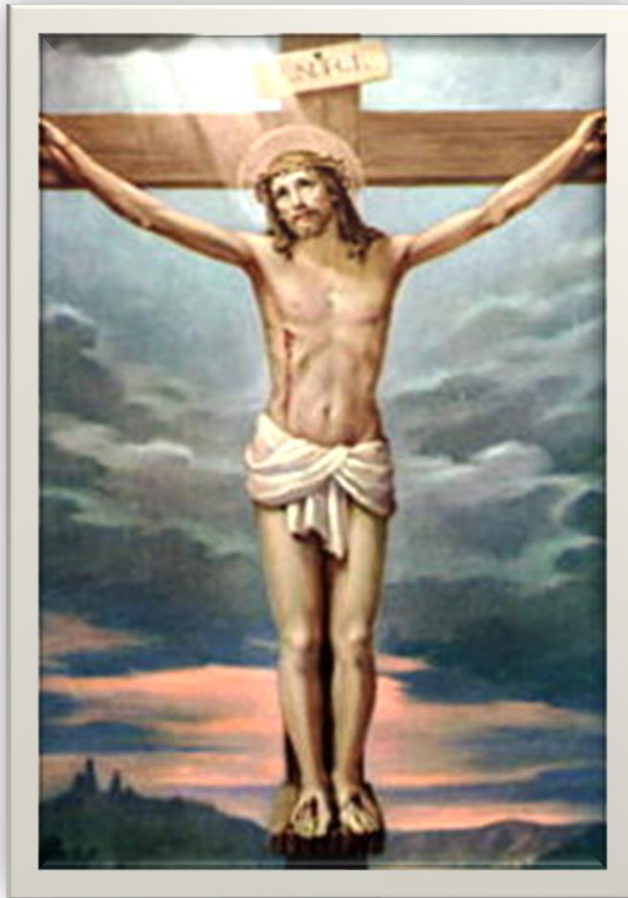


Stigmata



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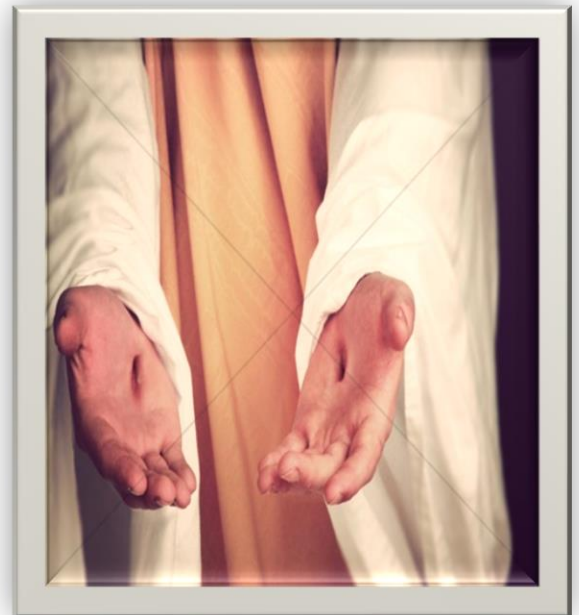
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Stigmata:

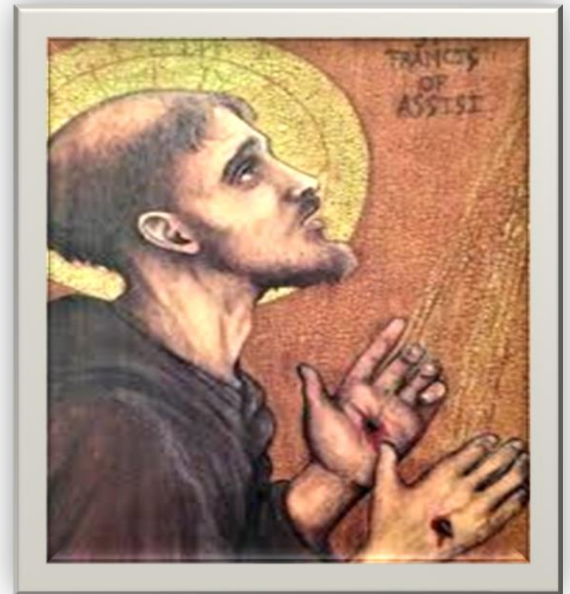
In Christianity, Stigmata are bodily wounds, scars and pain which appear in locations corresponding to the crucifixion wounds of Jesus Christ: the hands, wrists, and feet. The phenomenon of Stigmata has been viewed in many contexts by the world. Many saints and believers have been bestowed with this divine gift and have known to live a life that constituted of unbelievable miracles. Those who bear these marks are known as stigmatists. In Christianity, these wounds are considered to be a blessing and the marks are that of purity and holiness. Bearing the wounds of Christ and experiencing the agony and pain that He suffered for our sins isn't just a blessing, it is a mission of something far greater than this whole phenomena. Jesus chooses the worthy to be a part of the mission to redeem the sinners, to save their souls from the eternal fires of Hell. Therefore, the one who receives stigmata becomes the "co-redeemer" alongside our Saviour, and by sharing in the sufferings and pain, he/she repents for all of us who don't seek penance. Stigmata are a blessing that is bestowed upon only those believers who value it and are worthy and capable to face the consequences and changes that it brings along.



History has witnessed many believers to have been blessed with stigmata. However, there is no definite pattern for the same. Mostly, ecstasies bear all five, or some of the five wounds that Christ received while He was crucified. These include wounds on the hands/wrists, feet, and side of the chest. Apart from these, the occurrence of wounds on the back (resembling scourging), bruises on the wrist (that occur when tied by a cord), and wounds on the forehead (resembling those that came from the Crown of Thorns) are also seen. Some stigmatists also experience phenomenon such as sweating blood, or exhibit tears of blood. It is indeed a miracle that in spite of all the blood loss and suffering involved, the wounds never heal and never get infected. In fact, the blood from these wounds emits a sweet scent, like that of a perfume, known as the 'Odor of Sanctity'.

While these signs are quite overwhelming, some bearers have received God's mercy when they prayed for the visible signs to disappear from their bodies, and be left with what is called 'Invisible Stigmata'. Such was the case of St. Catherine of Siena. However, there have been cases where people have received invisible stigmata in the first place, where only the pain and ecstasy was felt, without any outward marks. Stigmatists are not only known for the bearing of Christ's wounds, but also because of other miraculous abilities that they display. Many are known to exhibit inedia—the ability to survive without any food and water, and only consuming the Holy Eucharist.

Stigmata is a blessing that is given to the highly compassionate and religious, so that they may know our Savior and the Blessed Mother more closely, partake in their peace and pain, and help the sinners redeem from the clutches of evil. Amen.



1. St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis of Assisi is the first recorded stigmatic in Christian history. In 1224, two years before his death, he embarked on a journey to Mt. La Verna for a forty day fast. One morning near the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, a six winged angel allegedly appeared to Francis while he prayed. As the angel approached, Francis could see that the angel was crucified. He was humbled by the sight, and his heart was filled with elation joined by pain and suffering. When the angel departed, Francis was purportedly left with wounds in his hands, feet, and side as if caused by the same lance that pierced Christ's side. The image of nails immediately appeared in his hands and feet, and the wound in his side often seeped blood. "When the blessed servant of God saw these things he was filled

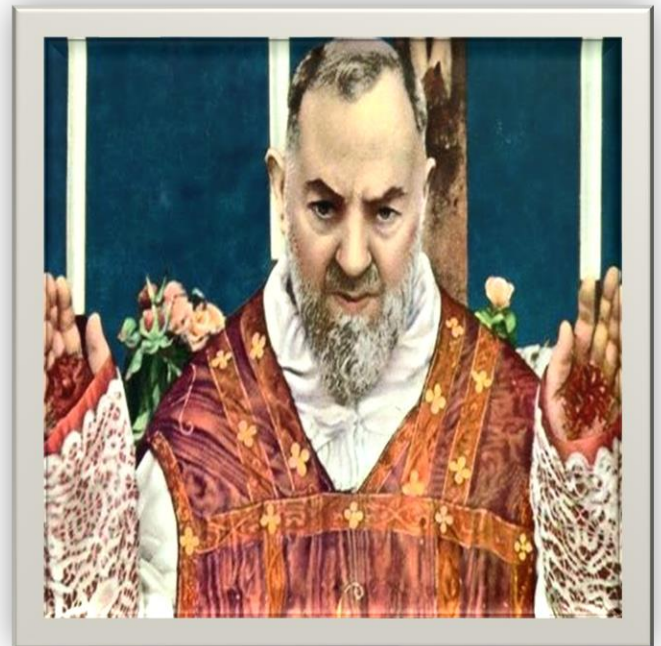


with wonder, but he did not know what the vision meant. He rejoiced greatly in the benign and gracious expression with which he saw himself regarded by the seraph, whose beauty was indescribable; yet he was alarmed by the fact that the seraph was affixed to the cross and was suffering terribly. Thus Francis rose, one might say, sad and happy, joy and grief alternating in him. He wondered anxiously what this vision could mean, and his soul was uneasy as it searched for understanding. And as his understanding sought in vain for an explanation and his heart was filled with perplexity at the great novelty of this vision, the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, just as he had seen them

slightly earlier in the crucified man above him. His wrists and feet seemed to be pierced by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing on his wrists and on the upper sides of his feet, the points appearing on the other side. The marks were round on the palm of each hand but elongated on the other side, and small pieces of flesh jutting out from the rest took on the appearance of the nail-ends, bent and driven back. In the same way the marks of nails were impressed on his feet and projected beyond the rest of the flesh. Moreover, his right side had a large wound as if it had been pierced with a spear, and it often bled so that his tunic and trousers were soaked with his sacred blood."

2. **St. Padre Pio (1887-1968)**

who lived at Our Lady of Grace Friary in San Giovanni Rotondo, near Foggia, Italy, for over fifty years, is known for a remarkable distinction unique in the history of the Church: This Franciscan friar bore the five sacred wounds of Christ for over half a century — from September 20, 1918, until his death on September 23, 1968! Nobody in Church history even comes close to this record. (The lay Franciscan stigmatic Therese Neumann probably holds that distinction for women: thirty-six years.) Miraculously, Padre Pio's wounds completely disappeared the last few days of his life. It was as if God had taken away his wounds because his mission had finally ended. Perhaps the disappearance of the wounds was also another extraordinary sign from God that they were genuine.



“On September 20, 1918 after celebrating Mass, while I was giving thanks in the Choir, I was repeatedly overcome by trembling. Later I became calm again and I saw our Lord as if He were on the cross—but I did not see if He did have a cross—lamenting the lack of response from mankind, especially from those consecrated to Him who are His favorites. He was showing that He was suffering and that He desired to unite souls to His Passion. He invited me to enter into His sufferings and to mediate upon them: and at the same time to concern myself with the health of the brothers. Immediately I felt full of compassion for the sufferings of the Lord and I asked Him what I could do. I heard this voice: ‘I unite you to my Passion’. And immediately, the vision having disappeared, I came to and I saw these signs from which blood was flowing. I did not have them before.”

3. St Veronica Giuliani(1660-1727)

a Poor Clare nun, received the stigmata after her mother (Benedetta) had offered her up to the sufferings of Christ. According to one story, Benedetta was dying and entrusted each of her five daughters to one of the five sacred wounds. Veronica was entrusted to the wound below Christ's heart. On Good Friday in 1697, when she was thirty- seven years old, Veronica received the stigmata.

Veronica survived a "plastic heart stigmatization". She confided her confessor, father Guelfi that the Lord put various signs into her heart (including a small banner with the initials J and M standing for Jesus and Maria). Upon request of her confessor, she drew these signs on a heart cut out of a sheet of paper. The confessor passed the drawing to a bishop. The bishop signed it and sealed in an envelope. Veronica died on July 9, 1727. 36 hours later, the bishop ordered her heart to be opened. The heart was removed by surgeon Prof. Francesco Gentili and physician Francesco Bordiga. The operation was witnessed by governor Torrigani, chancellor and future cardinal Fábri, Mr. Pessucci, Jacob Gellini and confessor Guelfi.



4. **St. Gemma Galgani**

An Italian woman who lived from 1878-1903, Gemma had a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart and received a special vision of Jesus. In it, Jesus appeared with his wounds, and fire came down and touched Gemma. This is her account of the experience:

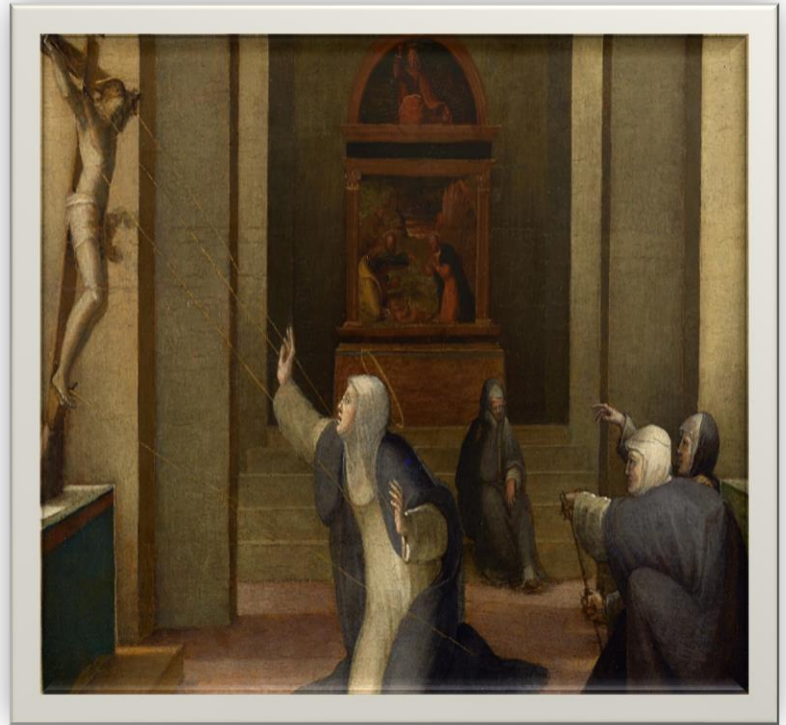
In an instant those flames came and touched my hands, feet and heart. I felt I was dying ... then everything vanished and I found myself kneeling on the ground, but still feeling intense pain in my hands, feet and heart. I got up to go to bed and saw blood flowing from those places where I felt the pain. I covered them up as best I could and then, with the help of my guardian angel, got into bed.



The stigmata continued for years up until Gemma's death, appearing on Thursdays and disappearing on Fridays. After her death, there remained on her body faint marks of where the stigmata had appeared during her life.

5. St. Catherine of Siena

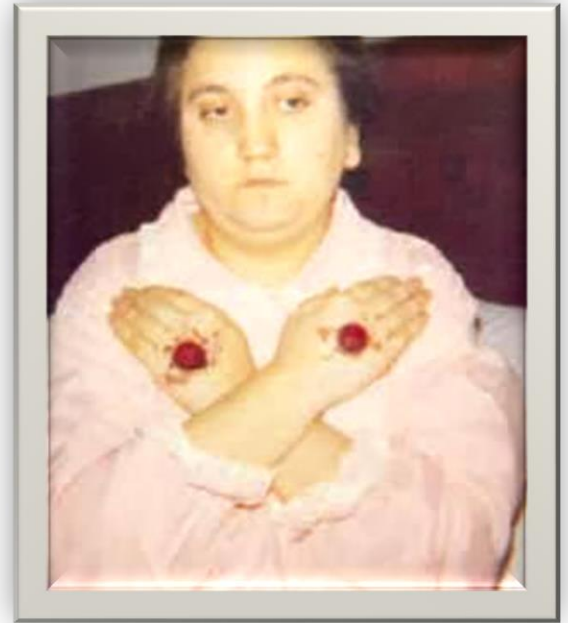
Catherine was a 14th-century Dominican tertiary who led a deep life of prayer and contemplation. I saw our Lord fastened upon the cross coming down towards me and surrounding me with a marvellous light. Then there came down from the holes of his blessed wounds five bloody beams, which were directed towards the same parts of my body: to my hands, feet, and heart. During her life she received the wounds of Christ after receiving Holy Communion, and they were at first visible. However, she petitioned God that the grace be made invisible, so that she could still participate in the suffering of Christ but remain hidden to the world.



She asked this because the visible stigmata, if made public, may attract a cult of followers who, even though well-intentioned, can distract from a person's mission. God granted her request, and for the rest of her life she bore the hidden stigmata (visible only to herself), suffering interiorly the wounds of Christ. After death the stigmata returned on her body for the world to see.

6. St. Mariam Baouardy

A Discalced Carmelite who lived from 1846-1878, Mariam experienced the stigmata early on in her life as a religious novice in the convent of the sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition. The stigmata occurred every week from Wednesday through Friday. It created problems for her in the convent, as some of the other sisters were skeptical or envious of this favor — especially since the sisters were French, and Mariam, who was of Greek Catholic background and had been born in Galilee, was thought of as “the little Arab.” Mariam would eventually be transferred to a Carmelite monastery, where she made her profession as a nun. Here is her account of the stigmata:



It seemed to me that I was gathering roses to decorate Mary's altar: these roses appeared to have thorns on both sides, and the thorns were thrust in my hands and into my feet. When I came to myself, my mouth was very bitter, my feet and hands swollen: in the middle of my hands and on my feet there were black bumps.

Her life was filled with other miraculous signs. Mariam Baourdy is a recent saint, canonized on May 17, 2015, by Pope Francis.

7. St. Rita of Cascia

An Italian nun during the 15th century, Rita did not receive the full stigmata as the other saints did, but as a single thorn embedded in her head.

St. Rita of Cascia received the stigmata five years before the end of her extraordinary life. After she was widowed and lost both her sons, she entered the monastery of St. Mary Magdalene at Cascia, where she received the stigmata in the form of the wounds from the Crown of Thorns.

One day a Franciscan priest came to preach in Cascia, and St. Rita went to the church to hear him. The topic was the passion and death of Jesus, but what really struck Rita was the crown of thorns that caused Jesus such great suffering. After leaving the church Rita went immediately to a chapel and prayed the following prayer.



Oh my God and crucified Lord! You who were innocent and without sin or crime! You who have suffered so much for love of me! You have suffered arrest, buffeting, insults, a scourging, a crown of thorns, and finally a cruel death on the Cross. Why do You wish that I, Your unworthy servant, who was the cause of Your sufferings and Your pains, should have no share in Your sufferings? Make me, Oh my sweet Jesus, a participant, if not of all of Your Passion, at least of a part of it. Recognizing my indignity and my unworthiness, I do not ask You to imprint on my body, as You did in the hearts of St. Augustine and St. Francis, the wounds that You still preserve as precious rubies in Heaven. I do not ask You to stamp Your holy Cross as You did in the heart of St. Monica. Nor do I ask You to form in my heart the instruments of Your Passion, as You did in the heart of my holy sister St. Clare of Montefalco. I only ask You for one of the seventy-two thorns which pierced Your head and caused You so much pain, so that I may feel a part of the pain You felt. Oh my loving Saviour! Do not refuse me this favor. Do not deny me this grace. I will not leave here consoled, if You send me away without so desired a pledge of Your love.

Rita is unique in that she asked Jesus for a portion of the stigmata and her request was answered. A thorn pierced her forehead and left a deep wound that lasted until death. It pained her greatly every day, but she felt more united to Jesus' suffering and believed it to be a special grace from God.

8. Therese Neumann (1898- 1962)

Of Konnersreuth, Bavaria, Germany, was one of the most gifted mystical souls in the history of the Church. During Lent in 1926, Therese received the sacred stigmata. These wounds would last until her death in 1962: a total of thirty-six years, which is one of the longest time periods that anyone has ever borne the stigmata (Padre Pio holds the record — fifty years!). Therese's stigmata was one of the most complete among stigmatics as well. Besides the five sacred wounds, she bore eight to nine crown-of-thorn wounds (beginning on November 5, 1926), the shoulder wound (March, 1929), the flagellation marks (Good Friday, 1929), and even shed tears of blood frequently. Examinations proved that there were 45 distinguishable marks of the Passion on Therese's body: 2 foot wounds, 2 hand wounds, 1 wound near the heart, 30 scourge marks, 1 shoulder wound, and 9 circular head wounds.

Bedridden for a good portion of her life, Therese relived her Passion ecstasies on a weekly basis from Thursdays to Fridays. This occurred on an average of half the weeks throughout each year. It has been estimated that she suffered the entire Passion mystery some seven hundred fifty times'.

