

San Damiano

On the outskirts of Assisi, halfway down the hillside to the plain, is the church of San Damiano. We walked there for mass and the first of two visits. It is a good mile or so down the mountain.

San Damiano



San Damiano



San Damiano

In 1205 Francis prayed before the crucifix in this dilapidated wayside church. Sources report that Christ spoke to Francis from the cross, saying: "Francis, go, rebuild My

San Damiano

house.”



San Damiano

If you look closely at the stonework, you can see the outline of the original Church.

Francis restored this church in 1206 begging stones on the streets of Assisi. But he did more than just stonework. The original church entered at a much higher level than the current Church. When one approached the apse, you walked up 7 or 8 steps to the altar area. On the sides you went down about 6 steps to the crypt. Francis, and his helpers lowered the floor of the entire Church to the level of the crypt and put the altar there.

In 1212 Francis brought Clare to San Damiano. It was here in 1225 that Francis composed *The Canticle of Creatures*.

Unfortunately, you are no longer able to take pictures in the sanctuary.



San Damiano

The convento garden.



San Damiano

The role of the cross is central to Francis' conversion. His experience at San Damiano was critical in this development.

San Damiano



San Damiano

San Damiano is closely linked with the reality of rebuilding. A strong Franciscan charism is “Rebuilding the Church” with its focus on renewing the people of God.

Eric Doyle, O.F.M., claimed that the Franciscan family has a many faceted charism: the First Order, the Friars Minor, Conventuals and Capuchins emphasize minority. That is simplicity, poverty, identifying with the poor; the Second Order, the Poor Clare Sisters, emphasize contemplation; the Third Order (regular-TOR friars, non-cloistered Franciscan religious sisters, and the Secular Franciscans) emphasize conversion. Each branch of the Franciscan family rebuilds the church from its emphasized focus, always aware of the influence the other dimensions of the charism exert on the rebuilding process.

San Damiano



San Damiano

San Damiano marked the beginning of Francis' journey; La Verna, its culmination. What does it mean for you to discover the crucified Christ?

Francis stayed at San Damiano in 1224 for more than 50 days. He was wracked with pain while living in a cell made of mats and infested with mice, which annoyed him day and night. Yet through his pain and blindness, he composed his *Canticle of Creatures*, the first recognized piece of Italian literature. What does this say to you about pain in your own life?

What are your rebuilding tools?

