

October 11, 2020



Dear Parishioners,

Last Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, the readings for the Feast of St. Francis took precedence over the readings otherwise scheduled for that Sunday because of his being, of course, the patron of our Archdiocese. Remembering him seems especially important at this point in our country's history due to several episodes in his life. He was the partying son of a rich cloth merchant, went off to war with the neighboring city near Assisi, then was wounded and confined to bed for months during which he prayed and re-evaluated his life. He had an experience of God telling him to "rebuild my church, which as you see is falling into ruin." He took this message literally and began to rebuild the decrepit chapel of San Damiano and other neglected chapels until it became clear to him that it was the Church with a capital "C" which he was called to rebuild. He renounced his father and his business, began to beg and minister to the poor, and was considered out of his mind by the fellow playboys of his young adulthood. During the Fifth Crusade, a bloody battle between Christians and Muslims, he risked his life in 1219 to meet with the Sultan of Egypt, spending a month there, learning from each other and trying in vain to broker a peaceful resolution between their communities. Stories about him abound: from kissing a leper to preaching to attentive birds to negotiating with a wolf to stop devouring chickens, if only the villagers would feed him. Why am I proposing that he has something to teach us now?

Perhaps, the coronavirus is our experience of having the image of our country and ourselves "wounded." Perhaps, our sheltering in place has brought a new awareness of our nation's inequality, previously not so noticeable, to the forefront of our hearts and minds. Perhaps, as we experience the most destructive weather patterns since their recorded history, nature herself is crying out for relief. Perhaps, with members of minority religious, political and ethnic communities being captured and killed, it is time for us to re-evaluate as Francis did.

It took Francis months to discern what God was asking of him. Might each of us use this strange time to listen for what the Holy Spirit might be asking of us and our families and communities? Might I at least pray daily, write letters, contribute to national or international groups addressing one major area in need of change? How involved am I in working for a more just society?

May we, like Francis, listen and then act.

Peace, Sr. Sheral