



A Call to Simplify: A Call to Trust

by Sr. Madelyn Gould, SSSF

For most people, October 4th is just another day. For Franciscans, of which I am one, it is a special day of celebration! It is on this day that our beloved St. Francis of Assisi entered eternal life. So we pause to reflect on his many virtues and examine how well we are living what he taught us. On this day, many will give praise for Francis' joy in experiencing the Divine in all of creation. Aware that he too, is a creature of the Creator, Francis sang of his kinship with all of creation in his "Canticle of Creatures"....."Praise to you for Sister Moon and Brother Sun.....Praise to you for Sister Fire and Brother Water....."

In addition to Francis' love and respect for the environment, there is his example of simple living. Francis' merchant father, Pietro, did his best to teach Francis that it was power and influence, the satisfaction of accomplishment in a world of business and trade, and the accumulation of wealth that mattered most in life. These are the standards of success Pietro proclaimed. However, as Francis grew in his relationship with God, it was a simple life style, detachment from material possessions that gave Francis satisfaction of spirit. Francis knew that the hardest test of all would be to stand up to his strong-willed father and testify to his own values.



One day when Francis was begging in the streets of Assisi, he passed his father's cloth shop. Pietro was livid with shame and heartbreak. He ran from the shop, collared Francis and dragged him before the Bishop of Assisi. Calmly, Francis stripped himself of his clothes and placing them reverently at the feet of his father, he declared in a strong voice, " I have called Pietro Bernardone my father....Now I will say Our Father who art in heaven and not Pietro Bernardone." It was done. Francis declared that he wanted to be known for a life of simplicity, a life detached from material possessions.



Francis' simple life style has much to say to us who live immersed in a consumer culture. Too often we believe that we are what we eat, what we wear, what we drive, and what we earn. In this time of economic insecurity, we pause to ponder what God is trying to say to us. Although God may not be calling us to give away all of our possessions as Francis did, God might be calling us to trust that we will be given what we need, although it might not be everything we want. Might God be calling us to simplify, to trust?

This is another in a series of reflections on our parish theme that will be written by our parish pastoral ministers.