

Homily
Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi, Religious
Friday of the 26th Week in Ordinary Time
October 4, 2024

Have you ever wondered why God doesn't reveal Himself or His plan to us? No, that would be too easy. "...although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike." Matt 11:25b. I have to struggle to understand why things happen the way they do, not according to the way I think they should go. God has a plan and He seems unwilling to share that plan with me. The hardest thing I have to do is accept that I don't know it all, that my plan isn't good for everyone, and that God has not only my best interest at heart, but the interest of all His creation. But sometimes, I just wish He would give me a hint to make my life easier.

Francis was noted for his charismatic personality, deep compassion for all, and love for God's creation. Born in Assisi to a wealthy businessman and faithful mother, he led an easy and permissive life, loved by all. His conversion took some time, but eventually, while praying in an old church, he heard Jesus on the Cross telling him to repair the church. Thinking Jesus meant repairing the physical church he was in, and acting impetuously, he stole cloth from his father's business and sold it. His father was not happy. Dragging Francis to the bishop in front of all the townsfolk, his father demanded reparations. The bishop took kindly to Francis, told him to return the money and that God would provide. With this inspiration, Francis renounced his wealth and inheritance, embraced poverty, became a beggar and itinerant preacher, was ordained a deacon, founded the Franciscan Family; this included the Conventuals, the Poor Clares and the Franciscan Order, numbering over 24,000 religious, and countless secular consecrated today. He wrote the Canticle of the Sun, received the stigmata and was canonized only two years after his death. He is the patron of ecologists and of Italy.

Francis thought God was giving him a hint in that church, but Francis got it wrong. And even in Francis getting it wrong, God made something good come out of it. Through Francis, we have all been blessed. We have an example of living a simple life, free from the bondage of worldly allurements. We can see his life of humility and service as a model for ourselves. St. Francis reminds us to trust in God, to come to His Son who will give us rest, to take His yoke upon us and learn from Jesus. It's when we humble ourselves and follow Jesus that we find joy and peace and eventually we can truly rest in the love and mercy of our heavenly Father.