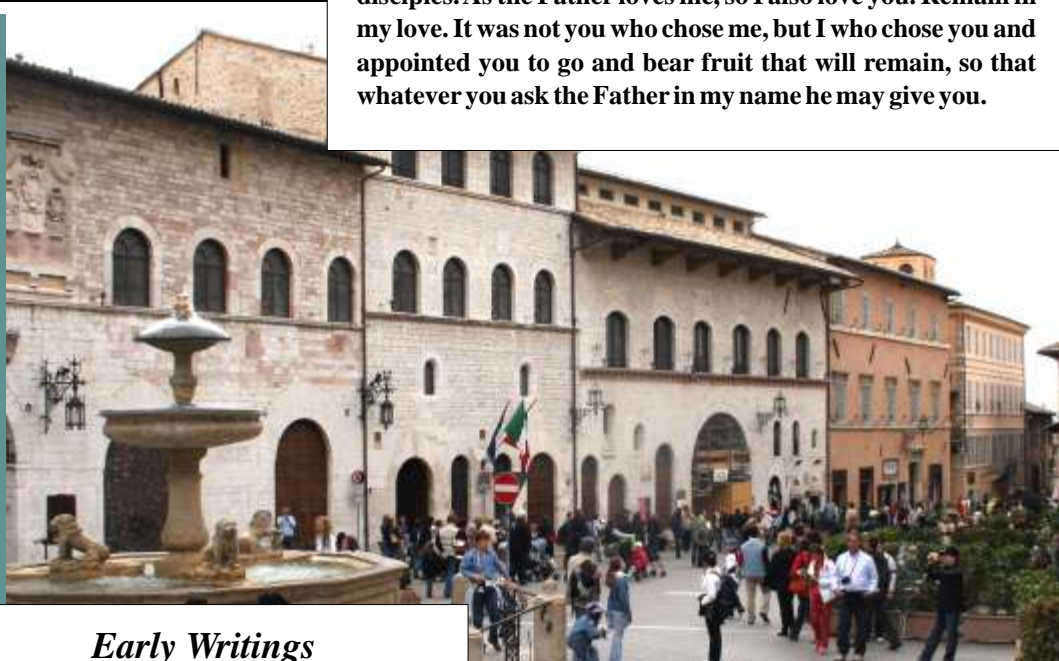


Pilgrimage Reflection

God's Pursuit of Francis on the Streets of Assisi

Considering the sheer magnitude of what Francis has inspired throughout the past eight centuries, we sometimes forget that he was once just a young man working, playing, and sometimes even getting into trouble in the town where he grew up. Like anyone who spends his or her youth in one community, Francis knew the streets of Assisi. He and his friends passed many late nights wandering through the small town, singing, laughing, and no doubt upsetting neighbors with their loud, raucous behavior. But it was also on these streets where he had some of his most significant encounters with God; encounters that would change his life forever. Francis was out to have a good time, he was not seeking God. But, as is exemplified again and again in Scripture, God sought him.



Early Writings

From *The Legend of the Three Companions*

[Francis] made arrangements for a sumptuous banquet, as he had done so often in the past. When they left the house bloated, his friends walked ahead of him, singing throughout the city. Holding in his hand the scepter of his office as their leader, he fell slightly behind them. He was not singing, but was deeply preoccupied. Suddenly he was visited by the Lord who filled his heart with so much tenderness that he was unable to speak or move. . . . From that very hour he began to consider himself of little value and to despise those things which he had previously held in love. . . . He retired for a short time from the tumult and business of the world and was anxious to keep Jesus Christ in his inmost self.

Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellmann and William Short, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder*, Vol. II (New York: New City Press, 2000), 71-72



Scripture

John 15:7-9, 16

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.



Prayer

Lord God, in the midst of the busy, often hectic activities of our lives, help us recognize those moments when You are inviting us into Your love. Bless us with opportunities to still ourselves and hear Your call to a more profound relationship with You. As Francis' heart was suddenly and tenderly filled with Your love on a street in Assisi, stop us, wherever we are, and fill our hearts as well.