September 17: The Stigmata of St Francis (Gal 6:14-18)

**THE PATH OF THE CROSS**

Fr Constantine Koser OFM, Minister General, wrote *The Lesson of Alverna* in 1975. He quoted St Paul to the Galatians: “May I never boast of anything but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 6:14). Forty-five years later (2020), Fr Constantine’s message is more relevant than ever.

St Francis’s receiving the Stigmata on Mount Alverna, brings us face to face with the mystery of the Cross. Fr Constantine went on to write:

“What a profound contrast between the road to the Stigmata and the path humanity treads today and has always trod: full flight from the Cross of Christ toward an empty dream of an earthly paradise without reference to God’s designs!

“We elevate our frenzied buying and selling and consuming almost to the point of idolatry. We cheerfully squander untold amounts of human and material wealth, resources, and energy. And why? Because we naively think that somehow we are going to be able to arrange it so that we can “live happily ever after.” Expectations, as vain today as they have ever been, are bound to end up in bitter disillusionment.

“Against these pernicious tendencies, the stigmatization of St Francis on Mount Alverna issues a clear challenge and message: that the true path of human destiny is something else, the path of the Cross. It is absolutely essential that we bring this truth back into our thinking and into our lives. We simply must return to the narrow path in spite of our human preferences, back to the way mapped out for us in the Beatitudes and in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

“We are much too given to relying upon the broad and easy road of the false prophets of the good life. It is high time that we come back to the narrow way of Christ, to the Cross. We must return to healthy austerity, to discipline, to the rigour of our Franciscan life, to poverty – Lady Poverty – which Francis so loved because Jesus loved it.”