to commit sin and bitter to serve God, because every evil, vice and sin flow and proceed from people's hearts, ^{Mt 15:19} as the Lord says in the Gospel. ⁷⁰And you have nothing in this world or in that to come. ⁷¹You think you possess the vanities of the world for a long time, but you are deceived because a day and an hour are coming of which you do not think, do not know, and are not aware.

⁷²The body becomes weak, death approaches, relatives and friends come saying: "Put your affairs in order." ⁷³Look, his wife and children, relatives and friends pretend to cry. ⁷⁴Glancing about, he sees them weeping and is moved by an evil impulse. He says, thinking to himself, "See, I place my soul and body, all that I have in your hands." ⁷⁵In fact, that man is cursed who entrusts and places his soul and body and all he has in such hands; ⁷⁶for, as the Lord says through the prophet, *Cursed is the one who trusts in another.* ^{Jer 17:5} ⁷⁷And immediately they make a priest come. The priest says to him: "Do you want to receive penance for all your sins?" ⁷⁸"I do," he responds. "Do you wish to make satisfaction, as far as you can, out of your wealth, for what you have done and the ways in which you have cheated and deceived people?" ⁷⁹"No," he responds. ⁸⁰"Why not?" the priest asks. "Because I have placed everything in the hands of my relatives and friends." ⁸¹And the wretched man begins to lose his speech and so dies.

⁸²But let everyone know that whenever and however someone dies in mortal sin without making amends when he could have [done so] and did not, the devil snatches his soul from his body with such anguish and distress that no one can know [what it is like] except the one experiencing it.

⁸³And every talent and power and knowledge that he thought he had *will be taken away from him.* ⁸⁴And he leaves his relatives and friends and they take and divide his wealth and, afterwards, they say: "Let his soul be cursed because he could have given us more and acquired more than he distributed to us!" ⁸⁵Worms eat his body and so he loses his body and soul in this brief world and goes to hell where he will be tortured without end.

⁸⁶In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

⁸⁷I, brother Francis, your lesser servant, with a wish to kiss your feet, beg and implore you in the love that is God, ^{1 Jn 4:16} to receive, to put into practice, and to observe, as you should, these words and the others of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love. ⁸⁸And may the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit bless all those men and women who receive them with kindness, understand them and send copies of them to others, if *they have persevered to the end* ^{Mt 24:13} in them.

Amen.

