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## *The Prayer of St. Francis — Beautiful Even if it Was Not Written By Him!*

**an article for the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler  
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Did Saint Francis actually write the prayer that begins, “Lord, make us instruments of your peace”? Many members of the Franciscan monastic order (which takes its name, of course, from St. Francis of Assisi) apparently speak about how new aspirants are so disappointed when they discover that St. Francis might not have written one of the best known prayers of Christendom, the one often attributed to him. It begins, “Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love.”

In fact, it is most probable that he did not write it. In its present form, the prayer cannot be found earlier than the year 1912, when it was published by *La Ligue de la Sainte-Messe* in a little spiritual magazine titled *La Clochette*. The founder of that organization was a man named Father Esther Bouquerel, and some speculate that he might have written it.

During this week in which we will celebrate, and honor, St. Francis of Assisi (his feast day is October 4, and we will bless animals at the 8:45 service on Sunday, October 5), I hope this piece of investigative history does not deter us from using the prayer. Indeed, St. Francis has borne the spiritual projections of many a pilgrim who simply want him to be everything! He might not have actually tamed wolves. He probably was not a vegetarian. One of his biographers writes that he was far more interested in the proper reverence for the Eucharist than in obedience or poverty.

But, of course, his vows of poverty and obedience were real. And his proclamation of God’s voice and presence in all of creation was real. And he did inspire reconciliation in people. He was a great man, and his sainthood is worth observing. Even if we are naïve in the way we use his persona to believe good and true things about the Christian life, maybe some of the legends can be helpful.

The good thing about this prayer — like all prayers — is that it does not matter who wrote it for it to be valuable! It teaches us something holy about the Christian life, and it teaches us in the juxtaposition of so many opposites that we are called to daily.

Maybe the primary juxtaposition is between receiving and giving. The things we do for others, whatever they are, are the things we get back! When we give hurt and pain to others, we end up getting them back, don’t we? When we give love and pardon to others, then it is we ourselves who are released for love and life. The great organization, Alcoholics Anonymous, knows this truth; and members of AA know this prayer as the Step 11 prayer. So it is that we keep praying this prayer attributed to St. Francis, named as such in the Book of Common Prayer.

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union;*

*Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

AMEN.



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