

## R e a d e r ' s   G u i d e

*These questions can be used by an individual reader or by book clubs, small faith sharing groups, discussion groups, and religion classes, as well as by vowed religious in spiritual formation. Feel free to adapt the questions for your use.*

What was Francis experiencing in his life at the time when he had the powerful Dream? When have you had a dream that gave you a sense of goal and purpose, that called you to respond to God, that called you to some sort of conversion? How did you respond to your dream?

How did Francis' relationship with his father influence his behavior and attitudes? In your teen and young adult years, what is/was your relationship with your parent(s)? How does/did this relationship influence your behavior?

In what way(s) was Francis being tested to follow his own heart? When have you been tested to follow your own heart? What were some of the consequences of Francis following his heart? What were some of the consequences you faced when following your own heart?

What do you think God meant by saying to Francis "rebuild my church"? In what ways is the church constantly being rebuilt? What, if anything, do you think needs rebuilding in the church today?

How would you define Lady Poverty to someone who is not spiritual or religious? What did Lady Poverty mean to Francis? What does Lady Poverty mean in your own life?

What is the connection between the leper and love for Francis? Who or what are the lepers in your life?

What role do clothes play in Francis' life? Why does he remove his clothes, stripping bare? What replaces his middle-class garments? How do you think of your own clothing?

How did Francis' love of music and singing affect his behavior, his outlook on life and all of creation? What role does music play in your life?

Who was an angel in Francis' life? Why did Francis need an angel? Who have been angels in your life?

Why was Francis in need of companionship? Who came to be Francis' companions? Who are the companions in your life? How do you interact with your companions?

Why did Francis see a need for some structure to his band of brothers? What kind of structure arose from this need?

What kind of journey was Francis undertaking, physically and spiritually? What kind of journeys have you taken? Were they easy or difficult journeys? Why?

What role did Clare of Assisi play in Francis' life? In what ways was Clare the same as Francis, and how was she different? What about Clare appeals to you?

How did Francis define a sinner? How did he distinguish between piety and goodness? What do these words mean to you?

How did Francis see God in all of creation? What is your favorite story of Francis and creatures? In what ways do you see God in creation?

How did Francis explain "perfect joy" to his companions? How would you retell the "perfect joy" story for modern-day listeners?

What was the wisdom about the Dream that Brother Giles understood and shared with Francis and their companions? How can you incorporate the sayings of Brother Giles into your life?

What role does begging take in Francis' life? When have you begged for something—from God or others? Did you receive what you begged for?

What was so important about Francis' meeting with the Sultan? What lesson from the meeting between Francis and the Sultan can speak to us today?

Why do you think Francis decided to celebrate Christmas in a new way at Greccio? Is Francis' manner of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ still meaningful today? How do you celebrate the birth of Jesus in your home and community?

What were the "inconveniences" of leading a poor life for Francis and his followers? When have you or someone close to you been affected by poverty? How did you respond?

How did Francis pray? How do you pray?

How did Francis react when he felt he and his companions were departing from the Dream? How did they get back on track? When have you detoured from a dream, and how did you get back on track?

In what situations or circumstances did Francis seek solitude? How did being alone help Francis sort out his thoughts and feelings? When do you find that you need solitude? Where do you find it?

What happened to Francis on the mountaintop La Verna? In what way have you ever been marked with God's seal of approval?

How did Francis think of his pain and physical ailments, of Brother Body? Have you ever experienced pain or an illness that changed you or that caused you to reflect deeply about your life?

As Francis neared the end of his life, what did he do to ensure that his companions would continue his radical way of living the gospel? How could you or do you live the gospel in a radical way? What in Francis' lifestyle truly appeals to you?

Francis lived in an age of violence. How did he come to realize that violence mocks the gospel? How does Francis challenge us today to live a nonviolent life? In what ways do you try to live a nonviolent life?

How did Francis meet Sister Death? How would you like to meet Sister Death?

How does the life of Francis of Assisi challenge you? How will you meet that challenge?