

Connect!

Uniting Word & World

For Sunday, October 11, 2015

Between the Francises

This Sunday's Scripture Readings

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://new.usccb.org/bible/readings/101115.cfm>

Wisdom 7:7-11

Hebrews 4:12-13

Mark 10:17-30 or 10:17-27



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He's back in Rome. That gentle smile is no longer dominating our TV screens. His halting English is no longer a challenge coming over our radio waves. Pope Francis is no longer on American soil. Have we forgotten his vital presence? It's only days since he was here. It's only a couple weeks since we were very proud to be Catholics! Hopefully, his message is still ringing in our memories and hearts.

“His vocation was to recall the church to the radical simplicity of the gospel, to the spirit of poverty, and to the image of Christ in his poor...”

“The joy and freedom...”

“His constant tendency to turn the values of the world on their head...”

“Preferential option for the poor...”

“Espoused a radical commitment to nonviolence...”

“Vivid sense of the sacramentality of creation...”

These words are from the two-page biography of... not Pope Francis of the twenty-first century, but St. Francis of Assisi whose feast was last Sunday, October 4! ([All Saints, Robert Ellsberg](#)). Not quite a thousand years separate these two men. Amazing, isn't it, that their thoughts and words and actions were so similar. Legend has it that one day St. Francis invited his brothers to go with him to preach the Gospel. They began walking and walking and walking, right through the village. As they moved on to the open road again, one brother questioned Francis, “When are we going to preach?” Francis responded, “Ah, but we have been, all through the village.” Again, tradition often attributes to Francis, “Preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words.” What do we remember mostly of our modern-day Francis? Not his [words to Congress, with the president](#), to [the UN](#), at [Madison Square Garden](#), or [in Philadelphia](#). What we remember most are the images of him with the crowds, receiving the babies, the children, the handicapped, the

common folk, and the forgotten ones of our society. We remember the light in his eyes and the genuine smile as he blessed, embraced, and touched. What did he say? Hmm. His words, too, were important, many of them echoing those of the twelfth-century Francis. What we saw and heard can be summarized in the old cliché. “He walked the walk.”

There was some point in each of these Francis' lives that they approached God and asked, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” And God looked at each man and loved him. God loved him and invited him to a deeper life, a life that would reflect another life, that of his totally beloved Son, Jesus. Francis of Assisi was a rich young man! Rather than turn away from the invitation, he stood in the center of Assisi and renounced all his possessions. He went so far as to lay all of the clothes he was wearing at the feet of his father right then and there... in public.

There was a time in the life of Pope Francis when he, as a young man at the time of his religious profession, sang the song of the Jesuits, “[Suscipe me, Domine](#),” “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my entire will, all I have and possess. You have given all to me; now I return it... Give me only your love and your grace. It is enough for me” (Prayer from Spiritual Exercises, #234).

The invitation of Jesus was not just for a young man two thousand years ago, nor for another young Italian nine hundred years ago, nor even for an Argentinian in our time. That invitation is spoken to each of us. The beauty of it is that the invitation comes over and over in each of our lives. Pope Francis said yes as a young man when he became a Jesuit. He also said his yes when he became a bishop. There was another yes when he became pope. He has responded positively to each invitation. We saw him also respond to little invitations like the one to eat with the disabled in Washington instead of attending a state dinner.

We are all pilgrims in our lives as we walk our unique paths. A pilgrim must always be listening... listening for the invitation as God says, “Walk this way, turn here, leave your possessions behind, come follow in the footsteps of Jesus.” We may respond positively! Or we may hang back with excuses... that it’s too hard, Lord... the path too narrow, the climb too steep. Jesus responds to our objections, “For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible for God.” By ourselves, we can’t do it! But “give me only your love and your grace. It is enough for me!”

This week we receive an invitation, a challenge, in the words of the Gospel. Can we choose just one of the areas our modern-day Francis brought to our attention? Here’s a simple one to help the environment. Can we shop for our groceries this week and remember to bring our own bags? No plastic bags! A few countries have forbidden them. In the US, California has outlawed them. How about going out of our way to be friendly to one person who belongs to a minority? Or a handicapped person? Can we answer just a small invitation coming from God? As we start saying yes to these seemingly tiny invitations, it will become easier to say our yes to the big ones. All of this, of course, with the grace and love God continually showers upon each of us!

Patricia DeGroot, OLSB

PRAYER

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
all I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.

—*Suscipe, St. Ignatius of Loyola.*

NOTICES

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE, October 22–25

The International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) is hosting its annual conference in Chicago, IL from October 22–25 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. For more information on the conference and to register, visit <http://catholicstewardship.com/programs-a-events/annual-conference/2015-annual-conference-information>.

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2015

Many dioceses will take up a collection to support the Society for the Propagation of the Faith the weekend of October 18, 2015. LPi customers will find resources to promote this collection on Art & Media Portal. You can also find the materials resources at: www.onefamilyinmission.org/society-propfaith/i-am-a-missionary.html.

PARISH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, October 14-16, Phoenix

The Diocese of Phoenix is hosting its 2015 Parish Leadership Conference from October 14–16 at St. Paul Parish in Phoenix, Arizona, with keynote speaker Sherry Weddell, author of *Forming Intentional Disciples*. Be sure to visit LPi at our booth. For more information and to register, visit <http://www.diocesephoenix.org/stewardship-day.php>.

RESPECT LIFE MONTH

October is Respect Life Month. The USCCB has several resources available to encourage special events and activities throughout October. View the materials at <http://usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/respect-life-program/index.cfm>.

Visit the LPi website for information on services and publications.

www.4LPi.com

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