



FRANCISCAN CORE VALUES

POVERTY

LEADER: CALL TO PRAYER:

Let us take a moment to quiet ourselves, breathe deeply and relax in the loving embrace of our God. (pause). Who shall we bring into our circle of prayer this day?

(Allow time to share the names of individuals or groups of people especially for those facing life decisions, transitions, or situations where it is hard to find the right path to God. This would be a good opportunity to raise up the names of the outreach Associates of your group and any of our Sisters in special need.)

LEADER: INTRODUCTION

Walking in the footsteps of Jesus, Francis valued Poverty above all because he saw that this was what Jesus chose for himself and his mother. Jesus walked the talk and so did Francis. For Francis, Poverty meant more than "having nothing". Rather it meant "having nothing but God". From this experience an amazing freedom emerges. Poverty allows us to live peacefully in our total dependence on God. We begin to see that all we have comes from God and that we are stewards of these gifts. Let us begin with this song by Michael Joncas which is based on Phillipians 3:7-11

MUSIC: The Love of the Lord, Michael Joncas, YouTube

PSALM 116: (Alternate sides)

+ What shall I render to You for all your goodness to me? I will drink the chalice of Love and praise you, who have done wondrous things.

+ I will bear witness to You, O Bread of Life, in the presence of all the people. Precious to You are all whose will decreases, who abandon themselves into your Will.

+ O Beloved, consider me your friend; I long to co-create with You. For you have loosed the bonds of fear in me. I will offer You the gift of gratitude and acknowledge your loving Presence with joy.

+ I will bear witness to You, O Giver of Life, in the presence of all the people. In the Sacred Altar of my heart, in your midst, O Beloved. Praises be to You! For You dwell within the heart of everything.

PRAYER TOGETHER:

O God, you do wonderful things. May we seek you, our only beauty, our security, our joy, and our sufficiency. Help us to befriend Lady Poverty as Francis and Clare did. We make our prayer in the name of Christ who lives in us. Amen.

READER 1:

Let us begin with a story about Francis. All families have stories that are told and passed down through generations. As they are repeated they sometimes change. They may not stick to the actual facts but they often communicate the underlying truth about the person, the legacy left for those who come after. The followers of Francis and Clare did this after their deaths and until recently, they were the most known and popular stories that we Franciscans had about our founders. Let us listen to one and then discuss how it brings out the meaning of poverty.

READER 2: (3 readers may take the parts of narrator, Francis and Matteo.)

Narrator: After sending his twelve followers out to the world as Christ did, Francis himself took Brother Masseo and set out toward the Province of France. And one day when they came to a village and they were quite hungry, they went begging for bread for the love of God, according to the Rule. And St. Francis went along one street and Brother Masseo along another. But because Francis was a very small and insignificant looking man, and therefore was considered a common little pauper by nearly all who didn't know him----for human foolishness judges

not by what is inside but only externals---- he received nothing but a few mouthfuls of food and some dry morsels of bread. But to Matteo, because he was a tall, handsome man, people gave plenty of good large pieces and some whole loaves.

When they came together they looked for a place to eat outside the village. They found nothing but bare, dry ground. But soon, with God's help, they found a spring and a fine broad stone, which made them very happy. So each of them placed the food they had begged on the stone. And when Francis saw that Masseo's pieces of bread were more numerous and better and bigger than his, he was filled with intense joy because of his longing for POVERTY, he said,

Francis: "Oh, Brother Masseo, we do not deserve such a great treasure as this!"

Narrator: And he repeated these words several times, raising his voice each time. Brother Masseo replied,

Masseo: "Dear Father, how can this be called a treasure when there is such poverty and such a lack of things that are necessary? For here we have no cloth, no knife, no dish, no bowl, no house, no table, no waiter, no waitress!"

Narrator: Francis answered,

Francis: "That is what I consider a great treasure---where nothing has been prepared by human labor. But everything here has been supplied by Divine Providence, as is evident in the begged bread, the fine stone table, and the clear spring. Therefore I want us to pray to God that we may love with all our hearts the very noble treasure of HOLY POVERTY, which has God as provider."

Narrator: And after he had said those words and they had prayed and eaten the bread and drunk the spring water, they arose to travel on to France, rejoicing and praising the Lord in song.

SILENT REFLECTION: using the questions below

LEADER: PRAYER DISCUSSION

How did Francis approach his ministry on this day? How would you describe it?

Discuss the way the townspeople treated Mateo as opposed to the way they treated Francis. What does this tell us about ourselves?

Discuss the difference in the way Mateo saw their lunch from the way that Francis experienced it. What can we learn about our practice of poverty from this story?

READER 3:

Evangelical Poverty is both an attitude of heart, revealing our total dependence on God, and a commitment to actual material poverty as we care for all that God gives us so that all can have what they need for living. Pope Francis expresses this throughout his writings as in the following from *Laudato Si*, 226. In speaking of our need "to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and ideals...." he goes on to say:

We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full. Jesus taught us this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, "he looked at him with love" (Mk 10:21). He was completely present to everyone and to everything, and in this way he showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers.

SILENT REFLECTION: using the questions below

LEADER: PRAYER DISCUSSION

How did Francis show a "serene attentiveness" in the story above or in other incidents you may know?

In what ways in our own lives might we practice serene attentiveness? What make this easy? What makes it challenging?

How can our practice of Franciscan Poverty free us from the anxiety that Pope Francis describes above?

What opportunities do we have to be God's stewards of creation in the use of water, land, energy, animals and plants?

MUSIC: "Tis the Gift to Be Simple", Shaker song also known as "Simple Gifts" (YouTube)

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'this the gift to be free, 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be.

And when we find ourselves in the place just right, 'twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained to bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed, to turn, turn, will be our delight till by turning, turning we come round right.

LEADER: INTERCESSIONS

You desire to be at home among your people, and so we pray:

RESPONSE: HEAR US, O GOD.

- + For a deepening awareness of our need for you in our daily life and service, we pray:
- + For greater generosity in sharing with others what we have received with such abundance, we pray:
- + For greater courage to act in counter-cultural ways and to challenge the wasteful practices of our times, we pray:
- + For greater willingness to engage in actions that bring about systemic change, we pray:
- + For what else shall we pray....

CLOSING PRAYER TOGETHER:

Grant us, loving God, a vision of your world
as your love would have it:
a world where the weak are protected
and none go hungry or poor;

a world where the riches of creation
are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;
a world where different races and cultures
live in tolerance and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice
and justice is guided by love.
Give us the inspiration and courage to build it,
through Jesus Christ our brother. Amen.

BLESSING TO ALL:

May God give us peaceful hearts, fill our souls with joy, and preserve in us a love
for poverty as Francis and Clare teach us!

SOURCES:

Companions on the Journey, Associates and Sisters; Franciscan Morning and
Evening Praise (FMPE); The Little Flowers of St. Francis (Fioretti),
Prayer for Justice, adapted, Bread For the World; Laudato Si, Pope Francis,
Pentecost, 2015

SETTING:

A statue or picture of Francis, candle
Symbolic current day images of people, ads, environment that relate to Poverty

NOTE TO CONVENER AND LEADER:

It's always good to have your group download the prayer ahead of time so that
they can pray and prepare for the sharing. For this service especially, three
people could prepare the parts of narrator, Francis and Matteo in the opening
story. The two songs are also in FMPE, the original version of the Office Book that
some of you may be praying.