

Franciscan Season of Giving

a word from Christine...

Thanks to you the Franciscan Center should end our fiscal year today on a solid footing. If you are able, please consider making a gift. Doing so will give us a head start on the coming fiscal year. We are humbled by your presence with us and your contribution to this sacred work.



This Saturday you're invited to join people around the world in celebrating the Feast of St. Francis. How will you mark the day?

Why a feast?

Feast days call us to remember. They bind us together as we pause, reflect, and recommit. The liturgical calendar offers a holy rhythm—one that, if we let it, reminds us of life's gift and our unity as gospel-people across time and place.

You might cook a meal, but in this context (and for this saint), "feast" likely means more than food. To me, it means turning a loving gaze toward Francis and his deep love for God.

Always learning.

We often frame feast days as teaching moments for the young. But aren't they really invitations for all of us to go deeper? Each year the day returns—and each year we are different. Our lives shift. Our worlds change. The calendar is generous. It meets us where we are and nudges us toward transformation.

Why Francis?

For 800 years, Francis' radical choices have borne fruit. His story can be reduced to kitsch and sentimentality, but I urge you to look closer.

To quote Shane Claiborne, Francis "lived as if Jesus truly meant what he said." Francis' conviction led to action. He shed possessions, built community, welcomed the marginalized, loved enemies, devoted himself to prayer, and joyfully recognized what was beautiful about all of God's creation. He risked being misunderstood and endured ridicule. He lived a life of service in the world and found sustenance in the quiet of solitude in the wild.

The leper's gift.

I keep returning to the story of Francis and the leper. Isn't the leper the one (or groups) who have been cast out—scapegoats, outsiders, the inconvenient. Too often, purity codes are used to justify exclusion. Worse, the excluded sometimes ingest the poison of shame themselves, internalizing what the dominant world says about them.

But Francis, transformed by the gospel, saw differently. He saw with God's eyes—the inherent dignity of each person.

Can we? Can we see the beauty in neighbors who are immigrants, elderly, poor, disabled, imprisoned? In those of different faiths, identities, or orientations?

The harder path.

But intellectually seeing something is not enough. Any card-carrying liberal can name the excluded. You know this. Charity costs little. Solidarity costs everything. It occurs to me that before Francis embraced the leper, he first stripped naked in the town square—renouncing privilege and security. Only then could he meet the leper as one who shared in vulnerability.

This realization both excites and unsettles me. It presses the transformational question: Where do I cling to safety instead of surrender?

The feast's invitation.

I sit with these stories because the Feast Day invites us to do so. The discomfort of the world right now urges me on. I am looking for solace and action. Then I remember the words of the Apostle (and Saint) Paul who observed in Philippians 2 that Jesus, "being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be clung to, but instead willingly emptied himself by taking the very nature of a servant."

And there it is! The insight I'd not seen before. The convergence of tradition, experience, and scripture bear down on me with an authority I can no longer ignore.

How will you mark the Feast of St. Francis?

May you be encouraged,

Christine

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