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Francis of Assisi - I

Lead: In 1210, responding to the prompting of a lay preacher, Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone (informally Francesco), Pope Innocent III established the Order of the Friars Minor. Francis of Assisi had the vehicle by which he could spread his message of sacrifice and salvation.

Intro. : *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Religious institutions are social organisms. They go through periods of robust energetic growth and spiritual enthusiasm then decline

into periods of corruption and stasis, when the ideals of the faith dim and require reformation. Having preserved what remained of civilization and order in Western Europe in the centuries following the collapse of the Roman Empire, by the 11th century the Roman Catholic Church was locked in a bitter struggle for pre-imminence with the newly re-emerging and secular national states of England, France and Germany. The focus of this struggle was the authority of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome. It was a struggle the church would eventually lose, but this decline would take another three centuries and culminate in the rending of the unity of Christian Europe in the Protestant

Reformation.

In the meantime, the Church's attempts to maintain its institutional power were seen by many ordinary believers as distracting and corrupt. The faithful, particularly in the growing towns and cities, were attracted to itinerant preachers of questionable orthodoxy and movements such as the proto-Protestant followers of Peter Valdo, the Waldensians, who established themselves in the mountainous borderland between France and Italy. In such a time, the Church has often tossed up reformers to call the institution back to its roots. Such a reformer was Francis of Assisi. Next time: the Little Poor Man.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

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