

Chapel of Our Lady of the Angels

Francis rebuilt this chapel with his own hands and died less than fifty feet away from it.

The chapel of Our Lady of the Angels, down the hill from the walled city of Assisi, was built out of devotion but had deteriorated by the time of Francis' conversion (1206). Although it belonged to the Benedictine monks on nearby Mount Subasio, few people then lived close to the Portiuncula, "Mary's little portion."

After having rebuilt the small churches of San Damiano and later San Pietro, which no longer exists, Francis rebuilt this chapel. In time, it would be called the "cradle of the Franciscan family," important to the friars, the Poor Clares, Secular Franciscans, and members of the Third Order Regular.



of

While attending Mass here one day, Francis heard a reading from the Gospel of Matthew; Jesus was sending out the apostles without gold, silver, or money; they were not to carry a traveling bag, food, or a walking staff and were not to wear sandals or have two tunics. Instead, they should preach the kingdom of God and penance. Francis exclaimed, "This is what I wish; this is what I seek; this is what I long to do with all my heart" (*1 Celano*, #22).



A few years later, Francis and the other friars received the Lady Clare here on Palm Sunday evening (1212), gave her a religious garb, and cut her hair as a sign of entrance into a new way of life. The Benedictines gave Francis the chapel, which soon became his headquarters; here the friars assembled in annual chapters to report on what they had accomplished with God's grace and to decide on new territories for evangelizing. It is here that Francis resigned in 1221 as minister general

of the friars. Because this chapel had a special role in Francis' conversion, it became a place very special to members of the Secular Franciscan Order. A few feet from this chapel, Francis died just after sunset on October 3, 1226.

By that time, Francis had gained from Pope Honorius III the “Pardon of Assisi,” a plenary indulgence (under the usual conditions of prayer, confession, and reception of the Eucharist) for everyone who visited and prayed in this small chapel on the anniversary of its dedication (August 2). In 1569, construction began on the basilica that now surrounds the chapel. The hillside city of Assisi has stopped growing geographically; expansion now occurs on the plain near.

Every year thousands of pilgrims, come to Our Lady of the Angels Basilica to pray for their own intentions, for family needs, and for reconciliation throughout the world. On October 27, 1986, Pope John Paul II and 235 leaders of the world's major religions began their Day of Prayer for World Peace with a prayer service in front of this tiny chapel.

QUOTE:



On that Day of Prayer for World Peace, 1986, Pope Saint John Paul II said at the Portiuncula: “I have chosen this town of Assisi as the place for our Day of Prayer for Peace because of the particular significance of the holy man venerated here—Saint Francis—known and revered by so many throughout the world as a symbol of peace, reconciliation, and brotherhood. Inspired by his example, his meekness and humility, let us dispose our hearts for prayer in true internal silence.”

COMMENT:

In this chapel, Francis of Assisi began to understand more about the truth of his life, his service of God, and how both of those connect with service to other people. Truth and forgiveness provide the only lasting foundations for genuine peace. Three recent Popes visited here: Pope St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis.

