

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2 October 2022

Scriptures: Habakkuk1:2-3;2:2-4;2Tim.1:6-8,13-14;Luke17:5-10

Homily: Fr. Ken

This weekend we are anticipating the celebration of the October 4th feast of St. Francis of Assisi. There is indeed much for us to reflect upon.

The Gospel itself suggests that we today can still behave like the Pharisees and the other religious leaders of Jesus' time. If we keep the rules, go to church, and avoid scandal, then surely, we deserve to be rewarded—or do we? It sounds as though we are saving ourselves. And this reflects a deep feeling in modern society that demands the right to decide things for ourselves.

What we actually need, is to hear Jesus' call to faith with its truths which liberate us from self-centeredness and idolatry.

Faith teaches us that God is our Creator. God has given us our life and given us our home, the Earth. They are God's gifts for us. At the heart of it, is God's love for us, a love that is boundless and extravagant. It is a love that lays down its life on the cross. It is a love that gives itself to us in the Eucharist. It is a pure gift, not something we can claim credit for.

This is precisely why we need to keep the saints close to us, especially St. Francis of Assisi. The Gospel of Jesus is made real in the person of St. Francis. We can see God's love taking human form in St. Francis' life. St. Francis experienced God not as a slave master, but as Jesus who emptied himself in love and shared our sufferings. Francis delighted in serving God by serving the poor and all those in need.

The virtues and values in Scripture are the same virtues and values that characterized the life of St. Francis, as well as Jesus

himself. They are as relevant today as they were then. They are a call to be faithful to the Gospel.

That call is a call from God to all Christians and to all people everywhere. It was the same call that St. Francis of Assisi responded to 800 years ago.

St. Francis is a saint for all times, a saint for all religions, a saint for all peoples.

St. Francis has a deep love for the poor, for the marginalized, for the oppressed and exploited, and for all humanity. He also had a deep respect for animals and for all of God's creation. He had a deep relationship with God both through prayer and through action.

In troubling and challenging times, some people ask: "What would Jesus say?" On this feast of St. Francis of Assisi we can ask: "What would St. Francis say about our own 21st century world of increasing secularization, nationalism, and materialism?"

With the obvious exceptions of tour buses and souvenir shops, Assisi today is remarkably similar to the Assisi of St. Francis' time.

In his day, St Francis was confronted with the greed and corruption of the few, and the poverty and disparity of the many—not at all unlike what confronts us today from Wall Street to Market Street.

In the spiritual realm, the stakes are the same—good and evil, and our eternal fate inescapably challenged by the Gospel.

In the physical realm, the stakes are worse today than those faced by St. Francis. The crises we have been facing regarding housing, employment, health care, education, the increased cost of energy and food, and especially the environment, continue to be exacerbated by the current social, political, and economic challenges today.

While sympathetic and deeply caring for us, St. Francis of Assisi would nevertheless, even at this juncture, force us to look beyond our shores to the continents of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, to our sisters and brothers who are today suffering and will continue to suffer the dire consequences of climate change, for themselves and for their children and grandchildren into the future.

And so, on this celebration of St. Francis of Assisi, patron of our Archdiocese and the City, we affirm that it is an essential component of our mission as Catholics to build a more just society and economy, and to work effectively to eliminate the causes of climate change.

In doing this, we the parishioners of St. Rita, have over the last years, taken an active if not a leading role when we: feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, educate the young, welcome refugees and immigrants, care for the sick, the elderly, and the vulnerable, and when we work effectively as guardians of creation to protect and preserve our environment, our God-given home, the Earth.

In humility, but with much conviction, and inspiration from St. Francis, we serve and stand in solidarity with those who are poor and jobless, helping them break the cycle of poverty and act on behalf of their own families and communities.

That is our moral responsibility as Catholics, as guardians of creation, as faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

-end-