



Miracle of the Crucifix (ca. 1298)  
Fresco by Giotto di Bondone (d. 1337)  
Located in the Upper Church, San Francesco, Assisi, Italy

Na ke aloha o ke Akua ma loko o Iesu Kristo, e aloha iā ‘oukou ā pau!

As I prepare for Lent, a time for self-reflection and amendment of life, the story of St. Francis of Assisi (b. ca. 1182—d. 1226) praying before the crucifix in the ruins of the Church of San Damiano is again brought to mind. It is a much-told story. The young Francis suffering from what we might diagnose today as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (having been a prisoner of war and then faced with the possibility of war again) withdraws from the world. Praying in the neglected chapel, he hears the voice of God: "Francis, Francis, go and repair My house which, as you can see, is falling into ruins." He took this to mean the repair of the ruined church in which he was praying, and so he sold some cloth from his father's store for this purpose. Francis had a crisis of identity and of faith.

One of the earliest recorded saying of St. Francis is his prayer before the crucifix. He prayed this prayer in 1205/6, in the early days of his conversion:

**Most High, glorious God,**

**enlighten the darkness of my heart  
and give me  
true faith,  
certain hope,  
and perfect charity,  
sense and knowledge,  
Lord, that I may carry out  
Your holy and true command**

It is a simple direct prayer. It is a cry for faith, hope, love, common sense and true understanding in order to know and do God's will. What more can we ask?

I hope you can take the time this Lent to be still and listen to God. Perhaps following the example of Francis with a crucifix before you, you can speak directly to God surrendering that which broken in your life and asking God's guidance.

In the hymn "Abide with me: fast falls the eventide" (Hymn 662 in The Hymnal 1982), the final verse reflects our hope:

**Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;  
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.**

Lent calls us to union with God by trying to set aside that which separates us from God. This time holds that promise that we can be still and listen.

I pray that you have a holy and life-giving Lent.

Aloha ma o Iesu Kristo, ko makou Haku,

+Bob



San Damiano Crucifix (ca. 1100)  
Now located in the Basilica of St. Claire, Assisi, Italy  
Originally located in the little church of San Damiano