**The Testament of Saint Francis**

This is how the Lord gave me, brother Francis, the power to do penance. When I was in sin the sight of lepers was too bitter for me. And the Lord himself led me among them, and I pitied and helped them. And when I left them I discovered that what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness in my soul and body. And shortly afterward I rose and left the world.

And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I prayed simply, saying, "We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, in all your churches throughout the world, and we bless you because you redeemed the world through your holy cross.” Later God gave me and still gives me such faith in priests who live according to the form of the Holy Roman Church that even if they persecuted me I would still run back to them, because of their position. And if I had all the wisdom of Solomon and came upon some poor little priests in their parishes, I would preach there only if they wished me to do so. And I want to fear, love and honour these and all others as my lords. And I do not even want to think about there being any sin in them, because I see the Son of God in them and they are my lords. And I do this because in this world I physically see the most high Son of God only in his most holy body and blood, which they receive and they alone administer to others. And I want this holy mystery to be honoured above all things, venerated, and kept in costly containers. Whenever I find his holy names or words in improper places I pick them up and ask that they be collected and stored in a proper place. And we ought to honour and venerate all theologians and those who administer the holy divine Word, for they administer to us spirit and life.

And when God gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy gospel. I had it written in few words and simply, and the lord pope confirmed it for me. And those who came to receive life gave all that they had to the poor and were content with one tunic patched inside and out, with a cord and trousers. And we did not wish to have more.

We who were clerics said the office like other clerics, and the lay brothers said the "Our Father," and we gladly stayed in churches. And we were ignorant and subject to all. And I worked with my hands, and want to do so still. And I definitely want all the other brothers to work at some honest job. Those who don't know how should learn, not because they want to receive wages but as an example and to avoid idleness. And when our wages are withheld from us, let us return to the Lord's table, begging alms from door to door. The Lord revealed what greeting we should use: "The Lord give you peace."

The brothers must be careful not to accept any churches, poor dwellings, or anything else constructed for them unless these buildings reflect the holy poverty promised by us in the rule. We should always live in these places as strangers and pilgrims. I firmly command all the brothers, by the obedience they owe me, that wherever they are they should not dare to ask either directly or through an intermediary for any letter from the Roman court to secure a church or any other place, to protect their preaching, or to prevent persecution of their bodies; but wherever they are not received, they should flee into another land and do penance with God's blessing.

And I firmly wish to obey the minister general of this brotherhood, and any other guardian the minister should want to give me. And I want to be such a captive in his hands that I cannot go anywhere or do anything without his desire and command, because he is my lord. And although I am simple and ill, I always want to have a cleric who can perform the office for me, as the rule states. And all the other brothers are thus bound to obey their guardians and perform the office according to the rule. And whenever some are found who do not wish to perform the office according to the rule and want to change it, or who are not Catholic in their beliefs, then all the brothers wherever they may be are bound by obedience to turn such people over to the custodian nearest the place where they found them. The custodian in turn is bound by obedience to guard him strongly like a man in chains, day and night, so that he cannot possibly escape from his hands until he personally places him in the hands of his minister. And the minister is bound by obedience to place him in the care of brothers who will guard him night and day like a man in chains until they turn him over to our lord bishop of Ostia, who is the lord protector and corrector of the whole brotherhood.

And the brothers must not say, "This is another rule," for it is a recollection, admonition, exhortation and my testament which I, poor brother Francis, make for you my brothers, so that we may observe the rule we have promised to God in a more Catholic manner. And the general minister and all other ministers and custodians are bound by obedience not to add or subtract from these words. And they must always have this writing with them in addition to the rule. And in all chapter meetings held by them, when they read the rule, they must also read these words.

And I firmly forbid my brothers, both clerics and laymen, to place glosses on the rule or say, "This is what it means." But just as the Lord gave me the power to compose and write both the rule and these words simply and purely, so you must understand them simply and without gloss and observe them by holy action until the end.

And whoever observes them will be filled in heaven with a blessing of the most high Father and on earth he will be filled with the blessing of his beloved Son, with the Holy Spirit the Comforter and all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And I, brother Francis, your servant insofar as I can, internally and externally confirm for you this holy blessing.