

Franciscan Season of Giving

a word from Randy...

Thanks to you, we end this fiscal year strong.

A gift today will help the Franciscan Center begin the new year with hope and stability.

Thank you for being part of this sacred journey.



Cloud of Unknowing

I know many things! I was raised to know things in a culture that valued knowing things as a means to success and status. Thus, my identity, ambitions, and faith were largely shaped by those cultural determinants. Knowing things can be ego-based, coupled with a competitive assertion of superiority. It controls and/or manipulates the narrative. It can easily become dualistic and dual-istic.

In these latter years of my life, I am being companioned by the eight-hundred-year-old Franciscan tradition and charism that re-forms the image of God as extravagantly loving and gracious. I am being shaped by an abundant and generous orthodoxy that views “human beings as created in the image of God and unconditionally loved and redeemed by God in Christ...”. This includes the notion of the preferential treatment and justice for the poor. Francis used to say, “Anyone who curses the poor insults Christ whose noble

banner the poor carry, since Christ *made himself poor for us in this world.*"

It is a season of letting go – letting go of the need to control and the need to be right (especially in theological things). It is an intentional kind of “unknowing” that suspends judgment of others (and myself) and holds them (and myself) in the immense and immeasurable love of God. I liken this to entering the ‘cloud of unknowing,’ where union with the Divine is the goal and ego, ambitions, and knowledge fade away (I Corinthians 13). I wonder if this is similar to the medieval writing by the same name.

It was Francis who told his colleagues, “Up to now, we’ve done nothing. Let us begin afresh today.” I wonder if this was Francis’ way of referring to the Cloud of Unknowing. Let us begin afresh.

Beginning afresh: Forgetting our past, let us turn our eyes to the author and perfecter of faith.

Beginning afresh: Let us stop solving problems and live in the mysteries of life.

Beginning afresh: Let us abandon our need to be right and seek to be in right relationship.

Beginning afresh: Let us seek not to be understood, as much as to understand.

Beginning afresh: Let us seek not to be loved, but to love.

Amen!

With gratitude,

Randy Miller

Spiritual Director

Co-convener and teacher in the Franciscan Spiritual Direction Training Program

(Both quotes are from Dawn M. Nothwehr, O.S.F. *The Franciscan View of the Human Person: Some Central Elements*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2005)).

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