

Portraits of Church History - "Francis of Assisi"

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Preacher: Dr. Rhys Bezzant

[0 : 00] Whenever you're ready. Yes. Thank you. Good morning, John.

Well, friends, let's get underway. Hi. My name's Rhys. If this is your first time coming on, it's really great to have you in this session. I also wanted to begin in this Thanksgiving season by thanking Trinity, not only for the invitation to give kind of sessions like this at Adult Sunday School, but for all the hospitality I've received at Trinity over quite a number of years.

I've been coming here for about 17 years on and off, and I always feel like it's a spiritual home where I'm nurtured, encouraged in the faith. So in the spirit of Thanksgiving, I thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. This morning is the PS. Thanks. We did three sessions a couple of months back, and there was a lot of interest.

A lot of questions were generated around the life of Francis. So I wrote to Nick and said, if there were a slot, it might be worthwhile spending a little bit more time with Francis himself.

[1 : 59] I've just completed a translation of a biography of Francis from German to English. So I'm buzzing with new things that I've learned.

It won't be quite available, I think, in the bookshops for Christmas, but if you decide you want to buy a January 20 present, then that's probably the go-to place. Let me pray.

We do praise you, Heavenly Father, for brothers and sisters who are alive today or who've lived in the past, who've, according to their own lights, fought the fight and finished the race.

We thank you that we can gather this morning and think and learn and talk and listen. Please may we find deep roots that our faith would be not blown by every wind of deception, but that we know our security in Christ.

For it's in his name we pray. Amen. It's almost an Anglican setting here. No one's in the front row, but... First of all, some thoughts on the life itself of Francis.

[3 : 19] I'm not assuming that you know very much about his life story. That will be useful just to fill in some gaps before I make some kind of more general reflections.

And, of course, you're very welcome to interrupt, to put up your hand or to tackle me from the podium whenever you want to. There's no dumb questions, just dumb answers, so please feel free to ask what's on your mind as we go along.

As you'll see from his dates, he lived just about 800 years ago. Next year, or at least in 2026, we'll be celebrating or commemorating the 800th anniversary of Francis' death.

So he lived in the High Middle Ages. The Middle Ages were coming to an end. You don't need to have my water. The Middle Ages were coming to an end and the period of the Renaissance and the Reformation were about to begin.

He was born to a very wealthy, we might say middle-class family. His father was a silk merchant in central Italy in Umbria.

[4 : 37] Umbria is not so well known, but people know Tuscany. It's a little bit south of there. He grew up a privileged life. He was not pious in any way.

He ran amok in the town, making mischief. He had a very difficult relationship with his father. He had some kind of education.

He could do some very basic maths so that he could work out how much to charge people for the silk that were buying in his father's store.

He could write letters, but otherwise he was pretty well uneducated. Often we discover in Christian history that a bad relationship with a mother or father, often it's been a father, makes individuals think hard about...

My water is travelling around. Will it fit in here? No, it will not. Often in Christian history we'll find people who have struggled with their own relationship with their parents and that often predisposes

them to think again about the whys and wherefores of their own life or their own ministry.
[6 : 03] As a young man, he went to war for Assisi, his hometown, against a neighbouring larger town called Perugia.

Perugia was always bound to win. Perugia aligned itself with the Pope, whereas Assisi, where Francis grew up, aligned itself not with the Pope, but with the Holy Roman Emperor. There were distinct power blocks in Italy at the time. Francis was taken prisoner in that war and held in captivity for about a year.

I can't imagine what a medieval cell would look like for a prisoner of war. He got very sick and suffered greatly psychologically as well as physically.

I gave a talk not dissimilar to this at a Christian study centre at Virginia Tech a couple of years ago. A woman was in the seminar and she came up to me afterwards and she said she and her husband work with veterans, army veterans, military veterans, and they often used the example of Francis for someone who both suffered post-traumatic stress and seemed to process their PTSD.

[7 : 29] So she was...I didn't have any idea that this was what kind of ministries amongst the US military might take as a resource, but it was a really interesting perspective.

It does seem like he suffered PTSD after that year in prison. He leaves and he's a man who's restless.

He seems not to easily find his place in the world. That might be a consequence of the poor relationship with his father, not enjoying firm attachments.

It's probably exacerbated by his experience as a prisoner of war as well. At one stage, he's in a church. It's a run-down church.

The walls are barely standing. And he hears the crucifix, the piece of art, the Lord Jesus who's there affixed to the cross, say these words, Go, rebuild my church, repair my church which has fallen down.

[8 : 40] Of course, we have no idea what kind of reality this was, how he's processing psychologically his experience.

But he takes this as a command from the Lord. It's kind of remarkable. So he commits himself to buying stone and having it delivered to local village dilapidated churches and with his own hands finding mortar and rebuilding walls.

He's taken the words from the crucifix completely literally. Rebuild my church. Build up the walls of my church, however we might translate it.

If you visit Assisi today, you can still see the speaking crucifix. It didn't communicate very much to me, I must say. But it is powerfully formative of a certain kind of Christian tradition.

In building up the church, in literally rebuilding the church, he sees, as it were, his wealth and the ways in which he can serve those around him.

[10 : 03] In fact, he begins to serve lepers and the poor. Lepers, on the whole, were not allowed in a walled city.

Walls represented some kind of protection, some kind of purity. Often lepers lived outside the city walls. So perhaps it is that he's been building derelict churches and he's seen lepers who perhaps also need shelter or comfort.

They seem to accept him better than his old man. He even greets them with a kiss.

There were still some remnants in the church of his age of greeting brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. But of course, touching a leper in his world, kissing a leper in his world, was completely foreign and kind of dangerous, to be quite frank.

His father is more and more incensed. Perhaps in a sense, serving the lepers, serving the poor, is another way of pushing his father away, squandering his wealth.

[11 : 24] Once he squandered his wealth as a young man on fine clothes and eating and drinking to excess, perhaps now it's just a different way of poking his father in the eye, as it were.

His father's increasingly angry at him. He hears in a nearby church a sermon from Matthew chapter 10.

This was, in a sense, a much more powerful reorientation of his life. You might know Matthew 10, Jesus giving instructions.

He's prayed in Matthew 9, pray the Lord of the harvest to raise up workers for the harvest. Then in chapter 10, Jesus appoints the 12, and the 12 then are given some kind of instructions on how to do their ministry.

Don't take any spare shoes for your feet, no spare robes, ask for a blessing, ask for provisions on the road and so on.

[12:29] And this sermon radically focuses his mind and his heart. He ends up seeing his life as built around Matthew chapter 10, which in a sense is to build his life around the words of Jesus.

It might seem really obvious to us as a Christian, you make Jesus a focus. I think that's kind of the definition in a way.

But this was not expected or normal in lots of ways. In his church, the cues or the pattern of ministry was more likely to come from the book of Acts than a gospel itself.

Christ becomes, is a clear focus for his ministry. He's kind of a fundamentalist though.

That is, he's saying, well, Jesus says, don't take a second pair of shoes. So, don't take a second pair of shoes. Jesus is saying, take no money for the road. Well, okay, won't take any money for the road.

[13:47] He, he takes the detail of Matthew 10, hyper, literally. Except the verse that says, do not go to the Samaritans, just go to the house, do not go to the Gentiles, just go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

There weren't many, too many Jews for him to go to. So he did go to Gentiles, right? Those are the main, mainly the people he met. But apart from that slight, um, uh, uh, challenge, he wanted to model Christ intimately.

Well, now this is all too much for his father. Uh, uh, Francis wants to give money now, not just help building with stones, but wants to give money to a local church.

His father finds out is absolutely furious. So Francis hides in a cave for a month to keep out of his father's way. Uh, uh, he finally comes out of the cave.

His father finds him. He's so furious that his father puts him in the, the, the dungeon they have in their home. I presume it's a basement, a cellar, but his father locks him up, which if this is, if this is kind of, uh, par for the course, then he probably had reason not to be really close to his father.

[15:09] If he was that cruel, right? Uh, his father goes away on business again and, uh, Francis' mother lets him out of the dungeon. Um, probably now you can say the relationship with his father is pretty well over.

The father is furious. He's been out of the dungeon. And so Francis heads to the bishop, the bishop's palace, the Bishop of Assisi to receive protection.

No one could, uh, uh, you could perhaps find him there, but you couldn't exercise any judicial proceedings while they're in the bishop's palace. That fell down the canon law and not under secular law.

Uh, the father confronts the bishop and Francis at the doorway. And the legend goes that Francis removed all his clothes, still wearing kind of semi-decent materials and throws them at the feet of his father, as if to say, I'm done with you.

Uh, the bishop, a little bit embarrassed at this point, offers him some rags, which he then puts on. Francis, in one sense, was not a revolutionary.

[16:25] He sought protection in the Roman church of his day. He, he saw its compromise, if you will. He saw it, uh, the, the way it prized wealth and power, but somehow that wasn't determinative for him.

He still saw here refuge and safety and, uh, a place where he could commit his life. Uh, in a sense, uh, found personal integration there.

He found the tensions with his father when he was protected by the church, uh, kind of a resolution to his emotional restlessness.

His psychology, of course, is something we all want to explore. Uh, of course, it's always beyond our reach. You can only put together morsels and try and work out what's really going on.

But suffice to say, he, he did not see himself as a revolutionary. He was wanting to build the church. He was one who found protection in the church.

[17:37] He was someone who, whose restlessness somehow was relieved within the church. A couple of years ago, I worked at an Anglican church in Assisi.

There's a service that happens each Sunday. They meet in a small medieval chapel, which is rented from the, the Roman Catholic church. Uh, it's a very small congregation in the winter.

In the summer, it's full of kind of Swedish youth groups. I think you're visiting Assisi to kind of do what they do. Uh, but part of the deal when you become the chaplain to this church called St.

Leonard's is that you have to present yourself to the Bishop of Assisi and thank him for the hospitality that the Roman church has given to the Anglican church, just hiring one of their buildings.

So I dutifully, uh, organized my audience with the Bishop of Assisi. He couldn't be there that day. So he sent his commissary, his assistant, that was all fine. But his secretary afterwards said, we're doing some excavation work.

[18 : 39] I want to show you something that tourists don't get to see. So she took me downstairs. They've always wondered where it was that Francis's father confronted the Bishop and where Francis threw down his clothes.

It assumes that there's an outside street where you can have the father outside the door and the Bishop standing at the main entry.

And that had never been discovered. Uh, but they've just recently through this excavation work found a medieval street with a great medieval door that they assume was the place where Francis, uh, finally, uh, commuted himself to the church or finally renounced his father.

Uh, it was an odd arrangement. He was given protection by the church. He was allowed to preach, but it was illegal for most of Christian history, actually for lay people to preach.

He was a lay person. He, he might have been a deacon in terms of the ordering of Roman Catholic, uh, hierarchy, but he certainly was not ordained as a priest.

[20 : 02] He turned up at Rome and somehow naively, he just kind of had this arranged to get an audience with the Pope. And the Pope is a bit ambiguous as to why, uh, but gave Francis permission to preach as a layman.

Uh, this was kind of the founding of the order, though at this stage, it seemed more like a gentleman's agreement than a written legal document.

This was innocent, the third, the most powerful Pope of the middle ages and probably therefore the most, most powerful Pope ever to live. uh, uh, Francis begins an itinerant ministry of preaching. He was regarded as a, not a stirrer, not, uh, a troublemaker. He was regarded as a faithful churchman.

And he was only allowed to preach official doctrine of the church. And he wasn't educated. So the only sermon he really had was repent, uh, for fire and brimstone await you.

[21 : 21] If you do not, he had a very narrow range of, of certain material. Not surprisingly, that's itinerants have great sermons, but they only have two of them because they travel and they don't have, don't, uh, get the same audience twice.

It's just interesting. Our, our, the reputation that Francis has, you might know the phrase, uh, preach all the time.

And if necessary, use words, which is attributed to some Francis. The first time that ever appeared was in the U S in about 1920. Uh, this is not, in fact, and it's not that he could have said, of course, and not written down.

He wasn't, he wasn't literate. He didn't write very much. Of course he could have said it. But when you know that the only reason he's allowed to be an itinerant preacher is because he's a loyal churchman preaching the established doctrine of the church.

Then you recognize that he was using a lot of words and they mainly were the word repent, repent, repent and be baptized or repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.

[22 : 36] In fact, that's exactly the phrase that Jesus uses both in Matthew four and in Matthew 10, when he commissions the 12, right? He sends them out the same message, repent for the kingdom of God is at hand or the kingdom of God is near.

Uh, Francis is probably doing exactly what the Lord Jesus told him to do, to preach repentance for the kingdom of God is coming near. I'm going to pause then, have a sip of my water and see if you have any comments or questions so far.

Yes. I think a comment that it's interesting. He would go to the Pope when Assisi was not, uh, aligned with the Pope and that the Pope would actually even agree to see.

Yes. Thank you. So the politics of Assisi, you are right, lent towards protection from the Holy Roman Emperor, the German Emperor, but the church was still the church that was under the authority of the, of the papacy.

but you're right. It does seem a bit, Oh, doesn't it? Um, perhaps, you know, perhaps if I'm thinking cynically or politically, perhaps the Pope is thinking, I need a guy like Francis in Assisi.

[23 : 53] I need someone to be my voice or to represent me powerfully in, in town. Perhaps that was going on as well. Yes, sir. Yes.

No, thank you. So Assisi is about 200 kilometers. You might have to help me with miles. Uh, Assisi is about 200 kilometers from Rome. So you, you're walking it.

Probably it might take you a few days to walk it. Uh, you might've written on a donkey, but more likely to walk, I think. So does that mean the lines of communication to, between where the Pope was in these, uh, these various cities was actually fairly open?

That there was a dialogue going on. Yes. Yes. That's right. Yeah. So he, Francis had a close relationship with the Bishop. Uh, the Bishop is known by the Pope.

Of course, the Bishop is appointed by the Pope. So there's, yeah, the lines of communication are, are quite easy. It, they might not be quite so easy in, you know, Northern Germany or Scotland or something, but in Assisi, a couple of days walk from Rome, I think we can be confident of the, of open channels of communication.

[25 : 09] Well, Francis resolved some of his restlessness, uh, in being a servant of the church, a loyal servant of the church.

Uh, but there was still some deep psychological, you might say wounds or tensions, issues, which were, remained unresolved.

That's not surprising. You can be partially healed from PTSD, right? Or you can be making progress in your healing. So, uh, Francis found great solace in nature amongst animals.

Uh, he might not easily be described as an ecologist. He certainly was no vegan or vegetarian.

Uh, he would eat meat, certainly, but it is also true that he found solace in nature and, found, found there kind of a deep harmony that city life didn't quite give to him.

[26 : 30] And there are lots of stories of Francis with animals. One of my favorite stories is it was winter and the bees in their heart, human beings had come along and had taken the honey from a beehive.

Uh, in his world, at least Francis thought that bees ate honey. That was their food, not the bees manufactured honey.

So he's so distraught that these bees, uh, are being starved in the winter that he finds some honey and brings it back to the hive to keep them going.

Right? Um, Um, I like honey, but I don't think bees like it in quite the same way as I do. Uh, there's stories of him, uh, calming the ravenous attacks of a wolf.

This is a more famous story, but perhaps one that has less attestation. A local, a local village in Gubio, uh, was having struggles with a, a, a wolf that was attacking sheep and attacking people.

[27 : 40] Francis has a stern word with the wolf and the wolf relents. Uh, the deal is that if the townsfolk give food to the wolf, the wolf will no longer take the sheep randomly.

And the wolf seemed to honor the agreement. Um, Francis would have apoplexies when he was walking along the path and actually stood on a worm, which for some of us is quite a lot of fun, but for Francis was like the ultimate kind of sin.

So there is a sense in which his, he finds in nature some, some harmony, some solace, some home.

Uh, the story is also told of Francis preaching to the birds. Uh, and if you go to Home Depot, you'll find plenty of, uh, Francis statues more often than not with a bird in his hand or a bird in his shoulder.

This is something uniquely American. Uh, the equivalent of Home Depot in Australia would never sell a St Francis kind of thing and never imagined that you'd sell more if you put a bird on his shoulder.

[28 : 52] But, and of course, uh, the, the, there is some truth in the idea that Francis, uh, liked animals, liked birds. The story is told of him traveling along the path and he saw a flock of birds in the boughs of a tree.

And he bids them come down. They fly from the tree and land around him in the field. He walks close to them. They don't fly away.

They don't seem to be shocked by him. And he preaches them. He preaches to them a sermon on repentance, of course. Um, so there's any number of stories about Francis and nature.

Now, some of them are clearly mythical, clearly, uh, based on pious longings rather than reality.

But cumulatively, probably, it says something about his comfort in nature or his retreat to nature or the solace, personal, uh, psychological that he finds in nature.

[30 : 06] But he, he didn't remain a solitary figure. Uh, he was, by all accounts, very charismatic personality, handsome man, though emaciated as the years went on.

And he almost accidentally gathers around himself a group of brothers. A group of friends who together, uh, commit themselves to the life, the, the, the, the, the poverty, chastity, and obedience. Uh, if you meet a Franciscan today, they'll be wearing a brown habit, a brown cloak, a belt with three knots. The three knots remind them of those three vows.

The brothers formed not a monastery, right? In a monastery, you live in some sense, a secluded life. You're in some sense, creating an alternative community in the farm, or you're, uh, committing yourself only to pray.

These weren't monks. These were friars. Friars are different. Friars were just invented in this century or, or, or just a little earlier.

[31 : 27] Friars, the word in English, comes from, uh, Latin, presumably, or Italian word meaning brother. If you know any French, frere, is the, is the word for brother.

These are just the brothers. And they have a common task. They travel, uh, a life, uh, taking up a life of poverty and, uh, preach repentance.

He wasn't real good as a leader of a community. He was a very kind of spontaneous man and a very, oh, impetuous is probably not the right word, but, um, uh, instinctual, or there's another word I'm looking for that I can't quite find, he's doing things not in a premeditated way, but more spontaneously.

Uh, so that kind of person might well gather people in because they seem, uh, kind of have to have a close walk with the Lord or, or have a personality that's attractive, but they're not often the best people to arrange a community's life.

That takes a little bit more organization. He also gathered around him a group of women. Well, they didn't really gather around him.

[32 : 46] Uh, a woman from the same town, Claire, uh, decided as well, she wanted to give up her life of wealth.

She was of noble birth. She wasn't middle-class merchants from middle-class merchants family, uh, which of course was kind of horrendous to think that this woman who otherwise outside of her family's life would have very little kind of protection, or, uh, there'd be very few structures which would give her security.

Nonetheless, fled her home on Palm Sunday, uh, took up refuge amongst the brothers in the place where they were living.

They cut off her hair. They tonsied her. Uh, to cut off your hair was to commit yourself to the life of a community. Uh, so perhaps for a man that's not quite so radical, but for a young woman, certainly so.

There's some question as to what kind of relationship Claire had with Francis or Francis had with Claire. Uh, there's a movie made, I think it's by Zeffirelli in the, in the seventies in the kind of height of the flower, flower power generation.

[34 : 05] Um, and the, the movie makes out that Francis and Claire having little kind of nighttime, trysts, dalliances, um, and it's all kind of very ungodly.

Uh, that probably sells movies, but it's probably not true that she and Francis were lovers. Uh, but she certainly found as many did, uh, in Francis, a charismatic vision for the way Christians might live with more integrity.

She in time, forms her own community, uh, there today called the poor Claire's, uh, and they more likely live, sorry, in, in Francis day, they more likely lived in a community where you'd work the fields and, uh, tend gardens because it was ridiculous for men to be itinerant preachers, begging for food and kind of caring for the poor, the, the lepers.

It was even more outrageous in his day for a woman to do the same. Francis spends the bulk of these years from say, 1210 to 1220, traveling, preaching, uh, mainly in Italy, but he did manage to, uh, travel to Spain to preach as well.

Uh, uh, on the way, just assuming that people would give him some meat or some bread, uh, as well as perhaps, uh, money to use then to care for the poor and the lepers.

[35 : 46] He does this weirdest thing ever in 1219. He decides that he's going to travel across the Mediterranean to Egypt.

Uh, the fifth crusade was in full swing and he decides he's going to turn up, uh, at the palace of the Muslim leader, uh, Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil and tell him to stop fighting.

Uh, it's kind of naive and outrageous and weird. Where did he get this idea that he could stop the Christian armies?

Fighting against the Muslim armies who'd occupied Jerusalem. Uh, but through a weird sequence of events, he's actually allowed in to see the Sultan.

Uh, perhaps it's because he's such now a weak, a physically weak man that the Sultan's guards say, well, he, you know, he, he cries when he steps on a worm, he's not going to do anything bad to the Sultan.

[36 : 59] He's so frail. Perhaps the Sultan thought he was the messenger offering peace from the Christian armies. That's perhaps another reason some give for, uh, his being welcomed into the Sultan's palace, whatever, whatever the reason he's welcomed in.

And you can imagine what Francis does. He preaches repentance to the Sultan. Not that the Sultan understood middle, middle Italian, right? Um, um, the Sultan responded in Arabic as you do, as your mother tongue.

Um, Francis was quite happy with the sermon he delivered, um, and was quite persuaded that the Sultan had decided to become a Christian. Uh, uh, apparently the Sultan does ask a question, something like, uh, which God is then the true God?

And Francis, uh, uh, I don't know how this is communicated to him, but Francis assumes that that's the Sultan's change of mind. It could just be the, the Sultan, uh, making fun of Francis.

Uh, why would you think your God is the true God? But he came in peace. And of all the events in Francis' life, this one is the best attested.

[38 : 18] Uh, you know, the, the kind of, um, deal he did with the, the wolf that has no literary kind of foundations, but this event has several, probably because it's dealing with world leaders, right?

And involves taking a ship and securing the leadership of the order in Francis absence. So it's quite bizarre. In fact, still to this day, uh, many of the holy sites in Israel and the Holy land are in the custodia of custody of Francis.

Franciscans. So if you ever visit the Holy land, if ever there's peace that we can get back, uh, you'll find that many of the ancient Christian sites are cared for by Franciscans.

They've maintained a really positive relationship in the eyes of many Muslims and, and, and, and or Arabs, uh, to this day.

Uh, quite, quite, quite a spectacular outcome of Francis's, uh, mission to convert, uh, the Muslim leader in 1219.

[39 : 31] He comes back from his travels and he's lost control of his movement. Uh, he had never done very well in arranging its common life, but now things have got worse.

He tries to inveigle his way back into leadership. The guys who'd been leading in his absence, uh, gave up their authority, but kind of didn't give up their authority.

He kind of had given up his authority, but now didn't really want to give up his authority. So the leadership is in quite a mess. And the Franciscans then split into two parties, even if occasionally they were under the same leader, they became two distinct mini orders.

If you will, the spirit, spiritual Franciscans and the conventional Franciscans still to this day, there are different kinds of Franciscans. Uh, he's now very severely ill, uh, though he does preach in a local town named Greccio, 1223 at Christmas time, and decides that one of the best ways of preaching his message of Christmas is to gather together some animals, a little kind of manger with some hay in it, and, uh, make a nativity scene, as it were, or, or, or it's basically a sermon illustration.

Probably he's walking around pointing to the, pointing to the bull, pointing to the sheep, pointing to the wise men, whoever they were. Uh, uh, he invents the nativity scene that you might have in your home or that some churches put up, or there's often one on the corner of the green as well, isn't there?

[41 : 20] It was Francis doing. He never put a baby Jesus in the nativity scene because he said the Lord Jesus, well, in his theology, uh, appeared in the mass on the altar, not in the, uh, in the figurine.

His eyesight is deteriorating. His physical health is deteriorating, uh, rapidly. He probably has trachoma, I think.

That's how some medical people today describe it. But the, the way he was advised to deal with this trachoma was to have his eyes or his eyelids cauterized or his temples, a heat, uh, hot iron rods applied to his temples to kind of deal with it.

I don't know. I'm saying much about trachoma. I can imagine that hot iron rods applied to your temples doesn't do much for you. Um, but he said that, uh, he, he didn't mind the pain in a sense. He's imagining that the more pain he feels, the closer he is to representing the Lord Jesus in the world. He's, uh, uh, almost on his deathbed some months before, and he experiences something which, uh, no record exists of any other human being experiencing the stigmata that spontaneously appears on his body.

[42 : 47] five wounds in his wrists, in his ankles, in his ankles, and in his side, these five wounds representing the five wounds of Christ on the cross.

Stigmata, uh, had occasionally been done by very super zealous Christians. They'd kind of, uh, uh, uh, abused, uh, self-harmed and created holes in their wrists or holes in their ankles.

But this case is not him applying these wounds. Somehow he thinks in the appearance of an angel and the appearance of a seraph, he is spontaneously given these marks.

There's a lot of debate about what this really means. Uh, one person whom I find probably more persuasive, uh, describes those kind of marks that my mum had before she died where she easily bruised, and there appeared very large spots on her, uh, almost through no pressure at all.

Perhaps that's, there's a remarkable resemblance that there are some, some of these bruises in those kind of places. We don't really know. Uh, but Francis interprets it as a reward for his close walk with Christ.

[44 : 16] He is like Christ, almost literally, physically, and he'd had this desire to physically, literally be like Christ since his first conversion.

He dies shortly afterwards. His body is hidden. Uh, between the walls of the church because they were so scared that the soldiers from Perugia would come and take him and make him a tourist attraction.

Uh, so he was buried and until 1818, there was no record of where he lay, but in some renovations in a church in Assisi, his body was discovered pretty confidently him because, uh, it had been hidden between two walls and there weren't too many people who were hidden between two walls, right?

Uh, from so long before. He became a saint according to Roman Catholic traditions shortly after his death. He's often regarded as the most perfect Christian ever to live.

I've made a couple of my points at the bottom of the page as I've gone. Let me just briefly touch them. Uh, poverty wasn't as important to him as often assumed.

[45 : 28] Uh, more important was preaching repentance. Uh, he wanted to renew the church. He was a revivalist before there were revivalists, if you will, but he was not an enthusiast.

He was a churchman. He was a loyal churchman who worked within its bounds. He was kind of a fundamentalist using Matthew 10 in a really hyper literal way.

Uh, he would have heard the Bible read in church otherwise, but of course he couldn't read very much himself. Uh, he wasn't really an ecologist.

Uh, people want him to be, but that's projecting back from our day. But he did enjoy retreat solace in nature. Uh, surprisingly, he used words to preach sermons.

Uh, it's a good model for all of us. He was a missionary who wanted to convert Muslims to Christian faith. Uh, as difficult as that is for some people to hear today, his leadership skills were rudimentary.

[46 : 37] He was more of a solo actor really. And he's personally at times controlling, but he did set something in motion that has, uh, had quite a significant 800 year impact.

He's an example of urban spirituality. He liked nature, but that's because he spent most of his time in cities and you can't raise money for the poor or for yourself in your own living unless there's a money economy.

Uh, he lived within an early, uh, late or late medieval, early modern, capitalist economy. He was working at what it means to be a Christian in cities.

Uh, in terms of his ideas, if that's your, uh, passion, he would, and his followers focus on inductivism and divine freedom.

The most important thing was the actual objects, uh, that were in front of you, uh, that were in front of you, not grand theorizing. Inductivism is a, is the movement in philosophy where you start with the individual object and move out to the general theory.

[47 : 49] Uh, his descendants, those in his order in the next two or 300 years, because of their commitment to the individual case in front of them, uh, were significant in developing human rights and in the power of human observation to understand the world that God had made.

Well, that's been quite a rush. Uh, uh, it's 10 to, so we need to break so that folk for children's ministry can set up.

Um, um, I'll be here for a few more minutes if you, if you have any questions you want to ask. Let me pray. Uh, please, Lord, may we, uh, know how to manage, how to handle stories of Christian lives that are so different from ours.

Would we be able to seek out wisdom from, not just from them, but from the way they think about the scriptures, the way they obey the scriptures, the way they understand the scriptures.

And may we in our own day make an impact beyond all our imagining for the sake of Christ. In whose name we pray. Amen.

[49 : 14] Thank you, Todd. Thank you. Yeah. sort of. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Alright. Uh...

Thanks. Have a great question. Do you have a great máfrax? Uh... Did you have a famous four? Uh... That's a good idea.

Uh, uh... of... from the Ursumi. uh... . Dis...