

Francis's Tireless Pursuit of Renewal



While we certainly know it's coming, spring surprises us every year with new beauty. It has a way of restoring our sense of gladness and wonder as we come out of the harsh bleakness of winter. Francis's relationship

with God and the way he struggled to live a Gospel-centered life was much like this perpetual cycle of the seasons. We have numerous examples of his joyous, sometimes euphoric interactions with creation,

other people and God. We also know that he suffered bouts of loneliness, self-doubt and discouragement. It was during these low times that he deliberately sought a renewed spirit through prayer and service to others. Like all of us, Francis knew that closeness with God and a truly Christian life is not something you achieve once and then maintain forever. It's a constant cycle of stagnation and growth; of obstacles and smooth paths; of harsh bleakness and restored wonder. And like Francis, we can find our new beginnings through prayer and service to others. †

Reflection Questions

- How do I find renewal in my relationship with God?
- Is God calling me to a new beginning?



Early Writings

From Thomas of Celano's *Life of Saint Francis*

He burned with a great desire to return to his earliest steps toward humility; rejoicing in hope because of his boundless love, he planned to call his body back to its original servitude, although it had now reached its limit. He cut away completely the obstacle of all cares and silenced the noise of all concerns. When he had to relax this rigor because of illness, he used to say: "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up until now we have done little or nothing." He did not consider that he had already attained his goal, but tireless in pursuit of holy newness, he constantly hoped to begin again.

Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann & William Short, eds.

Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint, Vol. I (New York: New City Press, 1999), 273.

Scripture

Psalm 51:12, 14

A clean heart create for me, God; renew within me a steadfast spirit. Restore to me the gladness of your salvation.



Prayer

As prayed by the Psalmist, grant me, dear Lord, a clean heart and renewed spirit. Lead me, as you did Francis, to a restored sense of wonder at your love and mercy and help me be a herald of the hope that comes from new beginnings.