

**FRANCIS “DESPOILS HIMSELF”:** One day, his father gone, Francis returned home and ordered the servants to prepare a lavish banquet. When the guest arrived, to the amazement of all, they were the lowest human dregs, the diseased and beggars. They swarmed the house, tearing it to pieces; then mocked him and spread tales of his madness throughout the city. Francis apologized to all and swung back to his former pastimes. His noble friends, trying to comfort him, invited him to a banquet. He attended, jeweled, hair curled and scented, yet his mood was grave and his guest asked if he had fallen in love. Reluctantly, he admitted, “I am betrothed to a **Lady** lovelier, wealthier, and purer than any you know.” After that he took to wandering the countryside, often knelling long hours before a cross at San Damiano, a ruined chapel. The old priest had no worshippers but continued to say mass. It was here that Francis got a call: **“Repair my house, which as you see is falling into ruins!”**

Francis immediately returned to his father’s house, who was away. He ordered a servant to bring the best mount and Francis packed two saddlebags with the choicest stuff in his father’s stock and then sold everything along with the horse. Returning to San Damiano, Francis presented the gold to the old priest, saying they could now rebuild the ruined chapel. When the priest learned how he had obtained the gold, he threw it on the ground. Francis picked it up and placed it on the windowsill. The old priest said that it could stay there for he would never use the ill-gotten gains.

Francis again began wandering the countryside, staying in caves. One day he decide to return to Assisi, bearded, barefoot, clothes dirty. The crowd recognized him, called him a madman, and flung stones at him. His father ordered the servants to seize him and locked in a room. When he finally escaped, he made his way to Rome. In St. Peter’s Square, the extravagance of the church along side the crowds of diseased, crippled, despairing beggars, bothered him, this was not the love of the Christ he knew and desired to serve. **Christlike poverty** was his chosen **Lady** and he her dedicated knight, he wrote a poem: *Lord Christ have pity on me and on my **Lady Poverty**, for without her I cannot rest; have pity on her, Queen of all virtues, now seated, forsaken, on a dunghill.*

On his return home, he passed by a leper, revulsion gripped him, but then he turned, knelt in the dust, **kissed** the man’s hand, asked his forgiveness, begging him to pray for him. His father heard he was back and filed a lawsuit for the things he stole. When the civic leaders investigated and found the money still on the old priest’s windowsill, they turned the matter over to the local bishop, who ordered father and son to appear at his palace. As the crowd watched, the bishop ruled in his father’s favor and ordered Francis to return the gold. Francis had brought the money in his pouch and threw it on the floor and then **stripped himself** of his clothes before all, saying, **“These clothes are not mine. They were given to me. Now, I tell you that I have a Father in Heaven and none other.”** The bishop ordered a tunic to be put on him. His father picked up the coins and left before the jeering crowd.

Francis began rebuilding San Damiano and many other ruined chapels. Unshod, in a ragged tunic, he begged for materials. He never touched money again. He nursed lepers, his **touch** and prayer eased them. Then he heard a sermon, Jesus commanded his disciples: “Go to the lost sheep...say, ‘the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers...freely ye received, freely give. Provide neither gold...nor script for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.” Francis took this to heart. He was to go forth and preach about **Christ** and the **Lady Poverty**. He gained many followers. Unshod, they wore a shepherd’s tunic, preached God’s word of love and repentance, serving the poor cheerfully, and lived in **absolute poverty**, working for their food. They were to forget the words “to have” and “to get.” Francis believed that the least possession ended by possessing the possessor. They were to **LOVE AND GIVE TO ALL WHOM THEY MEET**, especially the poor and outcast, imitating Christ, **there was no other way!**

**“LOVE IS PRAYER!” TO RELIEVE LADY POVERTY, PRAY 3 TO 4 HOURS DAILY. (MED. 6.2.14/CARDS 17, 28)**

*A Message from the Queen of Hearts and Souls*  
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INSPIRED BY READERS DIGEST: ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI BY E. M. ALMEIDINGEN

**Card 35: Our Lady of Medjugorje Calls Us to Love All as Her Son in Us!**

**St. Francis of Assisi—The Apostle of Christ’s Love**

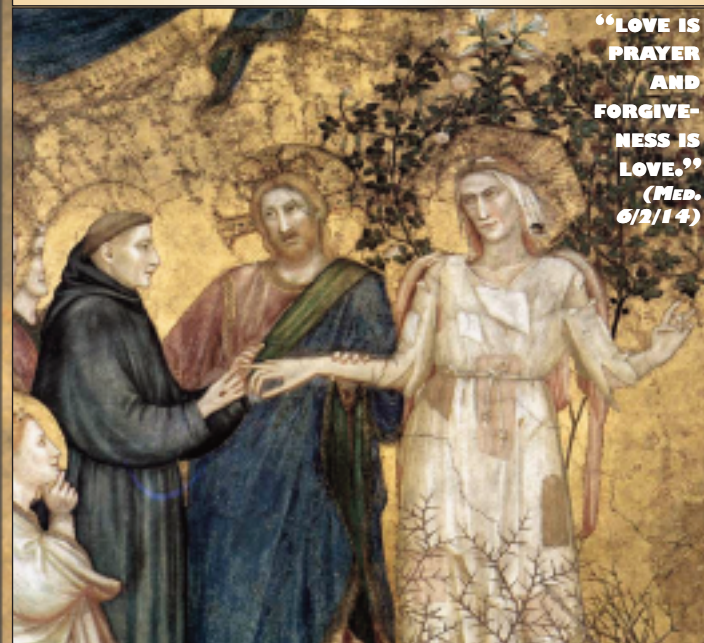
**ST. FRANCIS “DESPOILS HIMSELF” TO LADY POVERTY**  
**Give Love to All Those You Meet—Touch the Flesh of Christ!**

**ST. FRANCIS: THE MAN WHO KNEW THE TRUTH!**

**“THE WORD BECAME OUR FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US. WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, THE GLORY OF THE ONE AND ONLY, WHO CAME FROM THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.”**  
(Jn 1: 14)

**WE ARE CHRIST’S FLESH, HE IS OURS! TO TOUCH CHRIST, TOUCH ANOTHER; TO TOUCH ANOTHER WITH CHRIST, TOUCH THEM WITH YOURSELF!!**

**FRANCIS MEETS LADY POVERTY—OUR LADY OF ASHES**

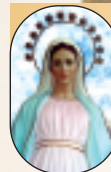


**“LOVE IS PRAYER AND FORGIVENESS IS LOVE.”**  
(MED. 6/2/14)

**“DEAR CHILDREN:** I am here among you as a mother who desires to help you to come to know the **TRUTH**. While I lived your life on earth, I had knowledge of the truth, and by this alone, a piece of Heaven on earth. That is why I desire the same of you, my children. The Heavenly Father desires pure hearts filled with the knowledge of the truth. **HE DESIRES FOR YOU TO LOVE ALL THOSE WHOM YOU MEET, AS I ALSO LOVE MY SON IN ALL OF YOU.** This is the beginning of coming to know the **TRUTH**” (Med. 1.2.15).

**JESUS, WHO WAS FROM THE BEGINNING, WHICH MANY HANDS TOUCHED—GAVE THIS MESSAGE: GOD IS LIGHT; IF WE WALK IN HIS LIGHT, WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, KNOW THE TRUTH, AND PASS FROM DEATH TO LIFE. LOVE NOT THE WORLD OR ANYTHING IN IT. IF ANYONE LOVES THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM. FOR THE WORLD IS PASSING.**  
(1 Jn./card 18)

**LADY POVERTY HAS BEEN BEGGING THE CHURCH TO LOVE AND PRAY SINCE 1981 FROM MEDJUGORJE. SHE IS STILL BEGGING TODAY! (CARDS 15, ALL).**



**“MY CHILDREN:** Many false truths are being offered to you. You will overcome them with a heart cleansed by fasting, prayer, penance, and the Gospel. This is the only **TRUTH** and it is the truth which my Son left you; you do not need to examine it much: What is asked of you, as I also have done, is to **LOVE AND TO GIVE**. If you love, your heart will be a home for my Son and me and the words of my Son will be the guiding light in your life. My children, I will make use of you, **APOSTLES OF LOVE**, to help **all** of my children to come to know the **TRUTH**. My children, **I have always prayed for the Church of my Son, and so I ask the same of you.** Pray that your shepherds may come to shine forth with the **LOVE OF MY SON**. Thank you” (Med. 1/2/15).



**POPE FRANCIS: "THE CHURCH MUST DESPOIL HERSELF OF WORLDLINESS!"  
ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI "DESPOILS HIMSELF" TO LADY POVERTY**

**POPE FRANCIS** (10/4/14) visited Assisi, Italy, the site where St. Francis, his namesake, "despoiled himself" of his riches to embrace **Christ** and **Lady Poverty**. His messages are condensed below. The first was off the cuff, the second was his prepared text.

**"IN THE MEDIA**, they fancied that the Pope will go to Assisi to 'despoil the Church!' Of what will he despoil the Church? He will despoil the habits of the Bishops, of the Cardinals; he will despoil himself! This is a good occasion to invite the **Church to despoil herself**. All of us are the Church! **All from the first one baptized**, we are all the Church, and we must all go on the path of Jesus, who, Himself, followed the way of despoliation. He became a slave, a servant; he willed to be humiliated unto the Cross. If we want to be **Christians**, there is no other way!

"They say—can we not make a Christianity that is a bit more human, without the Cross, without Jesus, without despoliation? In this way, we will become pastry Christians, like beautiful cakes, like beautiful sweet things—very lovely, but not Christians really! But of what will the Church despoil herself? She must despoil herself today of a very grave danger, which threatens every person in the Church, which threatens all: the danger of worldliness. **A Christian cannot coexist with the spirit of the world—worldliness that leads to vanity, to arrogance, to pride**. This is an idol, it's not God. It's an idol! Idolatry is the strongest sin!...worldliness is the contrary spirit of the Beatitudes—the spirit contrary to the spirit of Jesus. It is sad to meet a worldly Christian whose security...the world gives him. **The church must despoil herself of worldliness**. Jesus said, 'You cannot serve two masters: either you serve God or you serve mammon' (Mt. 6:24).

"So many have been despoiled by this savage world, which doesn't give work, which doesn't help, which is not concerned that there are children who die of hunger, it doesn't matter that so many families have nothing to eat...it doesn't matter that so many people must flee from slavery, from hunger, and flee seeking freedom...many meet death...These things are done by the spirit of the world. It is ridiculous that a true Christian wants to go on the path of this worldliness, which is a homicidal attitude. **Spiritual worldliness kills! It kills the soul! It kills persons! It kills the Church!**

"When **St. Francis** made the gesture here of **despoiling himself**, he didn't have the strength for it. **It was the strength of God that pushed him to do it**. We ask for this grace for all Christians—that the Lord will give all of us the **courage to despoil ourselves...of the spirit of the world**, which is leprosy, it is the cancer of society! It is the cancer of God's revelation! The spirit of the world is Jesus' enemy! **I ask the Lord to give all of us this grace of despoiling ourselves**. Thank you!" **"ASSISI IS A SPECIAL PLACE—here St. Francis despoiled himself of everything**, before his father, the Bishop, and the people of Assisi. It was a prophetic gesture, and it was also an act of prayer, an act of love, of entrustment to the Father who is in Heaven. With this gesture, Francis made his choice to be poor...to be like Jesus, of imitating Him, of following Him to the end. Jesus is God who emptied Himself, and **made Himself like us**, and in this abasement he arrived at death on the Cross. Jesus is God, he was born naked, he was placed in a manger, and died naked and crucified.

"St. Francis despoiled himself of everything, of his worldly life, of himself, to follow his Lord, Jesus, to be like Him. St. Francis' despoliation tells us what the Gospel teaches us: **to follow Jesus means to put Him in the first place, to despoil ourselves of things we have that suffocate our hearts, to renounce ourselves, to take up the Cross and carry it with Jesus**. To despoil ourselves of the pride-filled "I" and detach ourselves from the desire to have from money—an idol that possesses.

"We are all called to be poor, **to despoil ourselves of ourselves**; and for this we must learn to be with the poor, to share with those who are deprived of the necessary, **to touch the flesh of Christ!** (Christ died for all). A Christian is not one who fills his mouth with the poor. He is one who encounters

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BY FORCE**

"them, who looks at them in their eyes, who **touches** them. This is the **Christian way**, the one that **St. Francis** followed. **Of what must the Church despoil herself? She must despoil herself of all spiritual worldliness; despoil herself** of all action that is not for God, that is not of God; of the fear of opening the doors and of going out to meet all, specially the poorest, neediest, distant, without waiting; not to be lost in the shipwreck of the world, but to take with courage the light of Christ, the light of the Gospel, also in the darkness, where one cannot see, where one can stumble; to **despoil herself** of the calm that structures give, which are certainly necessary and important, but which must never darken the only true strength she bears in herself—that of God! He is our strength! To **despoil herself** of what isn't essential, because the reference is Christ; **the Church is Christ's!**

"For all, *who have* signs of exhaustion—if we want to be saved from the shipwreck, it's necessary to follow the way of **POVERTY**, which is not misery—this must be combatted, **BUT IT IS KNOWING HOW TO SHARE, BEING MORE SOLIDARISTIC WITH THE NEEDY, TRUSTING MORE IN GOD AND LESS IN OUR OWN HUMAN STRENGTHS. DESPOLIATION STEMS FROM LOVE—FROM THE MERCY OF GOD!** In this place, which invites us to question **ourselves**, I would like to **pray** so that **every Christian, the Church, every man and woman of good will, will be able to despoil themselves of what is NOT ESSENTIAL to go to MEET those who are poor and ask to be loved**. Thank you."

**THE KNIGHT OF LADY POVERTY:** John Francis Bernardone (1181-1226) was born to a wealthy merchant, Piero Bernardone; his mother, Mona Pica, was a knight's daughter. He was small, graceful, known for his poems and courteous manners, and had a strong, yet soft, sweet voice. All who heard him were enraptured when he sang and compelled when he spoke. He was the embodiment of his father's ambitions, who indulged him with extravagant clothes and jewels in order that he would appear as the son of royalty, not to be looked down upon. As a boy he heard tales of knights, who dedicated themselves to the service of a lady, and dreamed of becoming one. As a teen he lead his noble friends, rioting in the streets drunk; although he was never known to consort with the ladies.

War came to Assisi and Francis' father spared nothing to equip his son (20) for the battle. Francis was taken captive; but, oddly, he seemed to thrive in the prison walls, singing and remaining cheerful, caring for the sick, eating his revolting food with gusto. He became sick with fever and after a year was released. His recovery was slow, leaving him much time to reflect. Francis (23) still dreamed of becoming a knight. When a few of the local knights decided to come to the aid of Pope Innocent III, Francis' father arranged for him to join the expedition, again, sparing nothing to equip his son. His father's dreams came to an end when Francis took fever and returned home. After he recovered, he returned to his old self, rioting with his noble friends; but he became discontent. He loved nature and animals and withdrew, living in a cave. He began spending time with a lowly new friend, Bombarone, who repaired carts. Perhaps, it was he that first told him of his unshod, forlorn **Lady Poverty**.

NO SHOES

**THE HOLY CONVERSE:** St. Francis in despair searches the streets for **Poverty**, begging, "Show me, I beg you, where dwells the **Lady Poverty?** Where does she feed, where does she lie down, for I am sick for love of her?" But no one knows, for those in the city despise **Poverty** and hide from her. So he goes to the plains and ask some old poor men, who tell him, "If you would come unto **Lady Poverty**, put off the raiment of rejoicing and lay aside every weight, and the sins that beset you, because unless you are naked you shall not be able to ascend up to her who keeps herself close upon the heights."

Francis and his friends climb the mountain. When they reach the heights, they call out: **"Lady Poverty**, you, appointed by the King of Kings, Queen and Mistress above all virtues; admit us to your peace, and we shall be saved, that through you He may receive us, who through thee has redeemed us. If you determine to save us, quickly we shall be set free. For He, Himself, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, has desired your comeliness and your beauty" (From the medieval poem *Sacrum Commercium*).