

“Praise be to you, my Lord”, for our Seraphic father Francis of Assisi



Francis is a saint of the **middle Ages** and yet, he is a **modern saint**; because, as the word ‘modern’ denotes ‘**being relevant**’, he is very much relevant to our times. His life has a meaningful message to us, because he was totally animated by the **Gospel of Jesus**. After his initial conversion of leaving his family and Assisi, Francis was in a continuous process of discerning God’s will in his life. He dedicated himself to the will of God towards the fullness of life by living, “**the present of his life.**” This meant, dying to his human will and living for God’s will. This dialectical experience of life-through-death was revealed to Francis through the mystery of the Cross, which is the power and wisdom of the Father. Hence, in the life-project of Francis, Jesus the Crucified was the only model whom Francis wanted to imitate as perfectly as possible.

Like that of Francis’ world, our world too is fragmented and troubled by various negative forces. We are confused and disoriented. We are groping in the dark for light and truth. How does St. Francis of Assisi speak to us today? By his very life, Francis challenges us today to set our eyes on **God and on His holy will**. Because only God, the True Light, who can enlighten us toward the fullness of life. It is only in Him we find our Peace and Joy. Francis learned this truth through his conversion with the Gospel. By turning toward God with Jesus, Francis discovered himself as

well as all the creatures of God. He discovered that every creature shares in the eternal life of God. Hence, Francis feels united with God and with all creatures in Life.

And now, Francis invites us to thank and praise God who is Holy and Supreme Majesty. Francis wants us to **love and serve the Lord our God**, because, **He is our shield and fortress, our Light and our help**. It is only by **serving the true God we can experience true life**. We shall respond to the invitation of our Seraphic Father by serving one another as the Gospel invite us to do. **“Today, the Church does not need many more people who think they are the leaders but she needs more people who know they are the servants.”**

The Gospel according to John (13:1-17), where Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, provided a glimpse into the Gospel Life that the little, poor man from Assisi sought to live, and which we his spiritual heirs have inherited. At the heart of the reading stands the example of so-called **servant leadership** modeled by Jesus Christ Himself. The fact that Jesus washed the feet of the disciples made a great impact/ impression on Francis, relatively many times he mentions it in his writings.

Francis, whom do you want to serve, the Lord or the servant? Francis answered, the Lord. Yes, “serve the Lord, not the servant”; but how? Giving himself over to prayer and to journeys in the country side, things became clearer. The moment of grace could come – he could hear the Word of the Gospel and seek to live it out; he could embrace the leper; he could rejoice to be counted among those to whom no worldly honor is bestowed: “the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside” (ER IX.2).

We realize that our God is, indeed, not only a God of day but also a God who holds us during the darkness and that Francis’ imitation of the foot-washing by Christ is just the **antidote** we and our world need more and more in response to the oppression and brokenness that surround us.

Francis imitated Jesus with so much love and devotion that he was totally transformed into the Christ-self. Like Jesus, Francis proclaimed the merciful goodness of God by his words and service. He lived and let others live fully. Conversely, as Jesus was God walking on earth,

Francis was Christ living in the world. In His gracious mercy, the Lord acknowledged Francis' life-in-Jesus, by imprinting the "marks of Jesus" commitment in the body of Francis.

"Praise be to you, my Lord", for our Seraphic father Francis of Assisi, who loved You and served You, who died to his will to live by Thy will, and who embraced You in embracing all creatures and creation.