

The World Needs Us

by
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Nothing has changed since the first Secular Franciscans came together insofar, as the world still needs good influences throughout society, not just in its churches and synagogues.

Most people attend the services of their choice just once a week (if they go at all); so the only way to ensure a constant touch of God in their lives is for other people to bring it to them.

On an individual level, we can have a positive effect on the people in our families, at our workplaces, in our neighborhood and parishes; on a Fraternity level, we can have a positive effect on a larger scale. One person can donate just so much to a given cause or charity; but a Fraternity on a fund-raising streak can raise thousands. One person can write just so many letters to Congress; a Fraternity can write hundreds of letters and gather thousands of signatures on a petition.

Francis wasn't a political animal, and Franciscans aren't particularly called to politics, either. But it's getting more and more difficult in this day and age to separate politics from peace and justice, from hunger and poverty, from human rights. How can you be pro-life without flying in the face of our nation's laws and military budget? How can you work at a soup kitchen without wondering why the city or county isn't helping fund your endeavors?

It's all well and good to tell people they should follow Christ's example and love everyone, but the world often slams the lid on such sentiments before we can get them out of the box. So merely telling people isn't enough. Someone's got to live the words, to show Christ's example can be followed, to do the loving.

To be sure, loving is not the province solely of Franciscans. I don't think there's an SFO alive who couldn't name any number of good (read that REALLY good) people who aren't Franciscans. But, by the same token, we can't wait for the Gandhi's, the John Paul II's, the Mother Teresa's to spring up. They were all special, yes, but they had no more to start with than the rest of us. They simply refused to wait for someone else to do God's work; they figured they'd do what they could and hoped that some others would do the same. Maybe that's the secret.

Someone once said that if everyone swept in front of their own doorway, the world would be clean. Yeah, it's a cutesy slogan, a great bumper sticker. But it's also very true.

Yet most people would rather complain about their neighbor's dirt than sweep up their own. I can't offer any instant solution to the world's problems. But I do know that another truism, the one about being part of the problem if you're not part of the solution, should be taken to heart. SFOs are no stronger, wiser, or more capable than anyone else where the world's ills are concerned. But anyone who is willing to try, who is ready to do something, is taking steps in the right direction.

Francis, like Christ, preached love of neighbor. But unlike many preachers, he didn't stop there any more than Christ had. He put that love into practice. For instance, he ministered to lepers. Now, I'm sure he wasn't the first to say they were "God's children," too.

But how many people who agreed with that statement actually did anything besides nod their heads? Francis knew that mere agreement wasn't enough. Action was called for. It still is.

SFOs are in the world *for* the world. We may not agree with everything that comes down society's pike; Francis didn't; Jesus didn't. But we can't afford to be selective in our caring for and service to others.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions only if those good intentions aren't acted upon. Jesus walked His talk, so did Francis.

We can do no less.