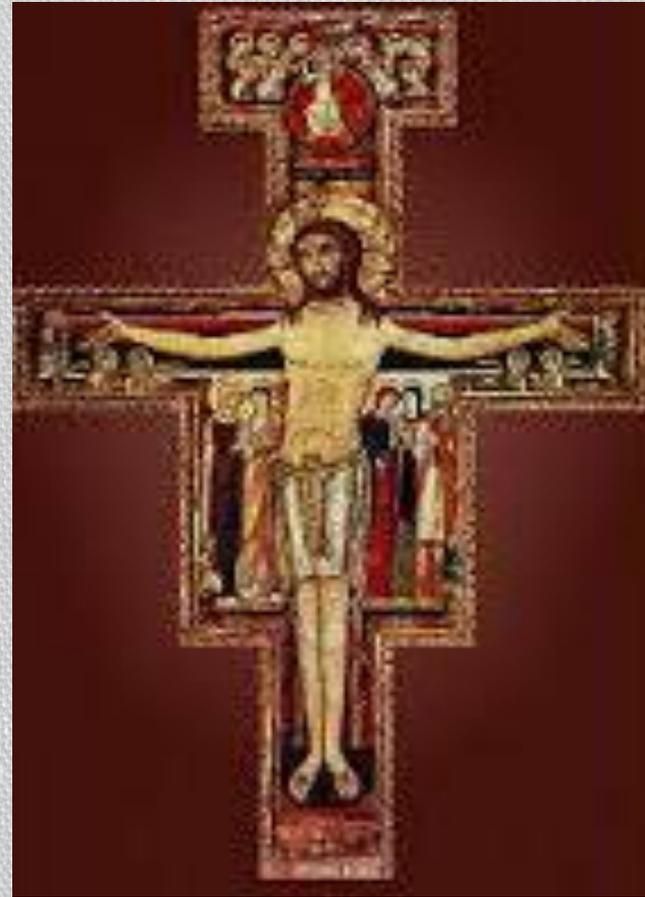
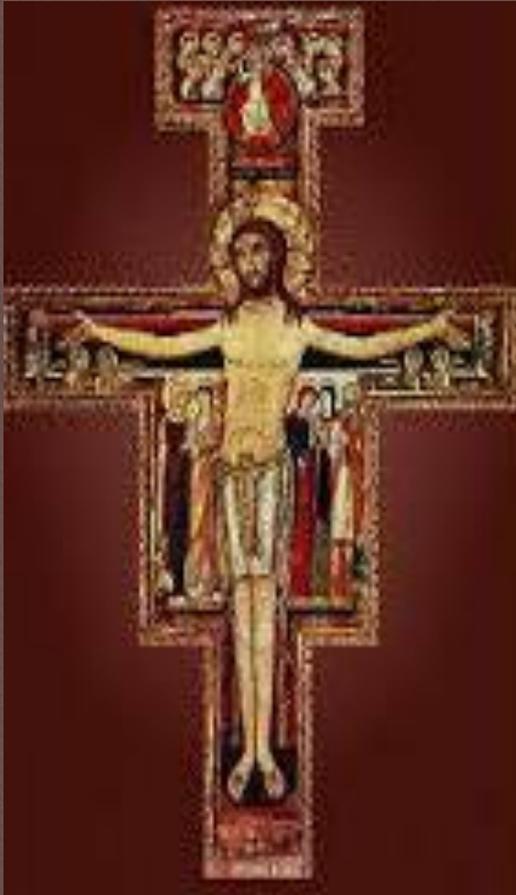


Franciscan Mirror
of Holiness



SAN DAMIANO
CROSS

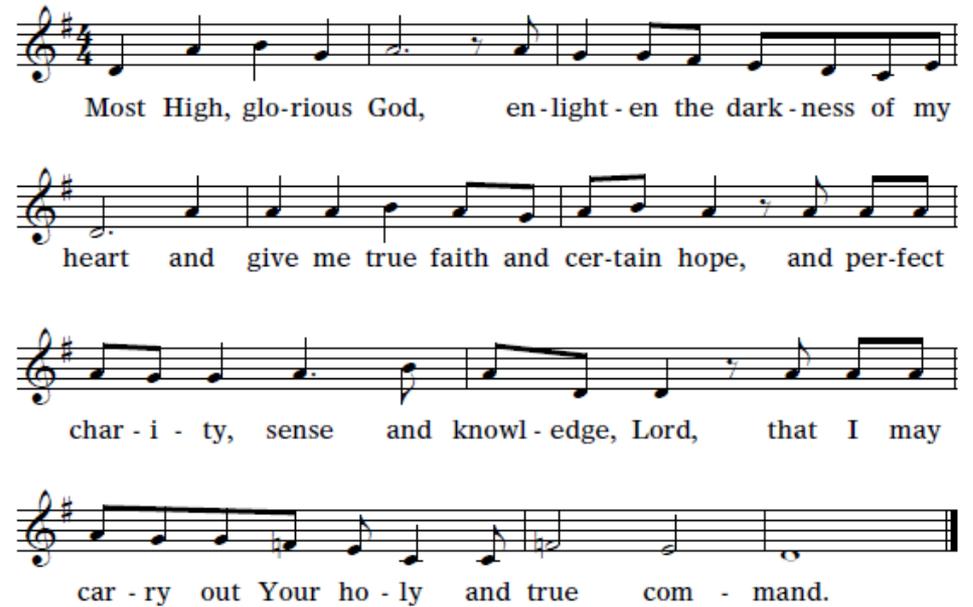


“Most High and Glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart.

Give me sincere faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord,

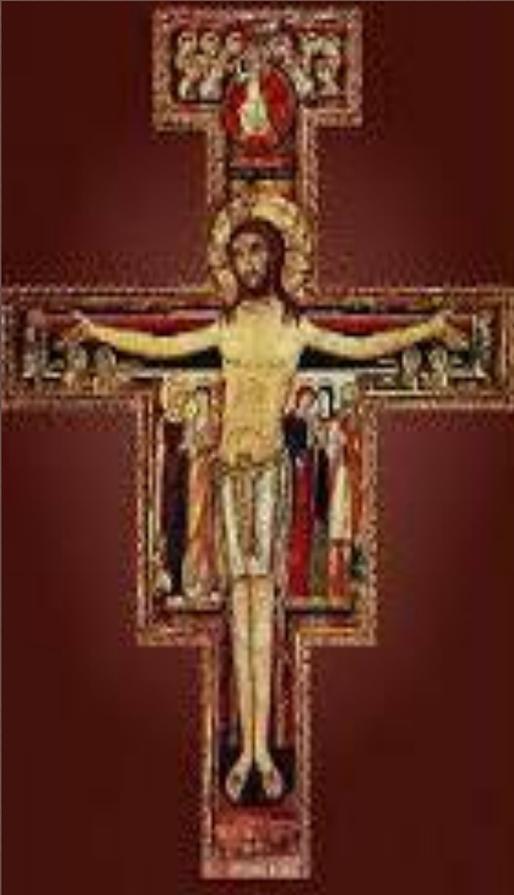
That I may carry out
Your holy and true command.”

The Prayer Before the Crucifix



Most High, glo-rious God, en-light-en the dark-ness of my
heart and give me true faith and cer-tain hope, and per-fect
char-i-ty, sense and knowl-edge, Lord, that I may
car-ry out Your ho-ly and true com-mand.

Text: Saint Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226, trans. © 1999 Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University
Music: Joe Higginbotham, b.1953, © 2012 Joe Higginbotham

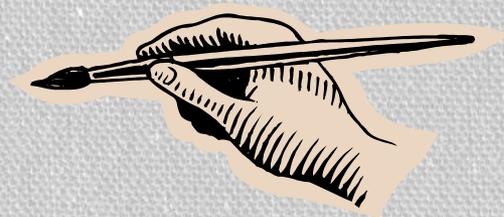


"As he was passing by the church of San Damiano, which was almost in ruin, he was moved by the Spirit to enter and pray . . . while with tears in his eyes he gazed upon the Lord on the cross, he heard with his bodily ears a voice coming from the cross which told him three times: "Francis, go and repair my house, which, as you can see, is falling into ruin" (LMj II: 2-5)".



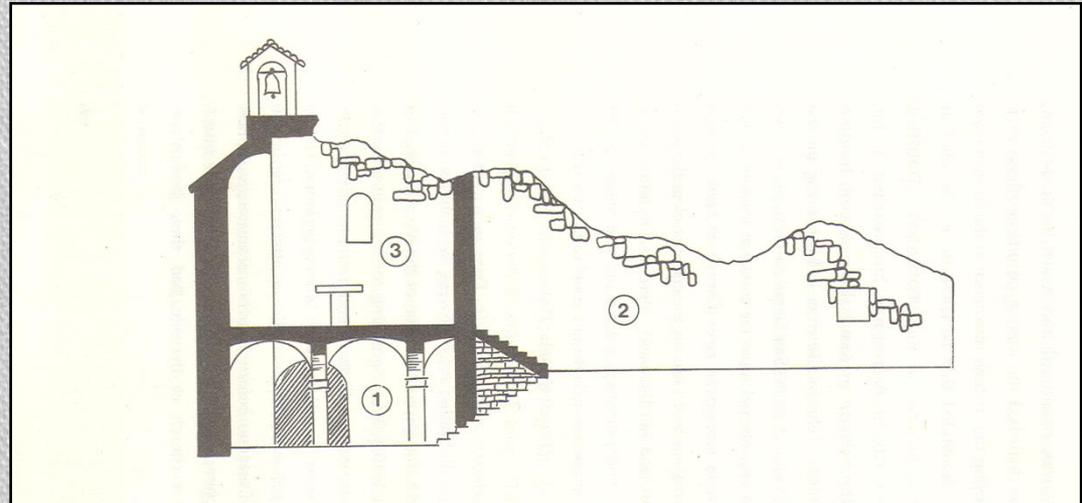
What is an ICON?

- Byzantine style: very specific rules apply for painting images meant for contemplation of Jesus, the Mother of God, and the Saints
- Latin style is more interested in the human dimension and has a didactic purpose
- Byzantine style uses extensive symbolism to point our thoughts to the eternal realities rather than earthly
- Council of Constantinople considered icons to be a THEOPHANY = revelation of God
- Author of icon must undergoes a period of of fasting and contemplation before painting
- This same responsibility applies to the one who receives an icon; before reading it, one must contemplate it for a long time in the context of prayer.
- The Crucifix of San Damiano was probably painted at the end of the 12th century



San Damiano at the time of Francis

The small chapel was a wayside shrine dedicated to Sts. Cosmas and Damian probably built during the 12th century at this site on the edge of the Commune of Assisi. By the time of Francis, it has fallen into ruin. Francis' father Pietro owned land nearby, so when Francis took refuge here, he was under the protection of the Church and was taken under the wing of the priest who was living here.



Ancient San Damiano

1. *Crypt*
2. *Nave*
3. *Presbytery*



The end of the story
... at the
beginning?

"From that time, on,
compassion for the
Crucified was impressed
into his holy soul. And
we honestly believe the
wounds of the sacred
Passion were impressed
deep in his heart,
though not yet on his
flesh (FA:ED, Vol. II, p.
249, Thomas of
Celano)".



The Cross

- Was probably painted in Umbria in the 12th century by an unknown artist
- It measures 6.9 feet long by 4.26 feet wide
- It is not painted directly on the wood but rather on canvas adhered to pecan wood
- One can easily see the influence of eastern art as there was a group of Syrian monks in nearby Spoleto
- Use of colors:
 - Black – death or the devil
 - Red and gold – divinity and eternity
 - Blue and green – the world and the course of human history
 - Shells – symbol of the supernatural



The inscription above Jesus' head . . .

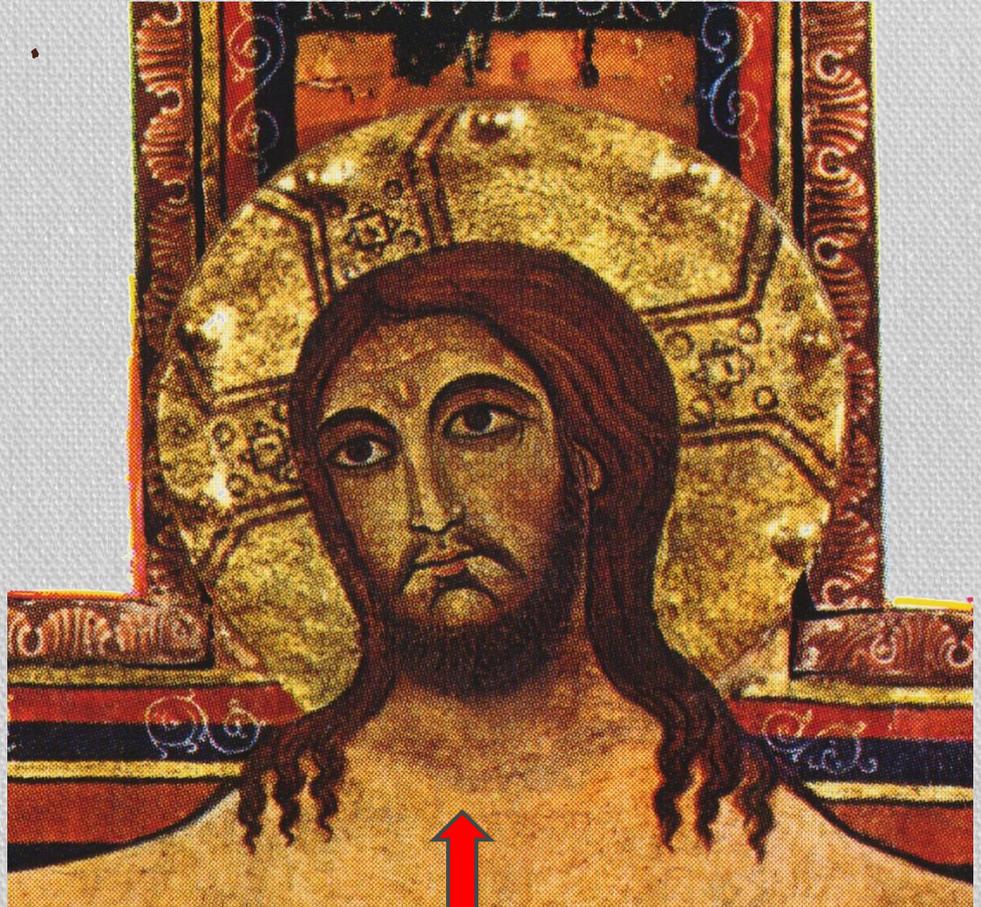
Inscription named
the specific crime
being punished . . .

Jesus of Nazareth,
King of the Jews
written in Latin,
Hebrew and Greek –
*Jesus Nazarenus Rex
Judaeorum* = INRI

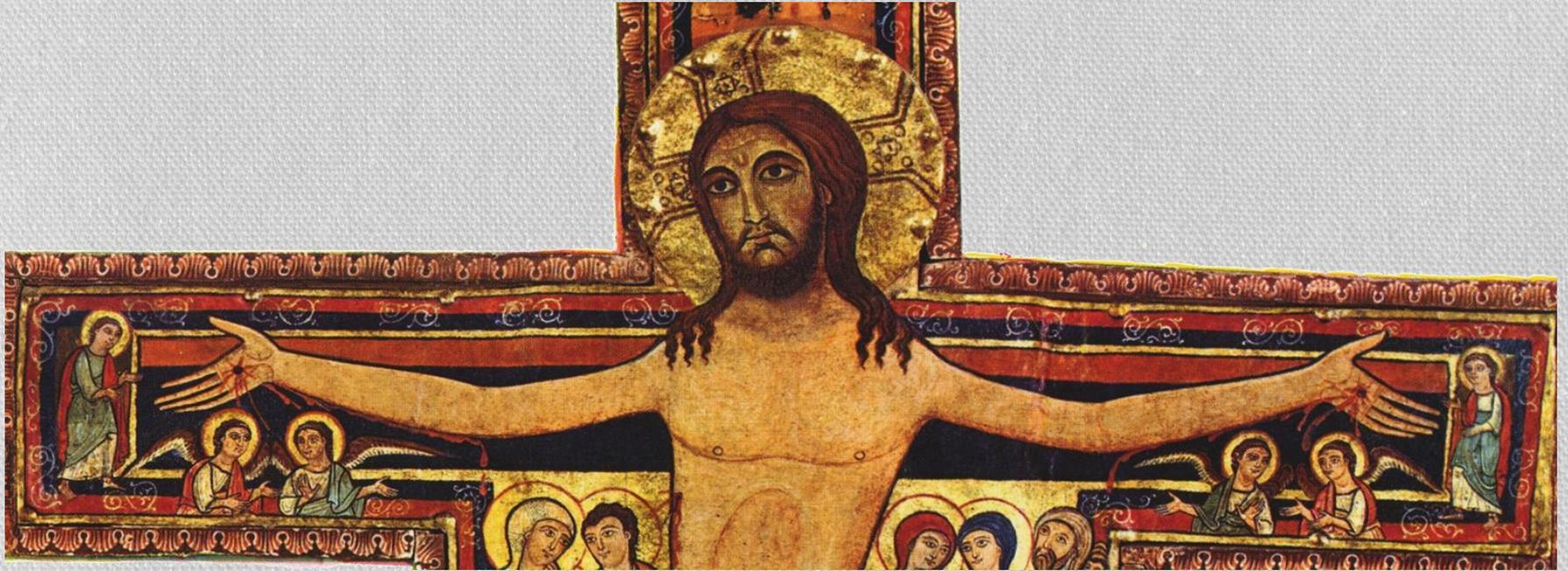


The face of Jesus . . .

- Jesus looks out peacefully with his eyes set on the Father
- Jesus' head encircled with a halo of glory – but it is not behind his head, but in front of his face – His divinity is veiled from us
- Jesus is the High Priest offering himself to the Father, willingly not by force
- Recurring theme in St. John is the “glory of God”



The hands, side, and feet of Jesus . . .



- The blood flowing from Jesus' hands runs to his elbows – brings salvation to all below His cross
- The blood from his feet and side flow down naturally to those below

Jesus' High Priestly garment . . .



- Not a rag like a common criminal, but an elegant garment of white with gold trim – here we have a priestly garment called an **EPHOD**
- In John 17, we read of the events before Jesus and disciples left the Last Supper – events which became known as Jesus (high) priestly prayer
- Now we have Jesus with two titles: **KING** and **HIGH PRIEST**

In John's Gospel, unlike the synoptics, Jesus does not kneel or pray in anguish after he leaves the Last Supper with his disciples

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is always the one in control: "I lay down my life . . . no one has taken it away from me; rather I lay it down of my own accord (Jn 10: 17-18). Though he was the "lamb who was slain", he was doing it freely – for us!

Now we have Jesus with three titles:
SLAIN LAMB, KING, HIGH PRIEST



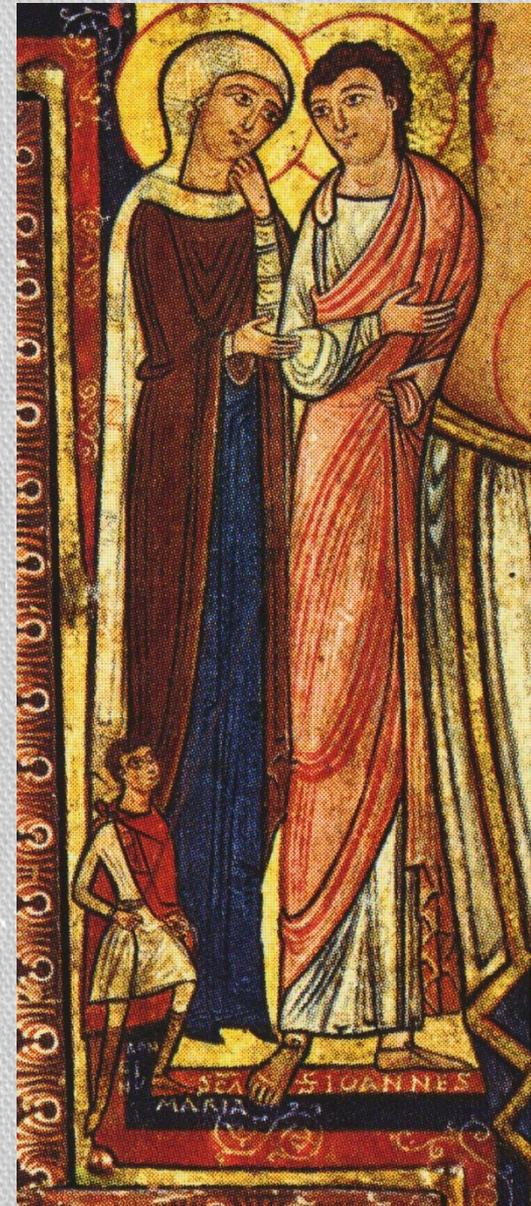


Left of Jesus: Mary, his Mother and St. John

Right of Jesus: Mary Magdalene, Mary, Mother of James, the Centurion (with his son and ??????????)

Mary, Mother of the Church

- Mary stands at the right side of Jesus = place of honor and she wears a purple tunic = Ark of the Covenant
- John wears a rose colored outer garment = love of eternal wisdom and a white tunic symbol of chastity
- Jesus gives Mary and John into each other's care and addresses her as "woman" = she is now the mother of a new community, the Church





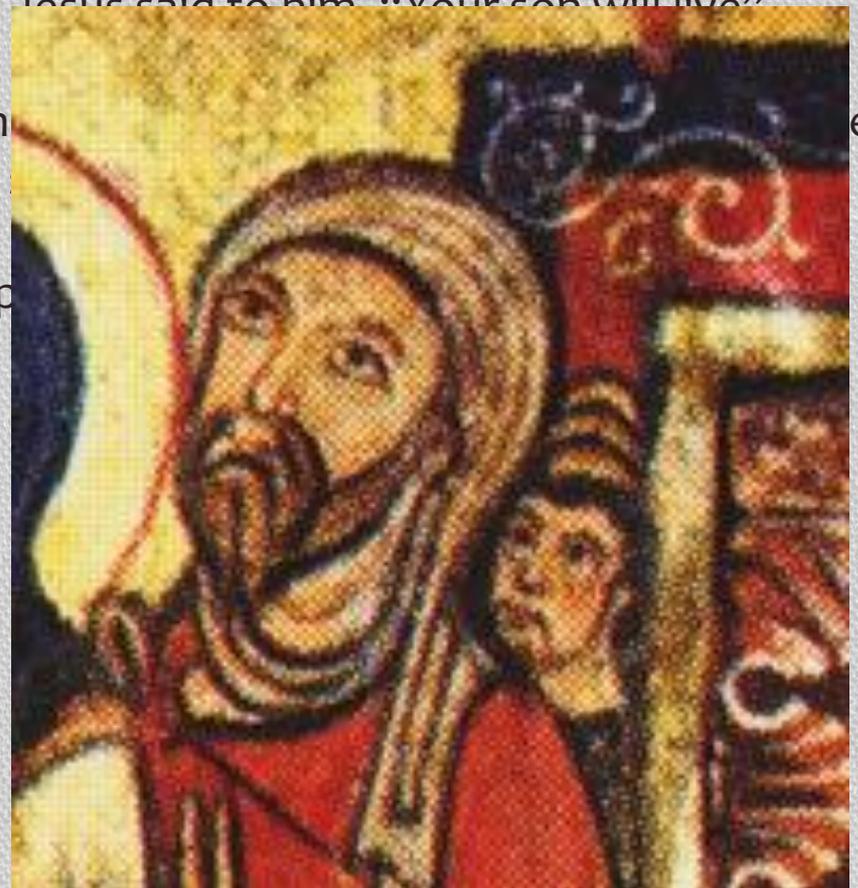
The Two Marys

- All four Gospels tell us there were onlookers looking on **from a distance**
- Gospel of St. John, however, said they were **standing near the cross of Jesus**
- We identify them as Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John)

The Centurion

- The artist remains true to the account given in St. John about the cure of his son. Jesus said to him, “Your son will live.”
- Looking over the shoulder of the Centurion, we see the face of the man whose son Jesus cured.
- Who are these people?

All of us who have
come to faith in
Jesus!



This community of faith . . .

- Nine persons inclusive of the Jews and the Gentiles . . . but also all whom Jesus came to save.
- Bright light behind the community -- Jesus is the Light of the World
- The blood of Jesus flows down upon the community nourishing it with his life blood = Eucharist
- Jesus lifted up on the Cross has begun “drawing all things to himself”





There are several suggestions:

1. St. Damian, St. Rufinus, St. John the Baptists, Sts. Peter and Paul
2. The disciples looking up awaiting the glorious return of Jesus
3. Christians called to be holy
4. Ancestors and holy people from the Old Testament
5. Other possibilities . . .

At the feet of Jesus . . .

The rooster



- It's easy to see connection to St. Peter's denial of Jesus, but . . .
- But the rooster is also a symbol for the rising sun = Jesus is the sun rising over the world = "I am the light of the world . . ."

Two additional observers . . .



- Both stand with hands on their hips. BUT
- Their dress and appearance are very different
- Left figure can be identified as Longinus – “sword man”
- Late 10th cent. tradition names other figure “Stephaton” – gave Jesus the sponge soaked in wine
- Together they refer to the two groups responsible for putting Jesus to death – the Romans and Jewish leaders



The angels . . .



Each Gospel account has a different number of angels present at the tomb . . .

Important fact . . . All of them on the San Damiano Cross are pointing to the victorious and glorified Jesus.



The Ascension of Jesus to His Father . . .

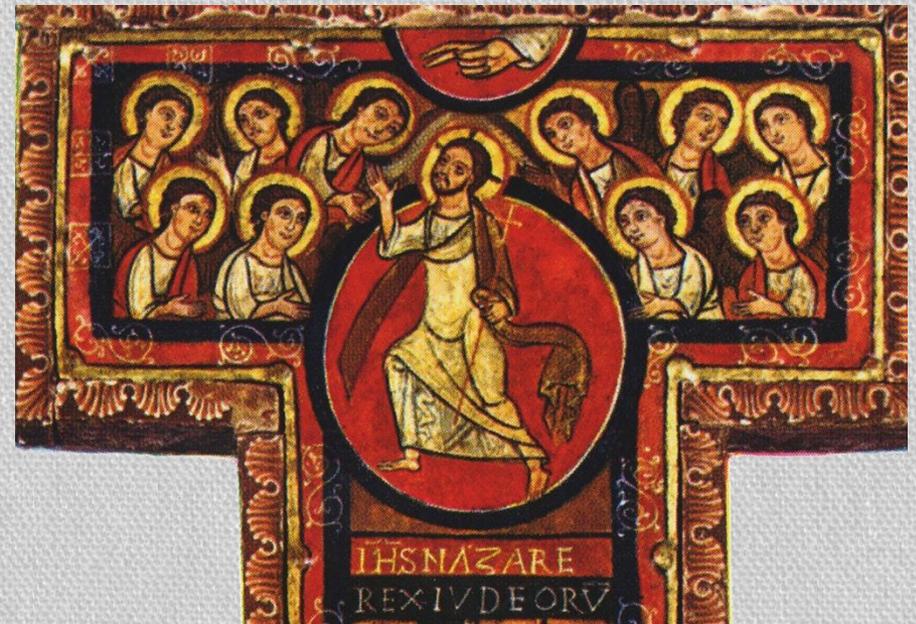
- Jesus' gold garments = victory and royalty
- Red scarf = love and kingship
- For St. John, the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus are all part of one great event . . .



. . . the glorification of Jesus in the Father's presence".

The Father –

- “No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man (3:13)”.
- “I have come from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father (16:28)”.
- “This is my beloved Son . . .”
- Father’s fingers: three drawn together = Three persons in God
- Two extended fingers – two natures of Jesus – God and man



For Francis, it ended where it began . . .

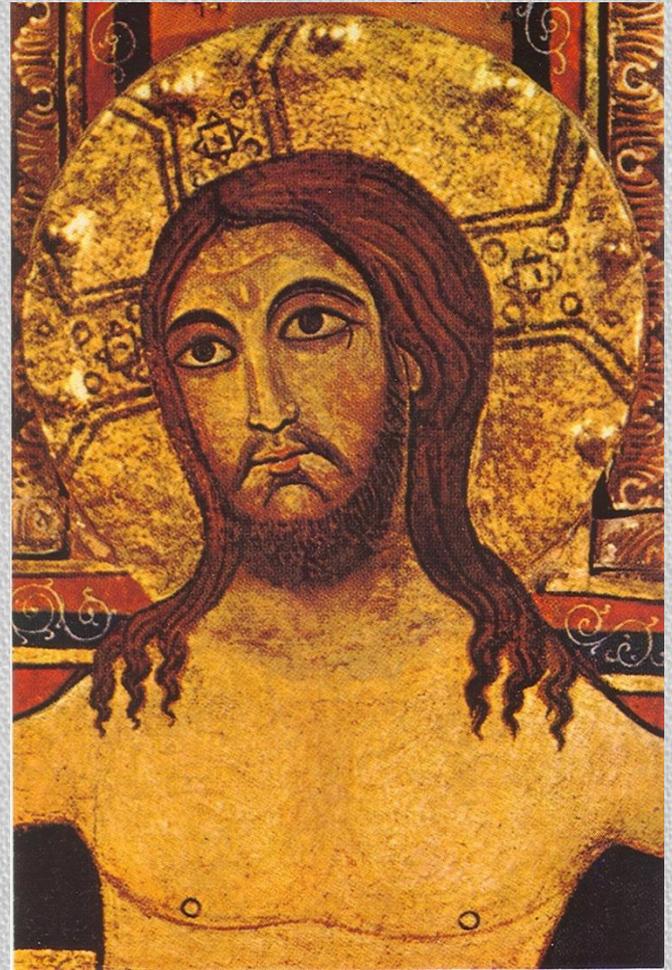
- At the time of his conversion the visual mediation on St. John's Passion account started his spiritual journey
- At the end of his life, Francis would ask his brothers to read (aural) this account one more time as Sister Death approached



The ancient chapel of San Damiano . . .



Most High,
glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of
my heart
and give me
true faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord,
that I may carry out
your holy and true
command.



TAU



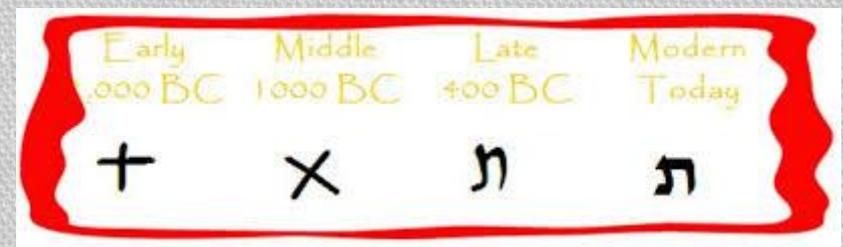
TAU – roots in Exodus 12: 1

“The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, “ . . . Every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household . . . They shall take some of it blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house . . . Seeing the blood, I will pass over you . . . “



Ezekiel 9: 4

“Pass through the city [Jerusalem] and mark an X on the foreheads of those who moan and groan over all the abominations that are practiced within it.” Do not look on them with pity or show any mercy! Old men, youths, and maids, women and children – wipe them out! But do not touch any marked with the X...”



Revelation 7: 2

“The servants of God signed on their forehead (sixth seal). I saw another angel come up from the east holding the seal of the living God. L He cried out at the top of his voice to the four angels who were given power to ravage the land and the sea. “Do no harm to the land or the sea or the trees until we imprint this seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God”. I hear the number of those who were so marked – one hundred and forty-four thousand. . . “



Book of Revelation:7:2

“Do no harm to the land or the sea or the trees until we imprint this seal on the forehead of the servant of our God.” Here is the number of those who were so marked – one hundred and forty-four thousand . . .”



Growth of penitential Pilgrimages:

Imposed

Voluntary

Brothers of St. Jacopo d'Altobascio



Description: “. . . The habit was grey or brown; they wore as a sign on their mantles or their cowl a gimlet or hammer which had the shape of the TAU.”

Cistercians . . .

Took active part in the Crusades as diplomats, organizers, chaplains, preachers and even as combatants.

Anonymous Benedictine monk getting his impetus from Cistercian writings wrote:

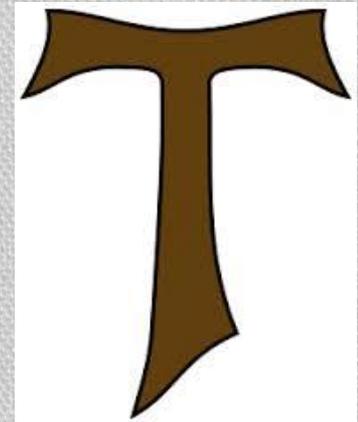
“Examine your thoughts,; words, and works accurately and see if you have sinned in these things. If you believe that you have gravely sinned, take upon yourself the sign of the TAU, the sign of those who weep and lament their faults. The TAU represents the figure of the Cross, a sign of the passion of Christ. Imitate, therefore, the passion of Christ and fulfill in your flesh whatever is lacking the passion of Christ. If you do this, the judge will pass by without striking you; that is he will pardon you.”



The TAU . . .

. . . was not considered salvific of itself, but had to be accompanied by faith and good works

. . . The TAU is an external sign of an interior sentiment of sorrow which is of the soul



Thomas of Celano

“”Happy over his intimacy with the blessed Father, Brother Pacificus began to experience a sweetness that he had never felt before. . . In fact, a short time later, on blessed Francis’ forehead he saw a large “TAU” sign that, eyes with little multicolored circles, was as beautiful as peacock feathers (Thomas of Celano, *Second Life, Part II, Chapter LXXII*)



“More than anything else, he knew the “tau” sign best, which was the only way he would sign his letters and which was drawn all over the walls of his cells. . . (*Thomas of Celano, The Treatise of Miracles, Chapter II, 3*).

Some interesting facts . . .



- Used by the early Christians especially those of Jewish origin
- St. Augustine mentions its being tattooed on foreheads
- Has always been seen as a symbol of God's protection either of a household or of an individual

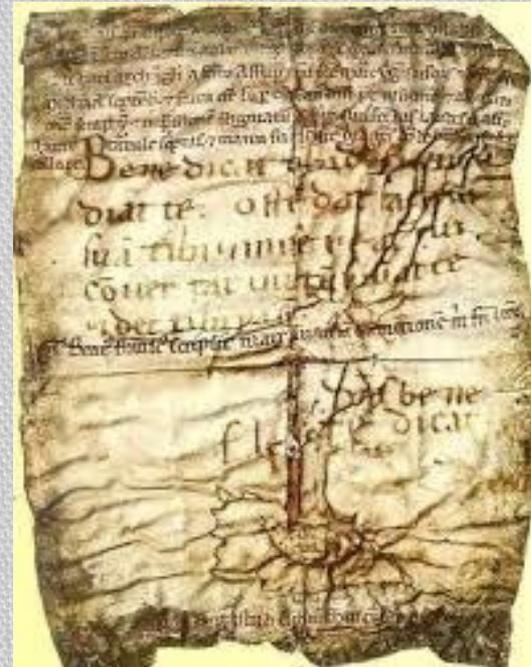
- The TAU fundamentally encompasses the essence of Franciscanism, viewed as the boundless love of God and Jesus Christ, and as the quest of peace, the love of nature, brotherhood, and respect for the world of men and things.

Francis . . .covered from head to foot with the TAU



Parchment with Blessing given to Brother Leo

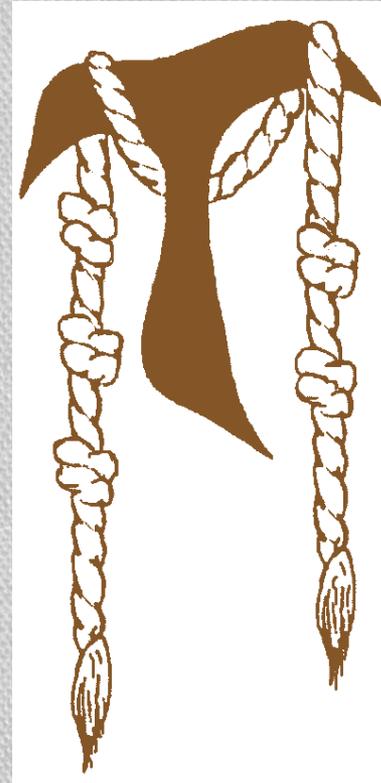
The Lord you and keep you
The Lord show his face to you
you and have mercy.
May He turn his face to you
and give you peace.
The Lord bless you!



National Statutes of the SFO: Article 16, #4

4. “The external sign of the SFO in the United States is the TAU”

“As you turn toward Christ in the spirit of St. Francis, receive this sign of the Secular Franciscan Order and become one with us (RITUAL, p. 16).”



In Francis' own hand . . .

“The saint adopted it intensely and completely, ultimately transforming himself, through the Stigmata on his body, into the living Tau he had so often contemplated, written and, above all, worshipped . . . It must remind us of a great Christian axiom: it is fitting that, more and more each day, the life of human kind, saved and redeemed by the love of the crucified Christ, should be transformed into a new life, a life given for love . . .

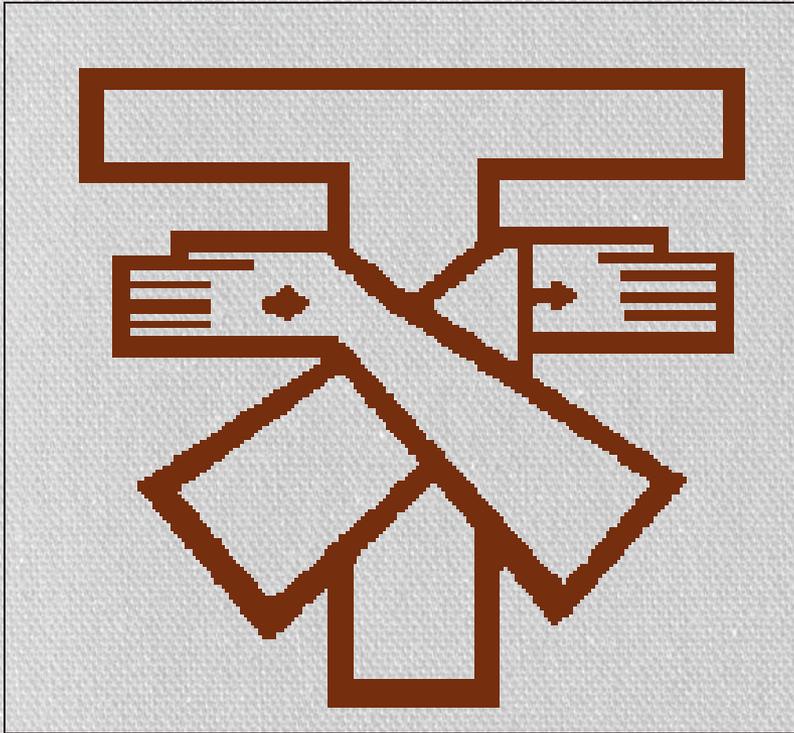
. . . . By wearing this sign, the faithful lives its spirituality and give us reason to hope, so that we can acknowledge ourselves as followers of St. Francis (THE TAU, by Enrico Sciamanna, p. 70 - 71)”.



Red = Paschal Lamb

Doorposts

Jesus

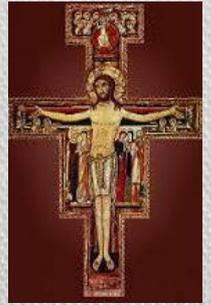


“Most High and Glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my
heart.

Give me sincere faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
cense and knowledge,
Lord,

That I may carry out
Your holy and true command.”

Leader: Jesus, Our Lord and Brother,
as we accept the call to rebuild your
house.

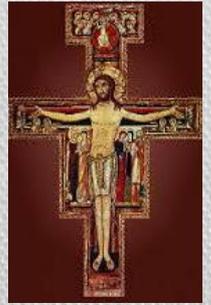


All: Give us true faith, certain hope, and perfect
charity.

Leader: *Mary, our Mother, as you stand beneath
the cross of your Son . . .*

All: . . . help us rebuild by giving birth to him by
holy acts that shine as an example to all.

Leader: All you holy angels sustain us as we rebuild God's house . . .

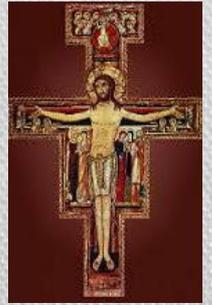


All: . . .by rebuilding all relationships between our brothers and sisters in the world.

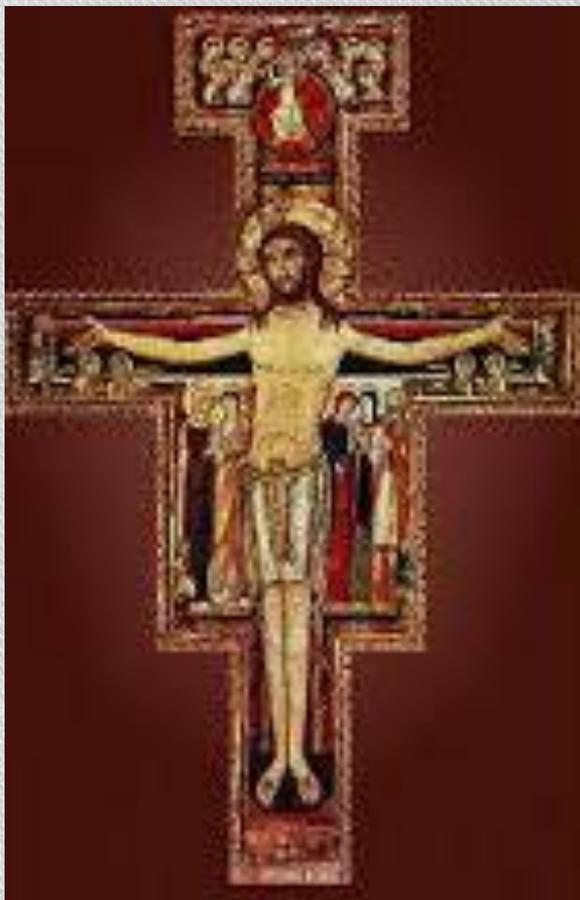
Leader: Anonymous Roman Centurian, help us rebuild the house of faith even in the midst of the wars around us. . .

All: . . .help us to speak up against death and destruction wherever we find it.

Leader: Jesus, our Brother, help us
rebuild the house of contemplation by
gazing each day upon the crucifix . . .



All: . . . Help us to rebuild His house of love by
the power of your love so that we may live and
die for love of you. Amen.



2

The Prayer Before the Crucifix



Most High, glo-ri-ous God, en-light-en the dark-ness of my



heart and give me true faith and cer-tain hope, and per-fect



char-i-ty, sense and knowl-edge, Lord, that I may



car-ry out Your ho-ly and true com-mand.

Text: Saint Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226, trans. © 1999 Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University
Music: Joe Higginbotham, b.1953, © 2012 Joe Higginbotham

Books for further study to which I am indebted for this reflection:

“The TAU”, Enrico Sciamanna, Tau Publications, Phoenix, AZ. 2014.

“The Cross Was Their Book”, Andre Curino, OFM, Tau Publications, Phoenix, AZ. 2010.

“Francis and the San Damiano Cross”, Susan Saint Sing, Ph. D., St. Anthony Messenger Pres, Cincinnati, Ohio. 2006.

“The San Damiano Cross “. Michael Scanlan, TOR, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville, OH.

“Prayer Before the Crucifix”, Joe Higginbotham, OFS, Sts. Francis and Clare Press, Mishawaka, IN, 2012.