



"I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you yours!" —Francis of Assisi

In my Advent/Christmas reflections book, I came across some thought provoking quotes from St John Paul II: "Individuals come to maturity through receptive openness to others and through generous self-giving." This receptive openness can only come about through dialogue with the other. This hit a mark with me because I see so little dialogue between groups. Many people (myself included) often avoid interaction with others who they think hold different beliefs or strongly held opinions. Or, when the interaction can't be avoided, attempts are made to convert people through argument. We don't listen, we don't dialogue. "Dialogue leads to a recognition of diversity and opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family's basic vocation to unity. As such, dialogue is the privileged means for building the civilization of love and peace" (JP II Msg for World Peace Day 1/1/2001). As Franciscans, dialogue is a key approach for us to bring about peace. It requires great humility to put our own beliefs on the back burner and listen to others expound on their often contrary beliefs. It takes humility, because our starting place has to be one where we admit that we don't have all the answers and that it's possible that we are not understanding the other's point of view or perspective. Our call to continuous conversion comes into play here too since we may discover that some of our deeply held thinking is wrong. The dialogue that we engage in may also help the other come to a better appreciation of another's views and even open a door for them as well. Franciscans: Listen, ask questions and be open. —Franz

This month's Fraternity Gathering

January 17, 2021, 12:30 p.m. – Pot luck and Gathering

Holy Family Catholic Church, social hall
2430 West 3rd St., Duluth
Park in the west parking lot

NOTE: This is the tentative plan. A decision on whether we gather in person or remotely will be made closer to the date. You will be notified by phone or email if the in-person gathering is cancelled.

Agenda:

- 1. Opening prayer – Bob
2. LotH – Barb
3. Gospel sharing – Keith
4. Ongoing Formation – Darlene: Reflection 20 in Live Like Francis.
5. Business
a. Approve minutes, assign ministries
b. Treasurer reports, bills, receipts
c. Formation report
d. JPIC report
6. Vocation and closing prayers

Next month's meeting: February 21, 2021.
Ongoing formation – TBD



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Council Meeting Agenda

Council meeting will immediately follow the fraternity meeting.

- 1. Opening Prayer
2. Approve minutes (11/15/20)/agenda
3. Spring Gathering planning
4. Initial Formation discussion
5. 2021 Come and See Parish
6. Other
7. Closing prayer



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Gospel Reading: 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Jn 1:35-42

John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” — which translated means Teacher —, “where are you staying?”

He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, “We have found the Messiah” — which is translated Christ. Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas” — which is translated Peter.

Wisdom from Solanus Casey

- ❖ God is constantly planning wonders for the patient and the humble.
- ❖ We want to be Christians—spouses of Jesus—risen and glorified, of course, but without getting too near the Cross.
- ❖ May God Himself be your reward and final crown, as He is for all who by His holy grace shall persevere.

Franciscan Saints/Blesseds of the Month

7 BL ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

12 ST BERNARD OF CORLEONE

Bernard was born by the name Filippo in 1625, the son of a shoemaker. After his father died Filippo became a soldier. He had a violent temper that led to many sword duels. When one of these fights severely injured his opponent, Filippo fled to the protection of a Capuchin friary to escape the revenge of the man’s family. He experienced a dramatic conversion and eventually became a friar and received the name, Bernard.

Bernard lived a simple life devoted to prayer and devotion to the Virgin Mary. He also adopted a severe lifestyle, including regular flagellation and radical deprivation, to atone for his sinful life. Bernard usually took on the most undesirable tasks in service to others, which damaged his own health. Bernard died in 1667 and was canonized in 2001.

14 BL ODORIC OF PORDENONE

16 STS BERARD AND COMPANIONS

24 ST FRANCIS de SALES

27 ST ANGELA MERICI

30 ST HYACINTH OF MARISCOTTI

31 ST JOHN BOSCO

Faith Matters: Reflections from your Spiritual Assistant

Most of the time when we think of poverty we think of it as a problem somewhere else—perhaps in the Third World or even some poorer areas of our country—not something close to home. But in Minnesota poverty affects about one in ten Minnesotans and one in nine children. That’s a lot of people, and many of them are our neighbors and friends here in the Northland.

By and large, the poor remain invisible to most of society. People living in poverty do not like to advertise that fact. Most will go to great lengths to hide their condition. They may be embarrassed to be poor, or too proud to reach out for help. Many others are simply too busy working two or three jobs to be actively involved in the community. This problem is compounded by services, such as county programs or food pantries, which are unavailable during the day when they are working. This has only gotten worse during the pandemic.

The daily stress of living in poverty is compounded by harsh attitudes that have grown up in this country over the past few decades that blame the poor for their poverty. I’m sure you’ve heard people say that the poor deserve their lot because they make bad choices or don’t work hard enough. You may have said these things yourself. Examples can always be found to support these beliefs, but in the end they amount to little more than prejudice.

Such prejudice has fostered a climate where politicians can safely cut the supports out from under poor people, often to pay for tax cuts or special benefits for those who are better off. Even now we hear calls coming out of Congress to balance the federal budget on the backs of the poor and vulnerable while making even greater tax cuts

for the rich. The verdict of Catholic social teaching, not to mention common decency, is that this course of action is morally bankrupt.

According to Catholic social teaching, our fellow citizens who are living in poverty deserve both our respect and our assistance. Most find themselves in this state through circumstances they could not predict or control: loss of a job, the break-up of a relationship, sudden illness, mental health problems, or simply being born into a poor family. Right now approximately two thirds of American families are one paycheck away from finding themselves in serious financial difficulty. I know, I've been there.

Poverty is a complex reality that defies simple solutions. It is at once a political, an economic and a social problem. Tackling poverty will require constructive action on all fronts. It is tempting to throw up our hands in the face of this daunting challenge and give up, thinking that the solutions are too far away. Remember the words of Mother Teresa, "We cannot do everything, but we can do something."

As Franciscans we have a special call to advocate for and to serve the poor. We have carried that out both individually and collectively in our fraternity. We have learned that it is not enough to just give material aid; we must see their faces and hear their stories. There is still more to be done. We can gather with others in the community to look at the needs of the poor and come up with creative solutions. We can contact our representatives in Congress and the state legislature to insist that they support programs that serve the poor. All we need in this country to tackle poverty is the will to do it. —Bob

Guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health for community gatherings:

- Ask participants to review this screening survey: Have you had any of the following symptoms that you cannot attribute to another health condition?
 - ◆ Fever or feeling feverish?
 - ◆ Chills?
 - ◆ A new cough?
 - ◆ Shortness of breath?
 - ◆ A new sore throat?
 - ◆ New muscle aches?
 - ◆ New headache?
 - ◆ New loss of smell or taste?
- Strongly encourage all persons to wear masks
- Maintain at least six feet between people who do not live in the same household.
- Provide tissues for proper cough/sneeze etiquette, trash receptacles and hand sanitizer.
- Encourage participants to regularly wash and/or sanitize their hands.
- Routinely clean and disinfect all areas, such as offices, restrooms, common areas, etc.
- Refrain from singing or chanting.

ODDS 'N' ENDS

Please continue prayers for the selection of a new bishop for the Diocese of Duluth.

As I am finishing up this month's newsletter the violent and dreadful events of January 6, the Feast of Epiphany, are unfolding in Washington, D.C. I am sure our Franciscan leaders will in due time issue statements that reflect a Franciscan response to these events. I myself am speechless as I ponder, what would Francis say? For that matter, what would Jesus say? In the meantime I offer for your reflection the words on the back page that come from a wonderful resource prepared by Ken Butigan, Mary Litell, O.S.F., and Louis Vitale, O.F.M. and the Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service: ***Franciscan Nonviolence: Stories, Reflections, Principles, Practices, and Resources***. To be peacemakers is our call and our challenge. Let us not lose heart in the face of violence.

—Bob



Newsletter edited by Bob

Today's Spiritual Challenge and Opportunity

The pervasive structures of violence we face today are rooted, in turn, in deeply embedded impulses of fear, hate and greed. These impulses often nurture separation and instill a seemingly unbridgeable gap between "us" and "them." We often project our own violence onto one another; we repeatedly see those with whom we struggle as unambiguously evil; we customarily justify cultural and economic systems that devalue other beings; and we often deploy the implements of verbal, emotional or physical war to both protect ourselves and to create what we think is justice. "The myth of redemptive violence," as scripture scholar Walter Wink names it, pervades our consciousness and our cultures.

Our greatest contemporary spiritual crisis is one of faith. The temptation is to place our faith in the power of violence rather than the force of the good; to surrender to violence forgetting that humanity, while capable of both love and violence, is created in the image, the very likeness of a good God. Our greatest challenge today is to cultivate a path as individuals and communities throughout the world that actively proclaims this goodness. In this way we might challenge the patterns of violence, and open ourselves to the transforming grace of the Nonviolent God. . .

Franciscans Serving Peace

However imperfectly realized over the succeeding eight centuries, the ministry of peacemaking—recognizing the primordial presence of God's peace deep within and serving it with prayer and action—has persisted as a central dimension of Franciscan spirituality. As we see in the stories featured in this text, Francis vigorously counseled peace between warring citystates and between Christians and Muslims. His devotion to embodied peacemaking and nonviolent intervention is captured paradigmatically in the story of the Wolf of Gubbio where Francis brokered a resolution between an Italian village and a wolf by meeting the needs of both sides. This is even more compellingly demonstrated in visit with Malik-al-Kamil, the sultan of Egypt. During the fifth crusade in 1219, "in the midst of wartime, Francis went to the enemy *unarmed and loved the enemy as a brother.*" Francis attempted to embody Jesus' words to "love the enemy" and to face the enemy within.

St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi greeted the people of their time with the expression "Pace e bene!" or "Peace and good!" So much was expressed by this little phrase: *May you have the fullness of well-being, may you be secure and happy; may you not want; may your dignity be respected; may the goodness in your inmost being flourish; may the world in which we live know this deep peace.* It was a blessing, a hope, and a way of acknowledging the sacredness of those whom they encountered.

The first Rule of the Third Order admonishes the brothers and sisters that they are "not to bear arms for any reason." The Franciscan movement became so widespread that there are indications that, in parts of medieval Europe, war was stymied at various times during the Middle Ages because potential soldiers had become Franciscans and were bound by their vows not to engage in armed conflict.

Even a cursory glance at the writings of Francis that have come down to us reveals his concern with the spirit and practice of nonviolence as he urges his brothers to follow Jesus' call to love their enemies, and do good to those who would seem to be their enemies; to go among people as Jesus instructed his disciples, in simplicity, as peacemakers, and calling nothing their own but sharing with everyone.

Francis lived, as we do, in an era marked by violence. His defeat, imprisonment and illness at Perugia suggest that he suffered from we now call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In the wake of this profound encounter with violence and the crisis it provoked, Francis became a person of peace who greeted all with "Pace e bene" ("Peace and goodness!") (Pages 11-13).