



This is the year, the time and, wherever you are, it is the place to hear again about the legacy of Francis, his gift to us. We are not as well versed in story telling as we once were, when we relied less on electronic media and were able to craft the details into a story to rouse the senses and emotions. Is not that intention of the Gospels, to be more than just words read at Mass? Think about it, on the road to Emmaus (Luke), when Jesus explained the meanings of the Old Testament passages that related to the Messiah, what was the disciples' reaction. "Didn't our hearts burn within us?" When was the last time you felt that way about the Gospel? Removing the human dimension and ability to become passionate, in lieu of an electronic flash, makes it hard to understand, let alone get excited about, either the Gospels or the legacy of Francis.

*So just what did Francis leave us?*

So just what did Francis leave us? Many call it the "Life Project" or, in Latin, the "Propositum Vitae," but most of us might know it better as "Gospel to Life, Life to Gospel." It was really not new stuff; it was just Francis' way of putting life and passion back into the words and stories of Jesus. Today, 2009, we just might need another transfusion of life, ala the Poverello, to move us off our secularized approach to the Gospel and our own Franciscan Vocation.

Francis' plan was simple, he just asked the Pope for permission to live as Jesus and his disciples did: poor, humble, devoid of power and status, so that not even the structures of the Church might come between Francis

*Francis' plan was simple...*

and his relationship with God. Gospel to life, life to Gospel is just as simple, but, I fear, as "modern" humanity, we pride ourselves on being too sophisticated for such utter simplicity. So we just miss the boat. It has never been about us, our prayers, our actions, our perceived holiness or performance in ways sacred; it was only about allowing ourselves to stand naked before and enter relationship with God. At God's initiative no less. We really don't have a whole lot to do. The Holy Spirit prays in us, so we don't even pray without the Spirit's prompting us. Jesus is always ready to lead us into the dance of Life, in order to introduce us to the Father, and the Father just waits patiently and lovingly for us to say yes. God really does it all on our behalf, except the YES, that is; that's totally up to us and though we say we want that relationship, we seem to resist it with all our might, as if we become less free in God? Do we fear the transformation or that maybe we will cease to exist if we say yes? I mean look at all those who did say yes to God: the Blessed Mother, Francis, Clare, the Apostles, countless men and women throughout the ages. They all said yes and disappeared, didn't they???

Or maybe it is the transformation of our lifestyle, to have the best of both God and the world! Oops, wrong again. Our Franciscan Heritage is Trinitarian and Incarnational, so God and all creation are GOOD and useful, to be ordered and used properly. I suppose the problem is more about the question when is enough truly enough, and, please, I'm American, don't show me pictures of sub-Sahara Africa. I'll help after I take care of me first, after all charity begins at home. I know that is laid down somewhere??

Understanding the proto-rule and legacy of Francis is easy and too simple. It is about three movements. It is about God moving, bending down to us in poverty and humility, in humanity, i.e. the offer of relationship. Next, it's about us turning ourselves to God, i.e. relationship, and it is, finally, about our turning to our neighbors, another layer of relationship – simple, huh – Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel.

Relationship (God) – relationship (us) – relationship (neighbor), when these movements become our foundation, life can be transformed. Then the Gospel will cause our hearts to burn within us and the Legacy of Francis will live on and the Gospel will be lived and not be just a book to read.