October 4th: Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi

Gospel text (*Mt* 11:25-30): At that time Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike... "

St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today we celebrate an authentic “giant” of holiness. At age 20, a slow process of spiritual conversion began within him. The famous episode of the message from the Crucifix in the small Church of St Damian, dates from this period. Three times Christ on the Cross came to life, and told him: «Go, Francis, and repair my Church in ruins».

Francis lived as a hermit, until, in 1208, he felt called to live in poverty and dedicate himself to preaching. Other companions joined him, and in 1209 he travelled to Rome, to propose to Pope Innocent III the plan for a new form of Christian life. Francis visited the Holy Land, thus sowing a seed that would bear much fruit: his spiritual sons would in fact make of the Sites where Jesus lived a privileged space for their mission.

In 1224, Francis had a vision of the Crucified Lord in the form of a seraph and from that encounter received the stigmata from the Seraph Crucifix, thus becoming one with the Crucified Christ: it was a gift, therefore, that expressed his intimate identification with the Lord. Francis has also been called “the brother of Jesus”.

—From love for Christ stems love for others and also for all God's creatures. This is yet another characteristic trait of Francis' spirituality: the sense of universal brotherhood and love for Creation, which inspired the famous “Canticle of Creatures”.