

Saint Frances of Rome

9 March



About Saint Frances of Rome

Saint Frances was born in Rome in the year 1384 and was married at the age of 13. (This age may well seem young to us these days, but it was common in those days. Added to that also is the much shorter life expectancy people had back then.)

She always wanted to be a nun, but her parents arranged a marriage to Lorenzo Ponziano, who was the commander of the papal troops in Rome. She was happily married to Lorenzo for forty years and they had three sons.

Her husband was often away at war, and during this time Saint Frances was very generous to people and displayed this generosity by distributing gifts to the poor and ministering to the sick. She was a very humble woman and did not become attached to earthly goods or possessions. She spent a great deal of time in prayer. She was obedient and patient in the experience of her own adversity which included her husband's banishment and the death of two of her sons from the plague and the loss of all her property.

Coupled with her generous spirit, Saint Frances was a mystic and a contemplative, who was granted intense prayer experiences in her life. During her lifetime mysticism grew among the faithful.

What can we learn from Saint Frances' life?

Saint Frances did not waste time with self-pity or planning revenge in the face of adversity. Rather, she used her time to serve God and neighbour and generously shared what she had with others, especially those who were far worse off than herself.

Saint Frances spent a great deal of time of prayer, and she coupled this prayer time with doing good works. She reminds us that prayer and good works are two sides of the same coin and to be an authentic follower of Christ we must do both.

When trials come our way, let us use that time to pray for others, share what we have with them and help them in their need.

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Collect

O God, who have given us in Saint Frances of Rome a singular model of both married and monastic life, grant us perseverance in your service, that in every circumstance of life we may see and follow you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Matthew 18:21-35

To be forgiven, you must forgive

Peter went up to Jesus and said,
'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me?
As often as seven times?'

Jesus answered,
'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.

'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt.

At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt.

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Now as this servant went out,
he happened to meet a fellow servant
who owed him one hundred denarii;
and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him.

“Pay what you owe me” he said.

His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying,
“Give me time and I will pay you.”

But the other would not agree;

on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt.

His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened,
and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him.

Then the master sent for him.

“You wicked servant,” he said

“I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me.

Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?”

And in his anger

the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.

And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you

unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.’

Antiphon

Lord, who may abide in your tent,

and dwell on your holy mountain?

Whoever walks without fault and does what is just.

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Hymn for the Memorial of Saint Frances of Rome

Saint Frances of Rome,
you show us how we
can serve God and neighbour too:
you combined a life of prayer
with great works of charity,
living with sincerity.

Saint Frances of Rome,
help us follow Christ
living in humility:
we will give our time to care
for the sick and for the poor,
sharing our great treasure store.

Saint Frances of Rome,
you remind us that
possessions will stay behind
on the day when the Lord calls
us to leave this mortal way,
forever with Him to stay.

Text: Chris deSilva and Alessio Loiacono

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