

Self-guided walking Pilgrimages around Assisi



Walk around Assisi at your own pace in the footsteps of Francis in medieval Assisi, scenic Spoleto Valley, and along the panoramic trails atop Mount Subasio. Visit where he prayed in the Carceri, where he served lepers in Arce, where he rebuilt churches in Santa Maria, San Damiano, and Spina.

Re-trace Clare's footsteps where she lived in Assisi, San Paolo delle Abbadesse, Panzo, and San Damiano.

Discover Assisi like Francis and Clare did - on foot. Pray in each place. Listen to their stories. Meditate.

(Sample Day Itinerary)

Day two: The active life: Penance, serving lepers and rebuilding churches

About 3-4 hours; 5-6 miles

Start at the Basilica of St Mary of Angels. See St. Mary of the Angels in the Appendix at end of document.



Facing the basilica, walk alongside the basilica up to Assisi on Via Patrono d'Italia. Take your first right (behind the basilica) on Via Protomartiri Francescani. Pass Via Capitolo delle Stuoie (to your right), and continue straight through the first roundabout. At the second roundabout, go left on Via Francesco di Bartolo. Go under the train track, then backtrack towards the train, and cross over it away from St. Mary of the Angels towards Rivotorto (basically a 270 turn). Now walk towards Rivotorto away from St. Mary of the Angels (Assisi is on your left).

In about 500 yards, you will pass by the cemetery of St. Mary of the Angels. Go left here at Via San Rufino d'Arce. In front of the cemetery is a convent, Suore Missionare della Susa. Inside is the first leper church of San Rufino d'Arce. Ring the bell and ask to see the church. Here is a photo of the convent gate. See Appendix on San Rufino d'Arce under 'Leper Churches'



Exit gate and go left towards Rivortorto. At the bend in the road, behind a large white house, is another leper church, Santa Maria Maddalena. Ring the bell at the white house and ask the caretaker to open the church.



See Appendix on Santa Maria Maddalena under 'Leper Churches'

Now turn left at the road and walk away from Santa Maria degli Angeli towards Rivotorto. Here there is no sidewalk, so be careful of cars. In about 500 yards, you will walk by the Assisi War Cemetery. [See Appendix: Assisi War Cemetery].



Just ahead of the war cemetery to the left is the basilica of Rivotorto.



See Rivotorto in the Appendix.

The next stop is San Pietro in Spina. To get there, however, you have to backtrack. With your back towards the basilica of Rivotorto (looking straight ahead at the highway), you will see a road dead ending at the highway. This was the ancient road that went directly from Rivotorto to the area of Spina. (See picture).



However, the highway divided the ancient road separating it in two. The only way to get there (going over the highway is dangerous and not recommended) is to return towards the leper churches and go under a tunnel and backtrack. Walk back on the road towards St. Mary of the Angels passing by the Assisi War Cemetery. A few hundred yards before you arrive at the church of Santa Maria Maddelana at the bend in the road there is an underpass under the highway on your left.



The walk to the ruined church of san Pietro of Spina is 4 miles (2 miles each way). Also, note that the church is hard to see as it is in the center of a fenced horse farm, so unless you really want to see this church, I would make this optional.

To get to San Pietro, go through the underpass and follow the road to the left. AS you walk back towards Rivotorto, the highway will be on your left. You will pass several secondary roads on your right. When you are almost back to Rivotorto (visible across the highway to your left), you will come to Via S. Petrignano. Turn right.



Walk for a short period of time and you will come to a low underpass under the train track. Continue straight through the under pass. About 200 yards ahead is an orange house. Follow the road to the left.



In a very short distance, there will be a road to the right (note that there is no street sign). Go right there.



In a few hundred yards you will see an equestrian center on your right.



In the back of the property are several ruined buildings. They are hard to see from the main entrance, but one of them is the church of San Pietro della Spina. If you continue walking around the property on the south side, you may have a better view. You can see that it has once again fallen into ruins. I met a caretaker once and went inside the property and took pictures. In case you can't get in, here they are:





Now you will head back to Assisi. Backtrack to the leper churches of Santa Maria Maddalena/San Rufino d'Arce. (Walk under the train underpass and the highway underpass, then go left.) Shortly, you will see the leper church of Santa Maria Maddalena on your right. Turn right there at Via S. Rufino d'Arce by the St. Mary of the Angels cemetery on your left.

Take the road, Via S Rufino d'Arce up towards Assisi. Note that the San Rufino whom this road (and the leper church) are named after is not the same San Rufino, patron saint of Assisi. According to a legend, St Rufinus d'Arce (known in Assisi as San Rufinuccio) was a young priest who refused to perjure himself in defense of a priest charged with bad behavior in 1286. Therefore, he was thrown into a well in the area of Arce. Monks from the Abbey of San Benedetto on the side of Mount Subasio saw a light coming from the well and, when they investigated further, found the body. They retrieved it and built a tiny church (San Rufino in Arce) on the site.



This is a lovely walk in the valley along a quiet road. This is one of the ancient roads existing during the time of Francis. This is most surely the same road Francis took to/from Assisi when he went to the area of Spina where his father owned property.

Just before the road starts to slope upwards, you will pass across the Via Francesca. This was an important ancient road connecting France to Rome.



Continue straight across the Via Francesca and continue the road upward following the signs to San Masseo. At the juncture by the Marian shrine (in the photo below), follow the signs to San Masseo to the right. You will come to a lovely recently restored monastery. In ancient times, San Masseo was probably the site of a pagan temple. In the 11th century, it became a monastery belonging to the monks of San Benedetto. At the time of St. Francis, it was still a monastery, and it is believed that Francis often visited the church for rest and prayer. Some historians believe this was the site where Francis hid from his father, although most people believe that place to be San Damiano. Today, San Masseo has recently been restored by and is lived in by a new Benedictine community, Bosè.





You can walk back up into Assisi from San Masseo and conclude your day. Otherwise, if you would like to visit the third church St. Francis rebuilt around Assisi, you can walk to San Damiano. [Note that I have included San Damiano also in the walking tour in the footsteps of St. Clare, since she lived there for forty years].

To get to San Damiano from San Masseo, return to the end of the driveway and go left back down to the Via Francesca. Go left on the Via Francesca. Assisi will be on your left.

Walk until you come to Via Cantico delle Creature.



Go left and walk up the windy road to San Damiano. You'll see the parking lot for San Damiano on your right.



Visit San Damiano. (Note that San Damiano closes during the middle of the day.)

See "San Damiano – St. Francis" in Appendix

Day two: The active life: Serving lepers and rebuilding churches

St. Mary of the Angels – the Portiuncula

The basilica of St. Mary of the Angels is probably the most important Franciscan place around Assisi for the memories of Francis it contains.

Originally, the land was swampy and woodsy and the church dilapidated. Today, there is a bustling town surrounding the church, which is enclosed under a massive basilica built in the 16th century to accommodate pilgrims.

Historical:

- Before Francis had any brothers, here he heard his call to poverty. During Mass on the feast day of St. Mathias on February 23, 1208, Francis heard the Gospel reading: "Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick" (Matthew 10:9-10). Immediately, Francis gave away everything he desired to live as a poor penitent.
- Later, when Francis had brothers and could no longer stay in Rivotorto, they came here. The Benedictine monks of San Benedetto on Mount Subasio owned the property, so Francis and the brothers went to the abbot of the monastery to ask his permission. He agreed. In exchange, the brothers offered the monks a basket of fish, a tradition that continued each year during Francis's life and continues to this day.
- On Palm Sunday, 1212, Clare left her home to follow Francis and the first Franciscan woman. He met her here where he gave her the tonsure.
- In 1223, there was the first "Chapter of Mats" held here when 5,000 friars came from all over the world to participate.
- On October 3, 1226, Francis died here. Each year on the same date, the Transitus (the passing of Francis from this world to the next) is celebrated here.
- At one point Francis had a vision in which Mary asked him if he had any desires. He would like to see all people receive complete pardon from their sins. The Pope granted a plenary indulgence to any person who visits the Porziuncola, confesses, receives communion, and prays the intentions of the Pope, traditionally on August 2.
- Note the name of the road running in front of the basilica – Via Los Angeles. This church gave the name to the Californian city originally a mission named, "El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles de Porciuncula." Eventually, it would become known as simply Los Angeles.

Spiritual:

- Francis loved this church because of his devotion to Mary. He was filled with an inexpressible love towards the Mother of Jesus, because it was she who made the Lord of Majesty our brother. Francis once wrote that it is

right to honor the blessed Virgin, since she carried Jesus in her most holy womb. Francis once recalled the rupture with his earthly family next to another church dedicated to Mary, Saint Mary Major, the greatest of all the saints. Just as Mary had enveloped Jesus within her womb as a type of tabernacle, the bishop enveloped Francis in his cloak, symbolizing his complete immersion within the Church.

- Here we see Francis internalizing the Scripture. He did not just listen to it, but he took action.
- Forgiveness/peace – while crusaders were granted indulgences by fighting in the Crusades, Francis requested a plenary indulgence be granted anyone who made a pilgrimage here.

Reflection:

- The Pardon of Assisi at the Portiuncula is the culmination of Francis's attitude towards the primacy of Christ and his Atonement. Francis so believed in Christ's primacy and forgiveness that he looked at others with God's love and mercy. The Plenary Indulgence (forgiveness for all sins committed and remission for their punishment due) is granted to anyone who visits the Portiuncula.
- The Porziuncola is considered the heart of the Franciscan movement. With whom do you feel at home? Where do you feel most at home? How is your relationship within your own family? If there are any misgivings within your family, what would it take to reconcile?

From Major Legend, II, 8 by St. Bonaventure

He came to a place called the Portiuncula where there was an old church dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God which was now abandoned with no one to look after it. Francis had great devotion to the Queen of the world and when he saw that the church was deserted, he began to live there constantly in order to repair it. He heard that the angels often visited it, so that it used to be called St. Mary of the Angels, and he decided to stay there permanently out of reverence for the angels and love for the Mother of Christ. He loved the spot more than any other in the world. It was here that he began his religious life in a very small way; it was here that he made such extraordinary progress, and it was here that he came to a happy end. When he was dying, he commended this spot above all others to the friars, because it was most dear to the Blessed Virgin.

Leper Churches: San Rufino d'Arce and Santa Maria Maddalena
Historical:

- In Francis's era, several leprosaria (leper hospitals or communities) stood in the valley below Assisi. The main leper hospital in Assisi was in the area known as "Arce," where a fortress once stood. These small churches are well preserved today and were once part of a large hospital compound for those afflicted with the disease. Originally dedicated to St. Lazarus -- the beggar with sores who begged from the rich man -- (as were all ancient churches that served lepers) they were called Santa Maria Maddalena and San Rufino in Arce since the 14th century. San Rufino d'Arce is enclosed within the fenced property of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Susa. Less than 100 meters away, Santa Maria Maddalena stands near a cement factory on a sharp bend on the road from St. Mary of the Angels to Rivortorto. There were several other leper hospitals in the same area, no trace of which remain today. Another hospital still, San Salvatore alle Pareti, was located between Assisi and St. Mary of the Angels just off the ancient road that connected Rome with France, the Via Francesca. Today a beautifully restored villa, Villa Gualdo, stands in its place; the road running behind it recalls its origins, Via Salvatore dell'Ospedale.
- The first chapel you came to, San Rufino in Arce (within the Susa missionary nuns' convent), was built around 1,000 A.D. It is named after a young martyred man named San Rufino or San Rufinuccio. (Note that this is not the same St. Rufino and early bishop/martyr whom the cathedral is named after). According to a legend, this St. Rufino was killed for the truth. Apparently, he refused to lie on behalf of a local priest, and was killed before he could tell others. It is called "In Arce" because in antiquity there were numerous Roman tombs in the area which had arches on them giving the road the name "Arce."
- Some people suggest that San Rufino d'Arce served the needs of the male lepers while Santa Maria Maddalena cared for female lepers. Others have speculated that one served lepers of the upper class while the other served the commoners.
- Once a citizen was diagnosed with leprosy, he/she was banned from the city. Before leaving, they would be given a funeral-like rite. They would receive a cloak, flask, bowl, gloves, and clapper (to warn others). They were led to a hut in a leper community where they would spend the rest of their life and die. Contact with anyone outside the leper's family was forbidden and citizens were permitted by law to beat a leper who entered the city with impunity. The only non-infected people who could enter the leprosaria were chaplains to care for them.
- Lepers' hideous appearance frightened, repulsed, and angered the people. In the middle Ages, leprosy was often attributed to God's punishment for sins so lepers were judged to have been immoral. There was also fear of contagion when hygiene was poor.
- It is likely that Francis took the following roads to San Pietro in Spina (where his family had property) and crossed the leper hospital: "the road by which

from the city of Assisi one goes to the river Tevere (the Tiber). It began at the Moiano gate, to the Galletta spring, and through San Masseo to the Strada Francesca, from there it led to the hospital, then turned toward Castelnuovo. After a short stretch, one could turn to the left on the Via Antica, the ancient road that ran from Santa Maria degli Angeli to Foligno, and in a few minutes reach San Pietro della Spina."

Spiritual:

- The word penance was translated into Latin from the Greek word 'metanoia' (conversion). It was translated into English as Repent. So for Francis, penance means conversion.
- Francis himself says in the first sentence of his Testament that his conversion began when he first embraced a leper. He says, "The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world.'
- For Francis care of lepers was his main ministry. He made it formation for novice friars. He established leper hospices all over Italy.

Reflection:

- To witness a leper was truly revolting. Leprosy is a disease that putrefies and rots the skin away while the person is alive. The sight is not only wretched, but the rotten skin smells, too.
- The leper was the person Francis hated most. By embracing the leper, he began to find peace within himself. What must have happened to Francis so that he would be able to experience joy in embracing, kissing, and serving lepers? Why do you think Francis was so devoted to the care of lepers? What must have happened to him so that he would look at life differently from the people around him?
- How does God transform people's lives through contact with the despised and marginalized?
- Who are the lepers in your lives?
- Do you serve the poor, homeless, or other marginalized?
- Is there a person, type of person, or groups of people that you dislike? Could you pray for that person(s) and ask God to give you the opportunity to embrace him or her?
- Why do you suppose Francis was so devoted to the care of lepers?

From THE LEGEND OF THREE COMPANIONS, 11
"Embracing a leper"

One day, while he was praying enthusiastically to the Lord, he received this response: "Francis, everything you loved carnally and desired to have, you must despise and hate, if you wish to know my will. Because once you begin doing this, what before seemed delightful and sweet will be unbearable and bitter; and what before made you shudder will offer you great sweetness and enormous delight." He was overjoyed at this and was comforted by the Lord. One day he was riding his horse near Assisi, when he met a leper. And, even though he usually shuddered at lepers, he made himself dismount, and gave him a coin, kissing his hand as he did so. After he accepted a kiss of peace from him. Francis remounted and continued on his way. He then began to consider himself less and less, until, by God's grace, he came to complete victory over himself. After a few days he moved to a hospice of lepers, taking with him a large sum of money. Calling them all together, as he kissed the hand of each, he gave them alms. When he left there, what before had been bitter, that is, to see and touch was turned into sweetness. For, as he said, the sight of lepers was so bitter to him, that he refused not only to look at them, but even to approach their dwellings. If he happened to come near their houses or to see them, even though he was moved by pity to give them alms through an intermediary, he always turned away his face and held his nose. With the help of God's grace, he became such a servant and friend of the lepers, that, as he testified in his Testament, he stayed among them and served them with humility.

Assisi War Cemetery:

Historical:

On September 3, 1943 the Allies invaded the Italian mainland, coinciding with an armistice made with the Italians who switched to the Allied side. The Allies progressed rapidly northward from southern Italy despite stiff resistance. Their advance was checked for some months at the German winter defensive position known as the Gustav Line. The line eventually fell in May 1944 and as the Germans withdrew, Rome was taken by the Allies on June 3.

Many of the burials in this cemetery date from June and July 1944, when the Germans were making their first attempts to stop the Allied advance north of Rome in this region. The site for the cemetery was selected in September 1944 and burials were brought in from the surrounding battlefields.

The Assisi War Cemetery contains 945 UK British Commonwealth burials of the Second World War.

Spiritual:

As you walk by the cemetery, consider how much violence has surrounded this region. It is such a contrast, since St. Francis was such a man of peace and the city of Assisi is known as an oasis of peace today. Yet, even Francis had conflicts – especially with his father. Scripture says: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s enemies will be those of his household.” (Matthew 10: 34-36). After the showdown with Francis’s father, sources rarely mention him again and it is not known if there was ever reconciliation between Francis and Pietro.

Reflection:

- Consider where you have had conflicts with people in your life. Think about family members. What is/was your relationship with your parents like? If they have passed on, what was your relationship like before they died? What about with your spouse or grown children?
- Consider what leads to peace. Where does peace come from? Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.”

Rivotorto:

Historical:

The Franciscan sources speak about community life near a crooked stream (Rivo Torto in Italian). Although no one knows exactly where the friars lived, it was in the general location of the present basilica of Rivotorto. Today, the large church serves as the parish church of the town – also known as Rivotorto. Inside the Basilica (completely rebuilt in neo-Gothic style after an earthquake in 1854) are several huts reconstructed to look like the original dwellings where Francis and the first friars lived. The church is today overseen by the Order of Friars Minor, Conventual.

Here, Francis lived with first brothers serving lepers nearby. It was from this place that Francis set out to Rome with the first 12 friars went in 1209 seeking approval to live their way of life from Innocent III. When they returned, they found a local farmer here with his animals. Then they went to the Portiuncula where they’ve been ever since.

Here a story took place describing how Francis and the friars were awoken in the middle of the night by a friar who was hungry during a fast. Francis lets him eat and commands the rest to eat to avoid him feeling embarrassment. Here Brother Giles, the simple friar, joined the fraternity. Here, another friar who was described as being too 'sensual' and he was kicked out of the fraternity by Francis who called him Brother Fly.

From THE LEGEND OF THREE COMPANIONS, 55

The blessed father with his sons were staying in a place near Assisi called Rivo Torto where there was a hut abandoned by all. The place was so cramped that they could barely rest. Very often for lack of bread, their only food was the turnips that they begged in their need, here and there. The man of God would write the names of the brothers on the beams of that hut, so that anyone wishing to rest or pray would know his place, and so that any unusual noise would not disturb the mind's silence in such small and close quarters. [optional] One day while the brothers were staying in that place, a peasant came with his donkey, wanting to stay in that hut with it. And so that he would not be driven away by the brothers, on walking into the hut, he said to his donkey: "Go in, go in, because we will do well in this place." When the holy father heard the peasant's words and realized his intention, he was annoyed at him, most of all because he made quite an uproar with his donkey, disturbing all the brothers who were then immersed in silence and prayer. Then the man of God said to his brothers: "I know, brothers, that God did not call us to prepare a lodging for a donkey, nor to have dealings with men. While we are preaching the way of salvation to people and are giving them wise counsel, we should dedicate ourselves most of all to prayer and thanksgiving." They left that hut for the use of poor lepers, moving to a small dwelling near Saint Mary of the Portiuncula where they stayed time to time before acquiring that church.

Spiritual:

Fr. Murray Bodo, O.F.M., in his book "The Journey and the Dream" describes the experience of Francis and the first brothers in Rivotorto as the "honeymoon" of their life in the early years of the community. They felt a special calling to poverty and simplicity, and in Rivotorto, they experienced it fully.

Reflection:

- As Christians, we cannot live the spiritual life alone; there was always someone who introduces us to and taught us about the faith – whether it was our parents, relatives, friends, nuns or priests – someone brought the

- faith to us. Take a few moments to consider who it was – and there may be several people – who taught you about the faith.
- Community strengthens us: Whether we are married with a family, vowed to a religious community, part of a lay association, or even living as a single person, we must rely on others to help us in our spiritual life. Yet, as Americans or English-speaking people, our culture values independence and a 'go-it-alone' mentality. What are some challenges to community life you have experienced?
 - Rivotorto invites us to live a simple and uncluttered life. What are some things you can do to simplify your life? Can you think of any benefits of living a simpler life?

San Pietro in Spina

Historical:

San Pietro in Spina is one of the three churches Francis rebuilt in addition to the more popular churches of San Damiano and Santa Maria degli Angeli.

It is the church referred to by Thomas of Celano:

Meanwhile, the holy man of God, having changed his habit and rebuilt that church [San Damiano], moved to another place near the city of Assisi, where he began to rebuild a certain church that had fallen into ruin and was almost destroyed. After a good beginning he did not stop until he had brought all to completion. From there he moved to another place, which is called the "Portiuncula," ... (Thomas, First Life, IX, 21)

Bonaventure named the church when he wrote:

After this work [the restoration of San Damiano], to prevent his body from becoming sluggish with laziness, he set himself to repair a certain church of Blessed Peter a further distance from town, because of the special devotion which, in his pure and sincere faith, he bore to the prince of the apostles. (Bonaventure, Major Life, II, 7)

San Pietro in Spina is referred to by Arnaldo Fortini in his masterful biography on the life of St. Francis titled, "Francis of Assisi" translated by Helen Moak. Fortini states that Francis's father owned property in the area of Spina. According to Fortini, the little church was mentioned in documents of the Assisi cathedral from the eleventh century on, though in Francis's time it was abandoned and had fallen into ruin. Francis rebuilt this church in addition to the other two, despite the difficulty given its distance from Assisi. Incidentally, Fortini also notes that Francis's family owned land near the

church of San Pietro della Spina; since the shortest route to that property was the road that ran by the Arce leper hospital, therefore it is likely that Francis embraced the leper while was en route to or from his family's property in Spina.

Spiritual:

The first biographers of Francis connected Francis's rebuilding these three small chapels to the larger work of rebuilding the universal Church of Christ. Bonaventure wrote:

At the bidding of divine providence which guided Christ's servant in everything, he built up three material churches before he preached the Gospel and began the Order not only to ascend in an orderly progression from the sensible to the intelligible, from the lesser to the greater, but also to symbolize mystically in external actions perceived by the senses what he would do in the future. For like the three buildings he built up, so the Church – where there is victory for the triple army of those being saved – was to be renewed in three ways under his leadership: by the form, rule, and teaching of Christ which he would provide. And now we see that this prophecy has been fulfilled. (Bonaventure, Major Life, II, 8)

Reflection:

Today, the church of San Pietro della Spina is once again in ruin. It seems ironic that despite Francis's efforts to rebuild the church, it would once again return to ruin. Perhaps someone could once again hear and respond to the call to "go and rebuild my home (church), which has fallen into ruin."

San Damiano – St. Francis

Historical:

- San Damiano was built around the 7th century A.D., over an old pagan shrine on the hillside where St. Felicianus (the patron saint of nearby Foligno) was martyred in the third century.
- Dedicated to the twin brothers Saint Cosmos and Damian – early eastern Christian martyrs – it served as a hospital for pilgrims and crusaders passing through the area on their way south to Rome and beyond. Assisi was between two ancient roads: the Via Flaminia, which connected Ravenna and northern Italy to Rome, as well as the Via Francigena which connected France and northern Europe to Rome. From Rome, pilgrims

and crusaders could continue south on the Via Appia to reach Brindisi in southern Italy where they could board a ship bound for the Holy Land.

- Here the priest in residence probably served Francis as a type of spiritual director.
- In 1205, Francis prayed before this dilapidated church hearing the voice of Jesus say to him, "Go and rebuild my house that is falling in ruins." Francis immediately took a bolt of cloth from his father's warehouse and sold it in Foligno for funds to rebuild the church. Once he realized what he had done was wrong, he hid from his father. Eventually, he found the courage to face his father, which he did in front of the cathedral and bishop. Then he left Assisi for Gubbio, but eventually returned in 1206 and set out to rebuild the church of San Damiano.
- Late in his life, when he was almost blind and very sick, Francis wrote the Canticle of the Creatures here.

Spiritual:

- The cross was immensely important to the life of Francis. It was the crucifix here that spoke to Francis to tell him to rebuild the church. The crucifix that was revealed externally on his body in Laverna was imprinted spiritually on his soul in San Damiano.
- Here in San Damiano Francis listened to God speak to him, and he put into action that calling.

Reflection:

- How do you relate to the idea of rebuilding brokenness in a spiritual sense? Have you ever felt broken in any way? Has the Lord healed you? Has the Lord ever asked you to rebuild something? Is he asking you to restore something right now? What will you do when you return home?

Bonaventure wrote:

For one day when Francis went out to meditate in the fields, he walked near the church of San Damiano which was threatening to collapse because of age. Impelled by the Spirit, he went inside to pray. Prostrate before an image of the Crucified, he was filled with no little consolation as he prayed. While his tear-filled eyes were gazing at the Lord's cross, he heard with his bodily ears a voice coming from that cross, telling him three times: "Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is all being destroyed." Bonaventure (Book II: 536-538)

