

Advent 2023 Reflections/Action Steps (Week Four)

Celebrating Christmas at Greccio (1223-2023)

In October 2021, the Conference of the Franciscan Family—a group made up of the leaders of all three orders of Franciscans—called all Franciscans to join in the Centenary which will commemorate the 800th anniversaries of several significant events in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. We began 2023 with the celebration of the Later Rule and will conclude with Christmas at Greccio. During this Advent season, we will examine the story of the celebration of Christmas at Greccio and how we can apply the lessons learned from this event to our everyday lives. This week's reflections include a part of Celano's description of Christmas at Greccio and a quote from William Short, OFM, found in his book *The Franciscans*.

Sunday, December 24, 2023

“At last, the site of the manger was consecrated as a temple to the Lord. In honor of the most blessed father Francis, an altar was constructed over the manger, and a church was dedicated.”

(1 Celano 87)

“The very life of God is one of goodness expressing itself generously, fully. God's desire to share goodness is expressed as creation.... The creation is fully understandable at the birth of Jesus. Here is the 'missing link,' always present, now visible.... Christ is no alien in a strange universe: he was from the beginning the reason and the Creator's blueprint for every particle of matter, for all things visible and invisible, for everything and everyone.” (Short, 105-106)

Action Step: Place baby Jesus in your crèche. Spend some quiet time in front of your crèche and thank God for the gift of the Babe of Bethlehem.

Monday, December 25, 2023

“This was done
so that where animals *once ate the fodder of the hay*,
there humans henceforth
for healing of body and soul
would eat the flesh
of the immaculate and spotless lamb,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who *gave Himself for us*
with supreme and indescribable love,
who lives and rules with the Father and the Holy Spirit as God,
eternally glorious forever and ever.
Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia.” (1 Celano 87)

“God's complete generosity is revealed in the Incarnation—nothing is held back, nothing is 'property' to God, all is given away, God's true identity is communicated as poverty, holding onto nothing. The religious world that humans develop cannot contain this mystery: God does not come as an angel, or a burst of light, nor even as an idea or a vision—God comes as a baby. (Short, 106-107)

Merry Christmas! May the Christ child be born in your heart again the way it was 800 years ago in Greccio. Go out into the world to share the good news!