



FOLLOW CHRIST BY FOLLOWING FRANCIS

SUGGESTED SETTING: Statue of Saint Francis and/or a crucifix.

LEADER: Let us place ourselves in the presence of God.

SONG: As a Fire is Meant for Burning –Ruth Duck (YouTube)

As a fire is meant for burning
With a bright and warming flame,
So the church is meant for mission,
Giving glory to God's name.
Not to preach our creeds or customs,
But to build a bridge of care,
We join hands across the nations,
Finding neighbors everywhere.

We are learners; we are teachers;
We are pilgrims on the way.
We are seekers; we are givers;
We are vessels made of clay.
By our gentle loving actions,
We would show that Christ is light.
In a humble, listening Spirit,
We would live to God's delight.

As a green bud in the spring time
Is a sign of life renewed,

So may we be signs of oneness
Mid earth's peoples, many hued.
As a rainbow lights the heavens
When a storm is past and gone,
May our lives reflect the radiance
Of God's new and glorious dawn.

READER 1:

Francis of Assisi is assuredly one of the best known and most widely admired figures in the history of Christianity. The fundamental reason why the Catholic Church declares one a "saint" is that the person has fulfilled the "great" or "new" commandment of Jesus – to love God above all and to love ones neighbors as God loves them (Matt 22:36-39; John 13:34). All accounts of Francis of Assisi's life testify to his extraordinary sanctity. G.K. Chesterton, in his biography of Francis, remarked:

He honored all men, that is, he not only loved but respected them all. What gave him this extraordinary personal power was this: that from the Pope to the beggars, from the Sultan of Syria to the ragged robbers crawling out of the woods, there was never a man who looked into those brown burning eyes without being certain that Francis Bernardone was really interested in him, in his own individual inner life from creation to the grave; that he himself was valued and taken seriously. (G.K. Chesterton, Saint Francis of Assisi)

PAUSE and REFLECT:

Who are the people I come into contact with on a daily basis?

How do I honor them?

What can I draw from the life of Saint Francis?

READER 2:

Prayer was essential in the life of Saint Francis. It is what inspired him and gave him direction in his work with his followers. It is something he taught his followers and encouraged them to make prayer an essential part of their daily life.

Francis taught his followers his own expanded version of the Lord's Prayer drawing from scripture. He reflected on "Hallowed be thy name," by taking the passage from Ephesians that you "may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ"(3:18)

ALL:

Holy be your name;
May knowledge of You become clearer in us
That we may know
The breadth of Your blessings;
The length of Your promises;
The height of Your majesty;
The depth of Your judgements. (Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, vol 1)

READER 3:

Referring to the "great commandment" of Jesus found in Luke (10:27): Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

ALL:

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
that we may love you
with our whole heart by always thinking of You,
with our whole soul by always desiring You,
with our whole mind by always directing all intentions to You,
and by seeking Your glory in everything,

with all our strength by exerting
all our energies and affection of body and soul
in the service of Your love and of nothing else;
and we may love our neighbor as ourselves
by drawing them all to Your love with our whole strength,
by rejoicing in the good of others as in our own,
by suffering with others at their misfortunes,
and by giving offense to no one. (Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, vol 1)

PAUSE and REFLECT:

What does the prayer taught to me by Jesus mean in my daily life?

How do I live out my commitment as an Associate in the spirit of Francis?

SONG: The Lord's Prayer = YouTube or pray the prayer together thoughtfully.

DISCUSS AND SHARE

LEADER:

Francis's propensity for action over words is reflected in a popular phrase attributed to him that was articulated by Pope Francis in a speech given at Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls on April 14th, 2013:

One cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one's life. Those who listen to us and observe us must be able to see in our actions what they hear from our lips, and so give glory to God! I am thinking now of some advice that Saint Francis of Assisi gave his brothers: "Preach the Gospel and if necessary use words,"

As we depart: Go preach the Gospel and use words only when necessary.

Offer each other the sign of Peace!

*****Some materials in the Readings adapted from: St. Francis and Pope Francis, Prayer, Poverty, and Joy in Jesus, by Alan Schreck**