

The Catholic Church was in need of great reform in the 13th century. Confusion about the Church's teaching was widespread, and many clergy members were not living a life according to the Gospel.

In response to the crisis, Pope Innocent III convoked the Fourth Lateran Council, but he still needed help to bring these reforms into practice. For that purpose, God sent him two saintly men who would change the world.

First, St. Francis embarked on a journey to Rome to seek Pope Innocent's approval of his new religious community, eventually called the "Order of Friars Minor" (usually referred to as "Franciscans" today). Pope Innocent was skeptical of Francis' initial Rule (the plan for the community) and dismissed him and his followers. Then, according to a popular legend recounted by Leon Le Monnier in his *History of St. Francis of Assisi*, Pope Innocent had a powerful dream.

*"Truly," cried the Pontiff, "this is indeed the man who has been called to sustain and to repair the Church of God." And in explanation of these words, he related how, some time before, after a day on which he had been anxiously considering the misfortunes of the Church, he saw in his sleep a mendicant supporting the Lateran Basilica which was tottering and ready to fall. Then, bending towards the man whom he believed was called to this high mission, he embraced him paternally, and unreservedly, but in words only, gave his approval to the rule which he presented to him.*

Francis' order of mendicant friars was approved in 1209 and has since had a great impact on the world through their missionary zeal and humble poverty.