

# *A Franciscan Clarean Guide to Herbal First Aid*

Gentle Remedies for  
Everyday Emergencies



Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

*A Franciscan Clarean Guide to Herbal First Aid*

By Sister Abigail Hester, OFC

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To every soul seeking gentle care in a harsh world. May you find in the plants the whisper of God's healing breath.

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## **Introduction: Sacred Healing in Urgent Times**

In the Franciscan Clarean tradition, we believe healing is holy.

From the gentle touch of Saint Clare lifting the monstrance in protection, to the tender mercy of Saint Francis bathing the wounds of lepers, our way has always embraced care as a spiritual act. We do not separate body from soul, or earth from heaven. All of creation is kin. All of life is

sacred. Even in crisis—especially in crisis—we are called to respond with love, reverence, and simplicity.

That is the heart of this book.

*Herbal first aid* is not just a list of remedies. It is a way of walking gently in the world. It means keeping calendula in your cupboard not just for wounds, but for warmth. It means knowing that yarrow can stop bleeding, but also carry the memory of meadows and wind. It means having a tin of comfrey salve for bruises and remembering that the earth knows how to knit things back together—just like grace.

We live in a time when emergency rooms are overcrowded, access to care is unequal, and the earth itself is crying out. We need community. We need skills. We need sacred simplicity. A jar of elderflower, a bottle of lavender oil, a prayer whispered over a scraped knee—these small things are not insignificant. They are holy.

This guide is written for herbal beginners and longtime earth-lovers alike. Whether you live in a city, a tent, a tiny home, or a monastery, you can assemble a simple, affordable first aid kit using the wisdom of plants and the Spirit. Each chapter offers practical care for everyday emergencies—cuts, burns, fevers, anxiety—and pairs it with spiritual insights, healing rituals, and Franciscan reflections.

We do this not to avoid medical care when it's needed, but to reclaim the everyday ministry of healing. We do this because we are disciples of the wounded Christ and lovers of the healing earth. We do this because tenderness is resistance in a world that wounds.

Let this book be a companion in your backpack, your medicine shelf, or your heart. Let it remind you that even in chaos, love can be applied like balm.

You are a healer. You are healed. You are holy.

Welcome, beloved, to the way of sacred care.

— *Sister Abigail Hester, OFC*

Feast of Saint Clare, 2025

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## Chapter One: The Herbal First Aid Kit

### Simple, Sacred Tools for Everyday Emergencies

Before you reach for a remedy, you need a ready space. Whether you live in a cabin, a tent, a van, or an apartment, you can create a sacred little bundle of healing tools that support your

body and spirit in times of need. A well-prepared herbal first aid kit is not about having *everything*—it's about having *enough*, rooted in trust, love, and simplicity.

## What to Include in Your Herbal First Aid Kit

These are core items that blend safety, accessibility, and herbal power. Most are shelf-stable and easy to find or make.

### *Topical Herbs & Salves*

- **Comfrey salve** – for bruises, sprains, joint pain, and healing tissue
- **Calendula salve or oil** – antiseptic, gentle for skin wounds, diaper rash, burns
- **Plantain poultice (dried or fresh)** – bug bites, stings, drawing out splinters
- **Yarrow powder or tincture** – stops bleeding, antiseptic, fever support
- **Lavender essential oil** – calming, burn treatment, antimicrobial

### *Internal Herbs & Teas*

- **Elderflower** – fever reducer, immune support
- **Peppermint** – digestion, headache, nausea
- **Chamomile** – soothing for nerves, sleep, mild pain relief
- **Ginger (dried or candied)** – motion sickness, nausea, inflammation
- **Lemon balm** – antiviral, uplifting, calming to heart and mind

### *Natural Adjuncts & Supplies*

- **Raw honey** – antimicrobial, wound healing, sore throat remedy
- **Apple cider vinegar** – bites, digestion, cleaning
- **Oats (ground or whole)** – soothing skin baths for rash, itch, eczema
- **Witch hazel** – inflammation, bruises, postpartum healing
- **Activated charcoal** – emergency toxin binder (not for regular use)
- **Bentonite clay** – drawing out toxins, soothing rashes and bites

### *Basic First Aid Supplies*

- Bandages of various sizes
- Sterile gauze and wrap
- Cotton swabs and balls
- Scissors and tweezers
- Glass dropper bottles
- Small muslin bags for making poultices or tea
- Labels and a waterproof pen

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### *Spiritual Tools for Healing*

Because in our tradition, we treat the body and the spirit.

- A tiny San Damiano cross
- A candle for prayer
- A vial of blessed olive oil for anointing
- A small bottle of rose water or holy water
- A prayer card with Psalm 23 or Saint Clare's blessing
- A journal or notecard to write healing intentions or names

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### **Travel Version (Pocket Kit)**

For those on the move, consider a cloth pouch or small box containing:

- Lavender oil
- Chamomile tea bags
- Plantain salve
- Peppermint lozenges
- A small cloth and mini notebook
- A battery candle or rosary

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### **Franciscan Reflection**

Saint Francis carried almost nothing—but what he carried, he carried with great love. Your kit does not need to be exhaustive. It needs to be intentional. It is your mobile monastery of care, your little sanctuary of hope.

When you bless your kit, you bless your ability to respond—not just react—to life's wounds with peace and preparation.

“Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

— *Saint Francis of Assisi*

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### **Blessing for Your Herbal First Aid Kit**

*“God of healing, bless these herbs, these hands, and this humble kit.  
May it carry mercy, mending, and love to those in need.  
Let every salve be a sacrament, every tea a prayer.*

*Guide me to act with compassion, calm, and courage.  
In the name of Christ the Healer, Amen.*

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## Chapter Two: Cuts, Scrapes, and Wounds

### Tending the Body with Earth's Tenderness

A scraped knee on a garden path. A paper cut while writing prayers. A deeper wound while chopping firewood. Cuts and scrapes are part of our human journey—literal and symbolic. In the Franciscan Clarean tradition, we treat them with reverence. The body bleeds, yes, but it also heals. The goal is not just to close the skin—it is to bless the brokenness.



### Herbal Allies for Wound Care



#### Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

- *Nickname:* “Nature’s Bandage”
- *Use:* Stops bleeding quickly, disinfects, supports tissue regeneration
- *Form:* Powder, tincture, or strong tea (cooled) for washing wounds
- *Franciscan Note:* Legend says Achilles used yarrow to treat soldiers—today, we use it to treat the wounded soul.



#### Plantain (*Plantago major*)

- *Nickname:* “The Bandage Beneath Your Feet”
- *Use:* Draws out infection, soothes irritation, promotes healing
- *Form:* Fresh leaves chewed or mashed into a poultice; dried for salves
- *Practical Use:* Wrap with gauze or clean cloth and secure with tape



#### Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

- *Nickname:* “Golden Healer”
- *Use:* Antibacterial, reduces inflammation, speeds tissue repair
- *Form:* Oil or salve applied after wound has closed or begun healing
- *Warning:* Do not apply salves directly to deep open wounds—use after closure to assist healing



#### Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)

- *Nickname:* “Bone-Knit”
- *Use:* Encourages rapid skin and bone healing; ideal for scabs and bruises
- *Caution:* Use externally and only after wounds are clean and infection-free—comfrey closes skin quickly and can trap infection



## Natural Helpers for Wound Washing

- **Salt water rinse (1 tsp salt per cup of warm water)**
- **Diluted apple cider vinegar (antibacterial)**
- **Yarrow or chamomile tea (cooled)**
- **Raw honey (applied thinly for infected cuts)**

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## Sample Wound Care Routine

1. **Wash Hands and Breathe:**  
Begin with stillness and a breath prayer. Invite peace into your hands.
2. **Clean the Wound:**  
Rinse gently with herbal tea or salt water. Avoid hydrogen peroxide, which damages tissue.
3. **Stop the Bleeding:**  
Press yarrow powder or a clean cloth soaked in yarrow tea over the wound.
4. **Apply Plantain or Honey:**  
If needed, use plantain poultice for drawing or raw honey for its antiseptic properties.
5. **Cover Gently:**  
Use a breathable cloth or bandage. Change daily.
6. **Anoint Later:**  
Once scabbed and clean, apply calendula or comfrey salve with prayer.

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## Ritual for Healing the Wounded

**When you or a loved one is hurt:**

- 💧 Dip your fingers in herbal tea
- 🕯️ Light a candle
- 📖 Read Psalm 147:3 — “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
- 👉 Say:

*“May the Spirit knit this wound as you knit the world.  
May this pain find peace.  
May the body mend in mercy.  
And may I be a gentle witness to healing.”*

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### Franciscan Reflection

Francis once kissed the wounds of a leper, not to cure, but to connect.  
We do not rush healing. We stay with it.  
Every cut becomes holy when tended with love.

“Where there is injury, pardon.”  
— *The Peace Prayer of Saint Francis*

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## Chapter Three: Burns and Sunburn

### Cooling the Fire with Love and Lavender

Burns happen in the heat of life: while cooking dinner, brushing against a hot pan, or spending too long in the summer sun. Whether minor or more serious, burns cry out for immediate care—cooling, calming, and comforting. The Franciscan Clarean response is gentle, grounded, and guided by the Spirit’s healing breeze.

### Types of Burns (for home care)

Only treat *minor burns* at home:

- **First-degree burns:** red, painful, no blisters (e.g., sunburn)
- **Small second-degree burns:** red with small blisters, manageable size  
 *Seek medical help for large, deep, or infected burns.*

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### Herbal Allies for Burn Healing

#### Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)

- *Use:* Antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, analgesic (pain-relieving)
- *Form:* Essential oil (diluted), hydrosol, or strong cooled tea
- *Application:* Spray, compress, or apply gently with oil and carrier (like aloe)
- *Spiritual Note:* Known as the herb of peace—lavender soothes both flesh and fear.

## **Aloe Vera**

- *Use:* Cooling, hydrating, soothing skin repair
- *Form:* Fresh gel from leaf or store-bought pure aloe
- *Application:* Apply thin layer directly to burn (do not use on open blisters)
- *Franciscan Tip:* Keep an aloe plant in your home—tend it, and it will tend you.

## **Calendula**

- *Use:* Reduces inflammation, prevents infection, accelerates healing
- *Form:* Oil or salve for post-burn care (after blisters resolve)

## **Oatmeal (*Avena sativa*)**

- *Use:* Relieves itching, soothes healing sunburns
- *Form:* Oatmeal bath or compress made from ground oats and water

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## **Emergency Burn Care (Step-by-Step)**

### 1. Cool the Area Immediately:

Hold burn under cool (not cold) water for 10–15 minutes.

Say a prayer of calm:

*“God of mercy, bring your cooling breath to this flame.”*

### 2. Pat Dry Gently:

Never rub the burned skin.

### 3. Apply Soothing Agent:

Aloe gel or diluted lavender oil (1 drop lavender to 1 tsp carrier like olive or coconut oil).

### 4. Cover Lightly:

Use a sterile, non-stick dressing if needed. Let air flow as healing progresses.

### 5. Support the Body:

Offer cool chamomile or peppermint tea. Rest, hydrate, and avoid further sun or heat.

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## **Sunburn Soother Tea Recipe**

### **Internal support + external wash**

- 1 tbsp chamomile

- 1 tbsp calendula
- 1 tsp mint
- 2 cups boiling water

Steep 20 minutes, then strain.

Use 1 cup for sipping and 1 cup (cooled) for compress or mist bottle.

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## **Optional Salve Blend for Healing Burns**

Use **only after the skin has begun to heal** (not on fresh burns or open blisters).

- 1 part calendula oil
- 1 part St. John's wort oil
- 1–2 drops lavender essential oil
- 1 part beeswax

Melt together gently and pour into a small tin. Label and keep in your kit.

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## **Blessing for Burned Places**

*“Holy One, touch this wound with the gentleness of a breeze.  
Let your Spirit cool what is inflamed.  
Ease pain, restore skin, and calm the soul.  
Just as the sun returns without harm,  
so may healing return in peace.  
Amen.”*

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## **Franciscan Reflection**

Francis was a fire of love, but he knew when to walk barefoot in dew.  
We burn with life—and we also must learn how to cool and soothe.

“All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom you light the night...”  
— *The Canticle of the Creatures*

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## **Chapter Four: Bruises and Sprains**

## **Soothing the Body's Bruises, Honoring the Spirit's Resilience**

Bruises are the body's way of saying, "That hurt."

Sprains whisper, "Slow down."

In both cases, the message is clear: you need rest, care, and kindness.

Franciscan Clarean healing honors these silent messages. We treat bruises not as ugly blotches to be hidden, but as part of the body's testimony—proof that life has touched us and we are healing. In that way, bruises are icons of survival. And sprains, though painful, are invitations to pause our rush and receive sacred stillness.

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### **Herbal Allies for Bruises and Sprains**

#### **Arnica (*Arnica montana*)**

- *Use:* Reduces swelling, speeds healing of bruises, sprains, sore muscles
- *Form:* Cream, gel, or homeopathic pellets (external use only!)
- *Application:* Apply thinly to unbroken skin over bruised or sprained areas
- *Caution:* Never apply arnica to open wounds

#### **Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)**

- *Use:* Astringent, anti-inflammatory, reduces bruising and swelling
- *Form:* Liquid extract
- *Application:* Soak a cloth in witch hazel and apply as a compress

#### **St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)**

- *Use:* Nerve pain, bruises, trauma to soft tissue
- *Form:* Oil or salve (external), tincture (internal for nerve-related support)
- *Spiritual Use:* Often used for "darkness of the soul"—here it eases the pain of invisible injuries, too

#### **Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)**

- *Use:* Speeds healing of sprains, bruises, and bone trauma
- *Form:* Salve or poultice
- *Note:* Do not apply to deep wounds; good for already healing sprains and bruises

#### **Peppermint or Lavender Essential Oils**

- *Use:* Pain relief, cooling sensation for inflammation
- *Application:* Dilute well and apply around (not on) the injury



## Care Routine for Bruises and Sprains

### 1. R.I.C.E. Method (Rest, Ice, Compress, Elevate):

This classic first step is sacred simplicity. Ice reduces swelling. Compression and elevation help fluid return.

### 2. Apply a Healing Compress:

Soak cloth in **witch hazel**, **arnica infusion**, or strong **comfrey tea**, and place on the bruise or sprain for 10–15 minutes several times a day.

### 3. Massage with Salve (After 48 hrs):

Use a salve with **St. John's Wort** and **lavender** to ease deep soreness after the acute phase has passed.

### 4. Sip Internal Support:

Anti-inflammatory teas (like **turmeric**, **ginger**, or **nettle**) help the body flush out trauma and rebuild.

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## Quick Recipe: Bruise & Sprain Oil

- 1 part arnica-infused olive oil
- 1 part St. John's Wort oil
- Optional: 5 drops lavender EO per ounce

Massage gently around affected area once swelling has gone down.

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## Healing Ritual for Invisible Wounds

*"For the bruises we carry where no one sees,  
For the swelling of spirit when the heart limps,  
For the unseen sprains of trying too hard—  
We call on You, Tender Healer.  
Wrap us in gentleness.  
Restore our rhythm.  
Amen."*

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## Franciscan Reflection

Saint Clare lived with pain in her later years, yet her light never dimmed.  
Francis limped joyfully through Umbria after stigmata seared his flesh.  
We don't need to pretend pain isn't real—  
we just need to meet it with mercy.

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...

Where there is injury, pardon."

— *The Peace Prayer of Saint Francis*

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## Chapter Five: Fevers and Colds

### Tending the Body's Fire with Earth's Comfort and God's Calm

When your body aches, your nose drips, your throat burns, and your head pounds, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. But the Franciscan Clarean way teaches us this: **even illness can be a teacher**. Fevers burn away stagnation. Colds invite us to rest. And in these vulnerable moments, we are reminded of our deep need for warmth, simplicity, and tenderness.

Herbs cannot eliminate every virus, but they can support the body's natural healing processes, ease symptoms, and comfort the soul.

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### Herbal Allies for Colds and Fevers



#### Elderflower (*Sambucus nigra*)

- *Use:* Diaphoretic (promotes gentle sweating), opens pores, supports immune response
- *Form:* Tea or tincture
- *Application:* Drink hot at first signs of fever or congestion



#### Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)

- *Use:* Cooling, decongesting, pain-relieving, opens sinuses
- *Form:* Tea, steam inhalation, or diluted essential oil on temples and chest



#### Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)

- *Use:* Soothing, fever-reducing, anti-inflammatory, helps sleep
- *Form:* Tea or compress

- *Franciscan Note:* Chamomile was often used by medieval healers as a “child’s herb”—gentle but powerful.

### **Holy Basil / Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*)**

- *Use:* Adaptogenic, immune-supporting, anti-viral, clears heat and inflammation
- *Form:* Tea or tincture, especially when stressed or spiritually depleted

### **Raw Honey**

- *Use:* Soothes sore throat, antibacterial, cough suppressant
- *Application:* Take a spoonful or add to tea (not for children under 1 year)

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## **Simple Fever-Soothing Tea Blend**

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 part elderflower
- 1 part chamomile
- 1 part peppermint

Steep 1–2 tsp per cup in hot water for 10–15 minutes.

Drink warm with a blanket, in bed, and rest.

Add a prayer to each sip:

“As this tea warms me, so does Your mercy.”

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## **Comfort Care for Colds**

- **Steam Inhalation:** Boil water with thyme, eucalyptus, or peppermint. Breathe the vapor deeply under a towel.
- **Saltwater Gargle:** Soothe sore throats and clear mucus.
- **Warm Compress:** Chamomile or lavender tea compress across sinuses or chest.
- **Elderberry Syrup:** Immune support and gentle antiviral remedy

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## **A Sickbed Blessing**

“Beloved Healer,  
In this fever, may I burn only what no longer serves.  
In this cold, may I find a deeper warmth within.”

*Breathe through me as I rest.  
Knit me together again with lavender hands and holy herbs.  
And let me rise, in Your time, with renewed peace.  
Amen.”*

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## Franciscan Reflection

When Saint Francis was sick, he did not resist rest. He welcomed it as prayer.  
When Clare lay in bed, she turned her pain into praise.  
Illness is not failure. It is a threshold.  
Cross it with care and grace.

“Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Bodily Death...”  
— *The Canticle of the Creatures*  
(and through Sister Healing, too.)

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## Chapter Six: Stings and Bites

### Welcoming Relief from Nature’s Nips and Nibbles

The sting of a bee. The bite of a mosquito. The sudden shock of nature saying, “Hello... a little too strongly.” Whether we’re in gardens, fields, or forests, bug encounters are part of life. As Franciscan Clareans, we hold a deep respect for all creatures—**even the ones that bite**—but we also honor our need for comfort, protection, and healing.

This chapter offers gentle, effective ways to soothe the body’s reaction to bites and stings, using herbs and household ingredients that calm the fire and draw out irritation.

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### Herbal Allies for Stings & Bites

#### Plantain (*Plantago major*)

- **Use:** Drawing out venom, soothing itching, reducing swelling
- **Form:** Fresh poultice (chewed or mashed), or salve
- **Application:** Apply directly to the site; cover with clean bandage
- **Note:** This humble “sidewalk weed” is one of nature’s best first responders

#### Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

- *Use:* Anti-inflammatory, anti-itch, reduces redness
- *Form:* Salve, diluted tincture, or cooled tea
- *Application:* Apply as a compress or rub-in salve after plantain is removed

### **Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)**

- *Use:* Anti-inflammatory, calming for skin and nerves
- *Form:* Cooled tea compress, bath soak
- *Use:\** Excellent for children's skin and for sensitive reactions

### **Basil or Parsley (yes, kitchen herbs!)**

- *Use:* Crushed and applied directly for quick relief
- *Application:* Rub fresh leaves on bite or sting for temporary reduction in irritation

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## **Home Remedies**

### **Baking Soda Paste**

- *How:* Mix 1 tsp baking soda with a few drops of water
- *Use:* Neutralizes venom acidity, reduces itch
- *Application:* Apply thick paste to bite or sting for 10–15 minutes

### **Apple Cider Vinegar**

- *Use:* Disinfectant and anti-itch
- *Application:* Dab gently with cotton ball on affected area

### **Cold Compress**

- *Use:* Reduces swelling and numbs pain
- *Application:* Wrap ice in cloth; apply gently for 10 minutes

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## **Step-by-Step Care for a Sting or Bite**

1. **Stay Calm:** Panic causes more pain. Take a breath.  
*Say: "This, too, is part of the garden."*
2. **Remove the Stinger (if present):**  
Use a clean edge (like a credit card) to scrape it out gently.

**3. Wash the Area:**

Use soap and water or herbal tea like chamomile or yarrow.

**4. Apply a Poultice or Paste:**

Use plantain, baking soda paste, or crushed basil for 10–15 minutes.

**5. Soothe and Support:**

Apply calendula or chamomile salve. Rest. Hydrate. Tend yourself with love.

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### **Anti-Itch Herbal Tea (for drinking or compress)**

- 1 part nettle (antihistamine)
- 1 part peppermint (cooling)
- 1 part chamomile (soothing)

Steep 10–15 minutes. Drink warm—or cool and apply with a cloth to itchy skin.

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### **Prayer for Painful Encounters**

*“Holy God,  
You made the bee and the beetle,  
the nettle and the balm.  
When I feel the sting of life,  
draw it out with your mercy.  
Calm my body.  
Restore my peace.  
Let me be one with creation—  
even when it bites.  
Amen.”*

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### **Franciscan Reflection**

Francis loved every creature—but he also knew when to carry citronella!  
We honor Sister Mosquito, but we also honor Sister Skin.  
Balance is holy. Boundaries are sacred. And your comfort matters.

“If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.”

— Saint Francis of Assisi

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## 🌀 Chapter Seven: Digestive Upset

### Soothing the Belly with Earth's Bitters and Heaven's Grace

When our stomach churns, when nausea rises, or when digestion stalls, the discomfort affects everything—body, mood, spirit. In the Franciscan Clarean way, we listen to the body's signals with reverence. The gut, after all, is a sacred space where nourishment is transformed into life. It deserves tenderness.

This chapter explores herbal remedies for common digestive upsets—nausea, gas, cramps, indigestion, and mild food-related illness—using ancient plant allies, gentle rituals, and compassionate care.

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### 🌿 Herbal Allies for Digestive Relief

#### 🌿 Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)

- *Use:* Nausea, motion sickness, bloating, inflammation
- *Form:* Fresh slices, tea, candied, or tincture
- *Application:* Sip slowly in tea or chew crystallized ginger; also helpful for cold stomachs and morning queasiness

#### 🌿 Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)

- *Use:* Gas, bloating, cramps, sluggish digestion
- *Form:* Tea, tincture, essential oil (external only)
- *Application:* Sip tea after meals, or apply diluted oil to abdomen

#### 🌿 Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

- *Use:* Gas, colic, indigestion, especially helpful for children
- *Form:* Seeds chewed after meals or brewed as tea
- *Spiritual Note:* Used by medieval monks for digestive harmony during fasting

#### 🌿 Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*)

- *Use:* Nervous stomach, cramps, indigestion, IBS
- *Form:* Tea or tincture

- *Application:* Sip warm tea to calm both gut and nerves

### **Slippery Elm (*Ulmus rubra*) or Marshmallow Root (*Althaea officinalis*)**

- *Use:* Soothes inflamed stomach lining, GERD, ulcers
- *Form:* Powder stirred into water or tea
- *Application:* Best for dry, irritated, burning digestion

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### **Gentle Digestive Tea**

- 1 tsp dried ginger root
- 1 tsp fennel seed
- 1 tsp chamomile
- Optional: pinch of peppermint

Steep in 1.5 cups of hot water for 15 minutes. Sip slowly. Rest.

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### **Household Helpers**

- **Apple cider vinegar:** 1 tsp in warm water before meals supports digestion (avoid with ulcers)
- **Baking soda:** Small pinch in water for occasional indigestion (not long-term)
- **Plain yogurt or kefir:** Supports gut flora and restores balance after illness

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### **Constipation and Diarrhea**

#### **For Constipation:**

- Warm water with lemon
- Prune or fig tea
- Slippery elm
- Magnesium-rich foods
- Herbal laxatives (like senna or cascara) used sparingly and gently

#### **For Diarrhea:**

- Blackberry leaf tea
- Chamomile
- BRAT diet (bananas, rice, applesauce, toast)
- Hydration with electrolytes or herbal broths



## A Prayer for the Weary Belly

*“Divine Nourisher,  
This belly that hurts—  
holds both suffering and sweetness.  
Calm its storms.  
Release what needs to go.  
Keep what nourishes.  
May my body be at peace.  
May I digest joy again.  
Amen.”*

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## Franciscan Reflection

Francis fasted often, but he also feasted with friends. Clare grew herbs in the convent garden to ease the sisters' ailments. They understood that food was sacred, and that its passage through the body—though humble—was part of the holy cycle of life.

*“Praise be You, my Lord, through Sister Earth,  
who sustains and governs us  
and produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.”*  
— *The Canticle of the Creatures*

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## Chapter Eight: Nervous System Support

### Calming the Storm with God's Green Peace

An anxious heart. A sleepless night. The tight chest of panic. The tremble of trauma. In today's world, our nervous systems are under siege—by stress, grief, sensory overload, and injustice. But we are not powerless. The Franciscan Clarean way invites us to soothe the body with tenderness, restore the mind with stillness, and anchor the soul in divine peace.

In this chapter, we explore herbs that calm without numbing, ground without sedating, and restore without controlling. Paired with prayer, rest, and sacred ritual, these remedies form a spiritual first aid kit for the nervous system.

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## **Herbal Allies for Nerves and Emotion**

### **Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)**

- *Use:* Uplifting, calming, antiviral, helps with tension and low mood
- *Form:* Tea, tincture, fresh in water
- *Spiritual Note:* Called the “joy of the heart” in old herbal texts—a balm for body and soul

### **Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)**

- *Use:* Deeply calming, good for racing thoughts, overstimulation, insomnia
- *Form:* Tincture or tea (stronger as tincture)
- *Application:* Especially helpful during trauma recovery or acute stress

### **Chamomile**

- *Use:* Soothing, comforting, excellent for anxiety in children and adults
- *Form:* Tea, compress, or tincture
- *Pair with:* Gentle music and warm blankets

### **Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*)**

- *Use:* Calms nervous tension, helps sleep, lowers blood pressure
- *Form:* Tea or tincture, especially for insomnia from circular thoughts
- *Spiritual Note:* The vine's flower was seen by Franciscans as a symbol of Christ's Passion—beauty blooming from suffering

### **Lavender**

- *Use:* Relieves anxiety, headaches, nervous exhaustion
- *Form:* Tea, essential oil, pillow spray
- *Tip:* A few drops in a warm foot bath can shift an entire mood

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### **Simple Nerve-Soothing Tea Blend**

- 1 part lemon balm
- 1 part chamomile
- ½ part passionflower
- Optional: rose petals or oatstraw for heart-centered calm

Steep 15 minutes. Sip slowly while wrapped in a shawl. Let your shoulders fall.

---

## Other Nervous System Supports

- **Deep touch pressure:** weighted blankets, warm compress
- **Grounding practices:** barefoot walks, breath prayers, slow rocking
- **Sacred aromatherapy:** diffuse or anoint with lavender, frankincense, rose
- **Journaling or breath prayers:** helps discharge emotional buildup

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## A Blessing for the Overwhelmed

*"God of Stillness,  
My thoughts race,  
My breath tightens,  
My heart forgets its rhythm.  
Place your hand on my chest.  
Breathe through me.  
Calm the storm.  
Remind me that I am safe,  
And that You are here.  
Amen."*

---

## Franciscan Reflection

Saint Clare often lay in contemplative silence for hours.  
Saint Francis, in his later years, struggled with great emotional distress.  
Their response? Prayer, poetry, and presence.

We do not shame our overwhelm.  
We tend it like a frightened bird—gently, patiently, in the warmth of sacred love.

"Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you.  
All things are passing. God alone is enough."  
— *Teresa of Ávila* (a fellow contemplative in the Franciscan tradition)

---

## Chapter Nine: Skin Rashes and Irritations

### Caring for the Skin as the Garden of the Soul

Our skin is the boundary between the world and the self.  
It protects, breathes, absorbs, and signals when something is wrong.

When it itches, reddens, cracks, or breaks out in rash, it's calling out for comfort and care—not just from a medical lens, but from a spiritual one.

In the Franciscan Clarean tradition, we treat the body as sacred soil.

The skin, like a garden, requires tending—with softness, presence, and plants that soothe.

---

## **Herbal Allies for Itchy, Inflamed, or Irritated Skin**

### **Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)**

- *Use:* Soothes hot, itchy, inflamed skin
- *Form:* Fresh poultice or salve
- *Application:* Apply directly to rashes, bug bites, eczema patches
- *Spiritual Note:* Chickweed grows abundantly and humbly—like grace for the forgotten parts of ourselves

### **Oats (*Avena sativa*)**

- *Use:* Moisturizes and calms dry, irritated, or eczema-prone skin
- *Form:* Oatmeal bath, oat milk compress
- *Application:* Grind oats into fine flour; steep in hot water and apply or soak

### **Calendula**

- *Use:* Anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, supports healing of skin eruptions and wounds
- *Form:* Salve, oil, tea rinse
- *Application:* Use for diaper rash, cracked skin, fungal irritation

### **Plantain**

- *Use:* Draws out toxins, reduces itch, supports healing
- *Form:* Fresh poultice, salve
- *Application:* Especially good for poison ivy, allergic rashes, and bug bites

### **Lavender and Chamomile**

- *Use:* Calm skin and spirit, reduce redness and irritation
- *Form:* Essential oil (diluted), hydrosol spray, tea compress

---

### **Soothing Skin Bath (for full-body irritation)**

- 1 cup ground oats

- 2 tbsp dried chamomile or calendula
- 1 tbsp lavender flowers

Place in a muslin bag or sock; steep in bathwater. Soak 15–20 minutes. Pat dry—don't rub.

---



## Basic Rash Relief Salve Recipe

- 1 part calendula-infused olive oil
- 1 part chickweed or plantain oil
- Beeswax to thicken
- Optional: 3 drops lavender EO per ounce

Apply 2–3 times daily to clean skin.

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## For Persistent Rashes

If the rash is:

- Spreading rapidly
- Weeping or infected
- Accompanied by fever or swelling



**Seek medical care.** Herbs are helpers, not heroes alone.

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## A Blessing for the Skin

*“God of tender coverings,  
This skin that carries my story is irritated and sore.  
Touch it with calm.  
Cool its inflammation.  
Let healing rise from leaf and root.  
Let me know that I am held—  
even in my discomfort.  
Amen.”*

---



## Franciscan Reflection

Saint Francis called his body “Brother Donkey” because it was humble, burdened, and in need of kindness.

Saint Clare washed the feet of the sick and kissed their sores.

We too must care for our skin with reverence,  
Not as vanity, but as an act of holy tenderness.

“Let your gentleness be evident to all.”

— *Philippians 4:5*

---



## Chapter Ten: Grief and Emotional Distress

### Holding the Heart with Herbs, Ritual, and Reverence

There are wounds no bandage can reach.

Grief, heartbreak, and spiritual sorrow live deep in the body—behind the ribs, in the throat, at the edge of dreams. These are sacred wounds. They deserve sacred tending.

In the Franciscan Clarean way, we believe that **emotional distress is not a problem to fix, but a sorrow to companion.**

We do not rush grief. We hold space for it with herbs, prayer, presence, and ritual.

This chapter offers gentle remedies for heartache, trauma, loneliness, and emotional overwhelm, honoring both the body’s pain and the spirit’s slow healing.

---



### Herbal Allies for the Grieving and Heavy-Hearted



#### Rose (*Rosa spp.*)

- *Use:* Comforts the heart, opens the spirit, gently uplifts
- *Form:* Tea, glycerite, rose water, or anointing oil
- *Application:* Sip, spray on linens, or use in baths for emotional relief
- *Spiritual Note:* Symbol of divine love; heals wounds of the soul



#### Hawthorn (*Crataegus spp.*)

- *Use:* Strengthens the physical and emotional heart
- *Form:* Tea, tincture, syrup
- *Application:* Support for heartache, heartbreak, anxiety with chest tightness
- *Franciscan Note:* Known as “the sacred heart herb”



#### Holy Basil / Tulsi

- *Use:* Lifts the spirit, calms the mind, supports emotional resilience
- *Form:* Tea or tincture
- *Application:* Especially helpful when grief is tied to exhaustion or spiritual desolation

### **Chamomile and Lavender**

- *Use:* Restful, calming, tender companions during grief
- *Form:* Teas, baths, pillows, salves

---

### **Heart Healing Tea**

- 1 part rose petals
- 1 part hawthorn berries (crushed)
- 1 part holy basil
- Optional: a few lavender buds

Steep 15–20 minutes. Sip with intention.

Let each sip say: *“I am held. I am healing. I am not alone.”*

---

### **Grief Rituals**

- **Anoint your heart** with rose or lavender oil, saying:  
*“For all I have loved and lost, I honor the ache.”*
- **Create a grief altar** with photos, candles, herbs, and space to cry or write.
- **Offer a bath** with chamomile, rose, and Epsom salts.  
Soak, pray, and release.
- **Brew tea for someone else** who is hurting.  
Franciscan care includes emotional mutual aid.

---

### **A Prayer for Broken Hearts**

*“Tender Christ,  
You wept at Lazarus’s tomb.  
You weep with me now.  
Let my tears fall into Your cupped hands.*

*Hold the pieces of my heart as sacred relics.  
Comfort me—not by fixing,  
but by remaining with me in the dark.  
Let this grief be holy.  
Let this ache be shared.  
Let me rest in You.  
Amen.”*

---

### Franciscan Reflection

Saint Clare once held the pain of her sisters in silence, praying long into the night for those too sorrowful to pray. Saint Francis sang even when he was dying, because his grief became prayer.

In the Franciscan Clarean way, we let sorrow be sacred, and love—even lost love—become our medicine.

“Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Sorrow, who deepens our joy, when she is welcomed with love.”  
— *The Canticle of the Heart*

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## Chapter Eleven: Children’s Needs

### Gentle Herbs and Sacred Nurture for the Littlest Among Us

Children live close to the ground—closer to wonder, closer to the sacred, closer to vulnerability. Their needs are unique. Their bodies are tender. Their spirits are wide open.

In the Franciscan Clarean way, we care for children with holy attentiveness. Just as Saint Francis called all creatures his siblings, so too do we honor the littlest humans as spiritual kin—not merely to be protected, but to be cherished, listened to, and loved with gentleness.

This chapter offers herbal first aid and holistic care designed for infants, toddlers, and children. Each remedy is paired with a spiritual gesture of tenderness, acknowledging that a scraped knee or upset tummy is never “just” physical—it’s also an invitation to be held, seen, and comforted.

---

## **Herbal Allies Safe for Children**

Always use herbs appropriate to age, weight, and sensitivity. Start small.  
When in doubt, use **teas, not tinctures**—and less is more.

### **Chamomile**

- *Use:* Calms colic, upset tummies, anxiety, and sleeplessness
- *Form:* Tea, bath, compress
- *Franciscan Tip:* A warm cup with a lullaby is sacred medicine

### **Fennel Seed**

- *Use:* Relieves gas, colic, digestive upset
- *Form:* Weak tea for infants or nursing mothers
- *Application:* Nursing parents can drink fennel to help baby via breastmilk

### **Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*)**

- *Use:* Fever support, calming hyperactivity, teething relief
- *Form:* Tea or diluted tincture
- *Application:* Often used as part of nighttime blends

### **Lemon Balm**

- *Use:* Uplifts mood, settles nerves and digestion
- *Form:* Tea or glycerite
- *Spiritual Note:* Lemon balm is joy in a cup

### **Lavender**

- *Use:* Soothes rashes, calms anxiety, promotes sleep
- *Form:* Bath, pillow, diluted essential oil
- *Use:\** Add to bedtime rituals with stories and soft light

---

## **Gentle Remedies for Common Childhood Ailments**

### **Gas, Colic, Upset Tummy**

- Chamomile + fennel tea (very mild)
- Warm compress on tummy with soft humming
- Gentle tummy massage with a drop of lavender oil (diluted)

### **Trouble Sleeping**

- Warm chamomile or lemon balm tea before bed
- Lavender sachet under pillow
- Blessing and forehead kiss: “*Peace be with you, little one.*”

### **Mild Fever or Restlessness**

- Catnip + chamomile tea (cool slightly before giving)
- Lukewarm bath with a handful of oat flour
- Soft washcloth with lavender water across the brow

### **Emotional Distress or Overstimulation**

- Lemon balm tea + a quiet space with soft colors
- Cuddle + prayer
- Gentle story of Saint Francis and the animals

---

## **Herbal Baths for Children**

### **Simple Soothing Bath Blend:**

- 1 tbsp ground oats
- 1 tbsp chamomile
- 1 tsp lavender flowers

Tie in muslin cloth and steep in warm bathwater. Swish, soak, and snuggle after.

---

### **Prayer for Little Ones**

*“Holy God,  
You became a child.  
You know scraped knees and teething cries.  
Hold this little one in Your arms.  
Let every herb I give be steeped in love.  
Let their dreams be safe.  
Let their body be whole.  
And let them grow in Your grace.  
Amen.”*

---

### **Franciscan Reflection**

Saint Francis preached to the birds.  
Saint Clare rocked the sick like a mother.  
Theirs was a childlike faith,  
not naive—but open, trusting, and joyful.  
Let us bring that same spirit to the way we care for our children.  
They are not a burden. They are a blessing.

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,  
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

— Matthew 19:14

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## Chapter Twelve: Emergency Preparedness

### Packing Peace, Plants, and Prayer for Uncertain Times

In a world shaped by climate change, displacement, pandemics, and social unrest, the need for **simple, sustainable emergency care** has never been greater. But preparedness doesn’t mean panic. In the Franciscan Clarean way, it means **readiness rooted in love, not fear**.

Saint Francis traveled lightly, but always wisely. He relied on the earth, on community, and on the Spirit. In our own age, we too can carry a **sacred survival kit**—not just for ourselves, but for our neighbors. This chapter helps you build an herbal emergency bag that is **portable, powerful, and peaceful**.

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### Why Herbal Emergency Preparedness?

- **Herbs are accessible:** They grow everywhere and store well.
- **They are multipurpose:** Many herbs address several issues at once.
- **They support community resilience:** In mutual aid, not just self-preservation.
- **They hold spiritual power:** Healing in crisis becomes prayerful presence.

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### Essential Herbs to Pack

Herb	Use	Form
Yarrow	Bleeding, fever, wounds	Powder, tincture, tea bags
Lavender	Calming, burns, bites	Essential oil, dried flowers

<b>Ginger</b>	Nausea, digestion	Candied, dried root
<b>Chamomile</b>	Anxiety, sleep, kids	Tea bags, tincture
<b>Plantain</b>	Bites, stings, splinters	Fresh leaf (if foraging), salve
<b>Slippery Elm</b>	Sore throat, gut soothing	Powder
<b>Calendula</b>	Cuts, rashes, skin healing	Salve
<b>Peppermint</b>	Headache, congestion	Tea, essential oil (diluted)
<b>Holy Basil (Tulsi)</b>	Adaptogenic, immune, spiritual support	Tea

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## Suggested Kit Contents

- Travel-size **herbal tinctures** (5–10 mL dropper bottles)
- **Tea bags** (chamomile, peppermint, tulsi, etc.)
- **Herbal salves** (plantain, comfrey, calendula blend)
- **Essential oils** (lavender, peppermint – well diluted!)
- **Raw honey** in a small jar or honey sticks
- **Electrolyte herbs** (like hibiscus, nettle, or salt/sugar mix for rehydration)
- Bandages, gauze, tweezers, small scissors
- Face mask, gloves, soap, water purification tabs
- A tiny **New Testament, Psalms**, or handwritten prayer booklet
- A San Damiano cross, candle stub, or spiritual token
- Laminated blessing cards for sharing peace

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## Backpack Blessing Ritual

As you pack your bag:

1. Lay out each item on a clean cloth.
2. Light a candle and say:  
*“Let this kit carry comfort. Let it offer love.”*
3. Anoint your hands with lavender oil.
4. Say a prayer of peace:

*“God of Shelter and Strength,  
Let this bag carry balm.  
Let my steps bring safety.  
Let my heart stay open—*

*Even in disaster,  
Even in need.  
Make me a refuge for others.  
Amen.”*

---

## Franciscan Mutual Aid

Emergency care is not just for personal use.  
Keep extra supplies for your neighbor.  
Teach others how to make salves, forage herbs, and bless what they carry.  
Turn every crisis into an act of love.

“If you have two coats, give one away.”  
— Luke 3:11

---

## Franciscan Reflection

Francis met lepers in the wilderness and stayed.  
Clare faced soldiers at the convent gates and prayed.  
They were prepared—not with weapons, but with faith.  
So we pack herbs. We pack grace. We pack hope.

“Start by doing what is necessary;  
then do what is possible;  
and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”  
— Saint Francis of Assisi

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## Chapter Thirteen: Rituals for Healing

### Anointing the Body, Inviting the Spirit, Honoring the Journey

Herbs heal the body—but **ritual heals the whole person**.  
In the Franciscan Clarean way, we believe that every act of care—  
making tea, bandaging a wound, whispering a prayer—is a **sacrament** when done with love.

When someone is hurting—physically, emotionally, spiritually—what they need most is not just a cure, but **presence. Meaning. Sacredness**. This chapter offers rituals, prayers, and spiritual tools to accompany the herbal practices in this guide. You don’t have to be ordained or trained—just tenderhearted and present.

Let these rituals be simple, natural, holy. The earth is the altar. Your hands are the vessels. The Spirit does the rest.

---

## Healing Anointing Ritual

**Purpose:** To bless someone in pain, fear, or recovery with sacred oil.

**You'll need:**

- A small bowl of **olive oil**, infused with **lavender** or **rose**
- A cloth, candle, and quiet space

**Instructions:**

1. Light the candle and take a deep breath.
2. Dip your finger in the oil.
3. Anoint the person's forehead or heart with the sign of the cross (or a simple circle of blessing).
4. Speak aloud:

*"Beloved Child of God,  
May this oil carry peace into your pain.  
May your body be blessed,  
Your mind be soothed,  
Your soul be held.  
By the healing Christ,  
You are not alone."*

5. Close with a moment of silence or song.

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## Herbal Foot Washing

**Purpose:** For caregivers, loved ones, or companions in need of rest.

- Steep a large bowl of warm water with **lavender**, **chamomile**, and **rose petals**.
- Wash the person's feet gently, saying:  
*"As I wash you, may peace wash over you.  
As I dry you, may fear dry up.  
As I anoint you, may healing begin."*

- Optional: apply balm or oil with a gentle massage afterward.

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### **Candle Prayer for the Sick**

Light a candle. Place a small herb bundle nearby.  
Say the name of the person you're praying for. Then pray:

*"Christ, our wounded healer,  
Watch over [Name] in their pain.  
Send Your Spirit with comfort.  
Send Your creation with healing.  
Let every cell be restored.  
Let every moment be held in grace.  
Amen."*

---

### **Tea as Eucharist**

When you share tea with someone in recovery, let it be a sacred act.

- Brew with intention.
- Hold the cup in both hands.
- Say: *"This is the body's comfort. This is the Spirit's peace. Drink and be loved."*
- Sip slowly, together, in silence or soft conversation.

---

### **Blessing for the Healer**

*"God of Mercy,  
Bless these hands.  
Bless this heart.  
Bless this oil, this tea, this cloth, this balm.  
May I never rush healing.  
May I never forget that I, too, am being healed.  
Make me an instrument of tenderness.  
Amen."*

---

### **Franciscan Reflection**

Saint Francis anointed lepers with love.  
Saint Clare blessed her sisters in silence.  
Neither feared pain. Neither rushed healing.  
Both made **ordinary care into sacred ritual**.

So do we.  
Let each remedy be prayer.  
Let each gesture be grace.

“Preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words.”  
— *Saint Francis of Assisi*

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## Chapter Fourteen: Building Community First Aid Kits

### Healing Together: Mutual Aid, Sacred Solidarity, and Herbal Justice

No one heals alone.  
And no one should suffer alone.

In the Franciscan Clarean way, healing is **communal**. Just as Saint Francis begged not just for his own needs but for the needs of others, we are called to care not just for ourselves but for our neighbors—especially the sick, the poor, the houseless, the marginalized.

This chapter is a practical and spiritual guide to creating **community herbal first aid kits**—small but powerful collections of supplies you can distribute in times of crisis, in encampments, at protests, in mutual aid drives, or during climate disasters. These kits are acts of holy resistance and radical love.

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### What Is a Community Herbal First Aid Kit?

It's a **portable offering of care**:

- Tailored to real needs (cold, wound, stress, pain)
- Rooted in natural remedies and people-powered knowledge
- Meant to be *shared*, not hoarded

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### What to Include (Small, Medium, and Large Kits)

#### Small Kit (Ziploc bag or cloth pouch)

- Calendula salve (1 oz tin)
- Chamomile or peppermint tea bags
- Bandages (adhesive and gauze)
- Wound wipe (yarrow tincture or herbal spray)
- Small prayer card or note of encouragement

### **Medium Kit (canvas bag or quart-size container)**

- 3–4 herbal salves (calendula, comfrey, plantain)
- Lavender or peppermint essential oil (diluted roller bottle)
- Herbal teas (for anxiety, fever, stomach)
- Raw honey or lozenges
- Activated charcoal capsules
- A candle and blessing
- Basic first aid supplies (gloves, gauze, tape, tweezers)

### **Large Mutual Aid Box (for shelter or encampment hubs)**

- Dozens of herbal remedies in small containers
- Individualized kits for menstruation, trauma, burns, and children
- Herbal syrups (elderberry, immune support)
- Cloth masks, socks, water bottles
- Info sheet on basic herbal uses
- Bibles or spiritual booklets
- Sign that says: **"Free Healing. Take What You Need."**

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## **How to Distribute with Dignity**

- Never treat people as charity cases.
- Ask about needs before assuming.
- Offer herbs with **consent**, information, and kindness.
- Use phrases like:  
*"Here's something that's helped others—would you like one?"*  
*"This is a calming tea I carry when I'm stressed. Would you like to try it?"*
- **Listen. Learn. Leave dignity intact.**

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## **Blessing for a Kit Before Giving It Away**

*"God of Shared Bread and Shared Balm,  
Bless this bundle of healing.  
May it go where it's most needed."*

*May it bring relief to weary hands,  
Peace to troubled minds,  
And strength to sacred bodies.  
Let each salve be mercy.  
Let each herb be love.  
Amen.”*

---

### Franciscan Reflection

Saint Francis begged for the poor.  
Saint Clare gave her food to the sick.  
Neither clung to comfort—they gave it away.

Your kit is not just a bag.  
It is a **portable monastery**,  
**a walking prayer**,  
**a protest against abandonment**,  
**a yes** to a world where no one suffers alone.

“What we are looking for is what is looking.”

— *St. Francis of Assisi*

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## Chapter Fifteen: Resources and Further Reading

### Learn More, Go Deeper, Love Bigger

The path of herbal healing is never finished.  
It is a lifelong pilgrimage—through gardens, forests, kitchens, grief, and grace.

This guide is meant to be a companion, not a conclusion. Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned herbalist, continuing to study, grow, and share is a sacred calling. Below are resources to expand your knowledge of herbal first aid, Franciscan spirituality, mutual aid, and justice-rooted healing.

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### Recommended Herbal Books

- ***Herbal Medicine-Maker’s Handbook*** by James Green  
(Practical and friendly for beginners)

- **Healing Wise** by Susun Weed  
(Wise Woman tradition with a strong emphasis on intuition and relationship)
- **Medical Herbalism** by David Hoffmann  
(In-depth reference for those wanting a scientific foundation)
- **Earthwise Herbal** (vol. 1 & 2) by Matthew Wood  
(Energetic, intuitive herbalism based on Western tradition)
- **Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health** by Rosemary Gladstar  
(Accessible, beautiful, family-focused healing)
- **Adaptogens: Herbs for Strength, Stamina, and Stress Relief** by David Winston

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## Books on Franciscan Spirituality

- **The Writings of St. Francis and St. Clare** (Paulist Press edition)
- **Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love** by Ilia Delio
- **Francis and the Foolishness of God** by Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, et al.
- **The Way of St. Francis** by Murray Bodo
- **Clare of Assisi: Her Life and Message** by Bret Thoman, OFS
- **Franciscan Prayer** by Ilia Delio
- **The Canticle of the Creatures** – multiple translations and musical settings

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## Mutual Aid, Trauma-Informed Healing, and Justice Resources

- **Mutual Aid** by Dean Spade
- **Emergent Strategy** by adrienne maree brown
- **The Body Keeps the Score** by Bessel van der Kolk
- **My Grandmother's Hands** by Resmaa Menakem
- **Rituals of Resilience** by Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective (BEAM)
- **Herbal Mutual Aid Networks** – check local community centers, anarchist bookstores, or online organizers

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## Online Herbal Learning Platforms

- **Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine**
- **Herbal Academy (online)**

- **CommonWealth Center for Holistic Herbalism**
- **Sovereignty Herbs (Ohio-based, trauma-informed)**
- **Herbalists Without Borders** – focuses on global herbal justice

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## Herbal Study Suggestions

- Start an **herbal journal** for each plant you meet.
- Join a **community garden or herbal circle**.
- Volunteer with mutual aid groups or houseless outreach.
- Create **zines, kits, or blogs** to share what you learn.
- Most importantly: **listen to the plants, and to the people**.

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## Franciscan Final Reflection

The garden never ends.  
Neither does grace.  
You were born to heal—  
not just with tinctures and teas,  
but with tears, with laughter,  
with fierce compassion,  
with sacred slowness.

You are a herbalist.  
You are a healer.  
You are holy.

“May God show you His face and give you peace.”  
— *Saint Clare of Assisi*

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## Closing: The Healing Continues

If you have made it to the end of this book, know this:  
you are not just a reader.  
You are a healer.

You are a companion of the poor, a keeper of the herbs, a bearer of balm,  
and a quiet revolutionary in a world that often forgets how to care.

The Franciscan Clarean path is not flashy. It's not fast.  
It is tender, rooted, barefoot, prayerful, and often unnoticed.  
But its power is in its **presence**—  
in every salve applied with love,  
every tea brewed in compassion,  
every prayer whispered over a tired body.

This book is not an ending. It is a doorway.  
Keep walking through gardens. Keep learning from weeds.  
Keep building mutual aid kits. Keep tending your own wounds, too.

And always, always, let your healing be holy.

“We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh,  
but rather we must be simple, humble, and pure.”

— *Saint Francis of Assisi*

Go gently. Go boldly. Go in peace.

And may the God of wild herbs, warm hands, and wounded healers  
walk with you always.



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## About the Author

**Sister Abigail Hester, OFC** is a transgender nun, herbalist, certified nutritional consultant, and contemplative healer. She is the founder of the **Order of Franciscan Clareans**, a new monastic community rooted in radical simplicity, ecological harmony, queer inclusion, and sacred justice.

With a heart shaped by Saint Francis, Saint Clare, and the wisdom of the earth, Sister Abigail ministers to the margins through writings, teachings, and mutual aid—bridging **herbal healing, Franciscan spirituality, and liberating theology**.

Sister Abigail's work lifts up the sacredness of every body, especially those who have been pushed aside by religious or medical institutions. Through books, blogs, and community kits, she offers a gentle, grounded invitation to reclaim healing as a holy birthright.

She is legally blind, disabled, and dependent on the care of others—and she considers that a sacred part of her vocation.

When not writing or steeping tea, Sister Abigail can be found praying with the plants, blessing herbs for distribution, or holding space for little ones (including her own inner child) in a world that so often forgets how to be kind.

You can follow her ministry, read her blog, or connect with her work at:

👉 <https://franciscanclareans.blogspot.com>

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