

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Oct 4th 2018

Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi

In the first reading, Job expresses his faith in God in spite of his difficulties. The psalm contains similar thoughts. The Gospel has Jesus commissioning a set of disciples.

Today is also the feast of St. Francis. Pope John Paul II named him the patron saint of those who promote ecology. My sense is that we are seeing populations starting to suffer due to climate change. Today I am reminded of the urgency of this issue.

Sin has often been viewed as the basis for misfortune. Job is an honorable man, who is challenged by calamity. Still he responds with faith. The psalmist experiences desperation, but his faith remains intact. Difficulty and poverty are not punishments allocated to sinners. They are the challenges facing good people. Jesus makes this clear in the preparation which he gives to his disciples. This is modeled by Saint Francis who valued service to those in need more than his personal wealth.

Contemplating the Gospel, I can imagine myself as a follower of Jesus. I can see Him establishing a new order in this world. As an early member of His team, I imagine the benefits that are in store for me, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Then Jesus gives his charge and it is far from what I expect. The promise is not of earthly rewards, instead I am asked to give up my financial wellbeing and told to adopt a nomadic lifestyle in a world that may be hostile to my message.

Tradition has Saint Francis experiencing a vision in the chapel of San Damiano in which Christ on the crucifix charges him to “go and repair My house”. Initially Francis takes this literally and embarks on getting money for the physical reconstruction of the chapel and other nearby churches. Eventually he comes to realize that his mission concerns an institution in need of repair. Today I see many venues in need of repair - physical, institutional and individual.

Counting myself among the sites in need of repair, I conclude with St. Francis’ prayer in San Damiano.

Most High, glorious God,

enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me

true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity,

sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out

Your holy and true command. Amen.

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