



FRANCIS' "DREAM"!

By Bro Mariano Di Vito, OFM Cap.

The headlines of the newspapers and television have been for a while waking us in the mornings with the same message: the economical crisis that has effected the whole of the western world and the many subsequent small or large manoeuvres to prevent the breakdown, or as it is known in jargon the "default" – the collapse of economies that have always been believed to be unshakeable.

Just as in a tsunami the wave that is formed out in the ocean that then inevitably and dramatically strikes the land bringing down skyscrapers and huts, economical upheavals end up inevitably causing havoc with disastrous consequences, not just in the high financial spheres, but above all in the everyday lives of millions of families, small businesses, the young and all those who are most vulnerable.

The bright lights of the Christmas celebrations and the decorated Christmas trees that adorn our homes and cities cannot and must not become a smokescreen that hides and prevents us from taking seriously this present crisis and to confront it with the necessary tenacity and determination. Where must we begin? And who can show us the way?

Clearly everyone must play their part: politicians, economists, busi-

ness men, governments, financial institutions etc....; and nor are we that rash as to believe that we have the solutions or can assume roles beyond our competence. We can however sharpen our vision so as to enable us to become receptive to those signs or indications that could bring about a turnabout of the situation. I am thinking, for example, of that which took place 25 years ago in Assisi and that was recently commemorated (last 27 October). The "spirit of Assisi" is held up to mankind, seen in its fundamental unity rather than its great differences, so as to re-find and re-appropriate a number of ineradicable paths: man's pre-eminence over structures, whether economical, national, cultural, religious or other; the irrepressible need of the "spirit", the rejection that wars can be the solutions to the not always avoidable contentions and controversies; the now no longer deferrable rebalancing of the many poor and exploited nations with those "super" nations and exploiters of the most part of the planet's resources; and finally the trust in man and in his capacity to listen to and be able to receive the light of the Spirit.

Benedict XVI wished to recall to our attention that 27 October of 1986 and to hold up and present

again to our confused and disheartened world the "message" of the city of Francis, or more to the point the "message" of Francis, who refuted the "message" of the supremacy of money and power and indicated another possible road, that of solidarity, respect for creation, and the centrality of man immersed in the light of His Creator.

During the month of December of 1918, Padre Pio in making his Christmas greetings to his spiritual director, Father Benedetto, wished him that his heart may be the cradle of the Saviour adorned with flowers in which He "can rest without the slightest discomfort and without any suffering for having: 'come from the Father to come into the world' (Jn 16,28)" (cf. Letters I, no 515).

Jesus, the Son of the Almighty chose this world of ours as his home, "and came to live in our midst" (Jn 1,14). St. Francis and Padre Pio dedicated their lives in making the world, and beginning with their own hearts, a more worthy place to receive the Son of God, because – and this is Francis' "dream" – where there is a worthy space for God there are also and in great abundance, infinite horizons for man!

Happy Christmas to you from Padre Pio's heart, and St. Francis' "dream."