

April 25th, 2020 Daily Devotional:

This is a photo of a figure that stands outside of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Guardiagrele, Italy. I assume the figure is St. Francis, but I don't have any information about the artist or the context, and Google hasn't helped me figure it out. I can imagine interpreting the man's posture in lots of different ways, but today, for me, it looks like gratitude. Arms and eyes lifted in thanksgiving.

Perhaps I'm influenced by my own memories of encountering this figure. I stood in front of him with my mom at the start of a day filled with laughter. We wandered the little town of Guardiagrele, unexpectedly meeting the most unforgettable people along the way. A kind man in a tourist office who patiently tried to answer our questions despite our complete inability to communicate in Italian. An elderly woman on a narrow little street who beckoned us into her home and proudly showed us around the simple space.

And then a self-appointed tour guide at the Cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore—she noticed us trying to have a quick peek into the locked doors as she scurried by on the street, proceeded to let us into the building, and began what was at least an hour-long impromptu tour entirely in Italian. A little while into it, another couple entered the building and unwittingly got enveloped in her tour. They were from Spain, but knew enough Italian to understand what she was saying. (We then figured out that if they told me what she was saying in Spanish, I could gather enough basics to share it with my mom in English, and we all laughed together at being captive to our quirky accidental guide and the randomness of our multilingual game of telephone.)

All this is to say, at the end of that day—and as I look back on all of its gifts—I see that figure of St. Francis(?) in a posture of gratitude. And though much has changed, for both me and the world, I'm cherishing the start of another day, filled with the possibility of unexpected gifts. And I, too, am filled with gratitude.

Let us pray:

Generous God, may this day bring unexpected gifts. May our hearts be open to receive them. May our arms and eyes be lifted in thanksgiving to you. Amen.

