

October 4, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

MEMORIAL OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

By Elisabeth Beall

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Reflection

I can't read or think of St. Francis' peace prayer without hearing in my head the melody composed by Sebastian Temple, adapting the prayer into the song, "Make Me A Channel of Your Peace." With its gentle repetition of the same note many times in a row, carrying along the beautiful words, it is a meditation that helps me calm angsty or angry thoughts and recalibrate – a tool I find I need more frequently these days.

The Prayer of St. Francis is a beautiful rendering of our mission as Christians: to be a peaceful, loving presence in the world, to actively offer forgiveness and share hope, to love our neighbor as ourselves.

How often are we able to keep that mission at the forefront of our minds right now? How often do we really seek to understand others more than we seek to make ourselves understood? Do we really listen to others when they speak to us, or are we just counting the seconds till we can make our counter-argument and prove that we are right and they are wrong?

The story of how St. Francis saved a community from a fierce wolf provides a template for how we can strive to truly be instruments of peace.

When St. Francis lived in the city of Gubbio, a wolf was terrorizing the countryside – devouring not only animals, but also people. So St. Francis sought out the animal, and called to him: "Come hither, Brother Wolf." No surprise here – St. Francis befriended the wolf and struck a deal with him: the people would provide him with food, as long as he would promise never to kill another beast or person. Then St. Francis stretched out his hand, and the Wolf lifted up his paw and laid it in the saint's hand.

I see and hear it all around me, in people that I care for and respect – a fear of approaching the other, a reluctance to speak our truth and hear theirs, a hesitation in reaching out and building relationships. The people of Gubbio saw the wolf as a murderous monster, but St. Francis knew there was more to the story: he approached the animal, spoke to him openly, and offered him his hand in friendship.

That was a man approaching a fierce and wild animal. Should we not be less fearful of approaching our brothers and sisters who live and work side by side with us – but perhaps think differently or have opinions different from our own? Let us all strive to be a channel of peace in our homes, our workplaces, our communities – to stretch out a hand in loving welcome, to really see and hear the people around us, to strive more to love the dear neighbor than to be loved ourselves. It truly is in giving that we receive.



Sculpture of Francis of Assisi with Animals on River
Photo by Carlos Moura

For Pondering

- Who is the wolf in your life? How can you reach out a loving hand and strive to build a relationship?
 - We are all called to love the dear neighbor, which can sometimes take tremendous courage. Where in your life can you take brave steps to love the dear neighbor whose views may differ from your own?
 - Reread the Prayer of St. Francis out loud, slowly. Which phrases sink deeply into your heart?
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For Prayer

*Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures;
especially Brother Sun, who is the day, and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
and bears a likeness to You, Most High One.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars; in heaven You
formed them clear and precious and beautiful.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your
creatures.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night;
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

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