Penance and St. Francis

How are the Gospel, penance and conversion related?

Mark 1:15: “This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel.”

Matthew 4:17: “From that time on Jesus began to proclaim this theme: ‘Reform your lives! The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

Metanoia = ongoing conversion of mind and heart; “Repent and believe in the Gospel.” Life-long process, beginning with Baptism, ending with physical death.

What did penance mean for Saint Francis?

The order of Penitents in the Church

The Penitents of Assisi

“Living in penance” rather than just “doing penitential acts”

The TAU cross

First Version of the Letter to the Faithful (aka Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, 1209-1211)

Testament: “The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, to begin living penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them (literally, I made mercy with them). And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed only a little, and then left the world.”