

# SIGNS OF THE STIGMATA

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## Introduction

In Christian, especially Catholic, tradition, the stigmata are marks, corresponding to those left on Christ's body by the crucifixion, and said to have been impressed by divine favour of the bodies of St Francis of Assisi and other stigmatics.

In his 1896 book, "*Studies in The Thought World or Practical Mind Art*", Henry Wood identifies that the order of manifested stigmata infliction is the same as that of the Crucifixion.

The first token being a bloody sweat,  
followed by the scars of the thorny crown,  
then the wounds of the hands and feet,  
and finally the wound of the side.

Henry Wood says:

*"The first historic example which is beyond a doubt, is that of St. Francis of Assisi (Sept. 15, 1224). While intensely meditating upon the tragedy of Calvary in his cell on Mount Alverno, wounds appeared upon his body. There were five deep scars, those upon the hands and feet having the appearance of nails thrust through, and a severe one in the side which occasionally bled. These facts are attested by his reliable biographers, Thomas of Celano and*

*"Bonaventura, and also by Pope Alexander IV, who, with many other witnesses, declare that they had seen them both before and after his death. A similar phenomenon occurred in the next century in the case of St. Catherine of Siena, a sister of the order of St. Dominic. It seems probable that St. Paul's declaration, "for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," has the same significance; but of this there is no collateral evidence. Beginning with St. Francis, and coming down to the present time, there are about ninety well-authenticated cases of stigmatization on record, of which eighteen were males, and seventy-two were females. Generally the order of infliction was the same as that recorded of the Crucifixion, the first token being a bloody sweat, followed by scars of the thorny crown, then the hand and foot wounds, that of the side being last.*

*"The stigmatization of the nun Veronica Giuliana (1696) was remarkable. She drew upon a paper an outline of the images which she said had been engraved upon her heart. After her death (1727) a post mortem made by Professor Gentile and Dr. Bordega revealed in deep outlines the cross, scourge, etc., upon the right side of that organ. Other cases are also recorded of heart-marking when no scars appeared upon the surface. In still others, very severe pains were locally experienced without any marks.*

*"A young woman in Saxony (1820) was subject to stigmatic trance. She appeared as if dead on Good Friday, and revived on Easter Sunday.*

*"The stigmata have appeared sometimes in colored circles of various hues, often of blackish gray, and sometimes in rose-colored patches. In many cases the scars, and even the bleeding, would occur on Good Friday, and disappear on the following Easter Sunday. Details might be multiplied. Instances occurring in recent times, minutely recorded, and well known in medical annals, have merely been classed as remarkable or abnormal by conventional science, and thus dismissed. Intelligently to turn such herculean mental forces in the opposite and beneficent direction seems not to have been thought of, because the law of operation was not grasped. Everything strange was thought to be "supernatural," and that was a finality. Stigmatic pains and wounds were superstitiously regarded as special tokens of divine favor."*

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## **Stigmata**

There have been over 500 reported stigmatics who have displayed wounds similar to those of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The first recorded case of stigmatic wounds was Stephen Langton of England in 1222.

Saint Francis of Assisi first suffered the stigmata in La Verna, Italy, 1224.

Other famous stigmatics include Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint John of God, and Saint Marie of the Incarnation.

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## **Saint Pio of Pietrelcina**

Perhaps the most famous, and questioned, stigmatic of the twentieth century was Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (1887 - 1968) - Picture Right.

Padre Pio was declared a saint by the Pope (John Paul II) on 16 June 2002. It was estimated that three hundred thousand people attended the canonization ceremony.

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## **Classical Stigmata**

Classically, Stigmata appear at as many as five locations of the crucifixion wounds, namely the hands or wrists, feet, and side, and other wounds endured during Christ's Passion, including:

- Wounds caused by a Crown of Thorns, although sometimes this is invisible
- Whip lashings or scourging on the back
- A wound in the side, caused by a spear/lance
- Nail holes in the wrists, or hands
- Nail holes in the ankles, or feet



- Formations of the flesh in the form of nails - with the heads of the nails being rectangular in shape, and an inch on the topside and the tip of a nail on the backside, usually curved in as it struck another surface.

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## Historical Stigmatics

The following list of historical stigmatics was compiled from various Catholic sources:

- St. Francis of Assisi (1186-1226); nails appeared in his wounds.
- St. Lutgarde (1182-1246), a Cistercian;
- St. Margaret of Cortona (1247-97);
- St. Gertrude (1256-1302), a Benedictine;
- St. Clare of Montefalco (1268-1308), an Augustinian;
- St. Angela of Foligno (d. 1309), Franciscan tertiary;
- St. Catherine of Siena (1347-80), Dominican tertiary;
- St. Lidwine (1380-1433);
- St. Frances of Rome (1384-1440);
- St. Colette (1380-1447), Franciscan;
- St. Rita of Cassia (1386-1456), Augustinian;
- Bl. Osanna of Mantua (1499-1505), Dominican tertiary;
- St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510), Franciscan tertiary;
- Bl. Baptista Varani (1458-1524), Poor Clare;
- Bl. Lucy of Narni (1476-1547), Dominican tertiary;
- Bl. Catherine of Racconigi (1486-1547), Dominican;
- St. John of God (1495-1550), founder of the Order of Charity;
- St. Catherine de' Ricci (1522-89), Dominican;
- St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi (1566-1607), Carmelite;
- Bl. Marie de l'Incarnation (1566-1618), Carmelite;
- Bl. Mary Anne of Jesus (1557-1620), Franciscan tertiary;
- Bl. Carlo of Sezze (d. 1670), Franciscan;
- Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90), Visitandine (who had only the crown of thorns);
- St. Veronica Giuliani (1600-1727), Capuchiness;
- St. Mary Frances of the Five Wounds (1715-91), Franciscan tertiary.
- Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824), Augustinian;
- Elizabeth Canori Mora (1774-1825), Trinitarian tertiary;
- Anna Maria Taïgi (1769-1837);
- Maria Dominica Lazzari (1815-48);
- Marie de Moerl (1812-68)
- Louise Lateau (1850-83), Franciscan tertiaries.

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### A Modern Stigmatic



The picture above is that of the stigmatic, Therese Neumann, who, it is reported, had eaten nothing but a single communion host each day from 1922 until her death in 1962. It is also reported that she did not drink water during this period, and suffered no detriment to her health.

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