

Thanksgiving Greetings to you.

We are living through a very difficult period, full of questions about life and faith. Some people are worried about health, economy and our future. Others are broken-hearted from personal loss and isolation. We have all lost something in this pandemic, even if that is simply the loss of control over some of our daily activities.

Even through our loss, though, we are fortunate because no matter what is happening in our lives, we are not alone. God loves us and sent Jesus to live with us as a sign of that love; and we have people who love and care for us.

Today, as I write, it is Sunday, October 4, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi. St. Francis was born in thirteenth century Italy. His family had money, and position, but Francis left that behind after two tragic events. He experienced a serious illness, and he was held as a prisoner of war for a year. Throughout his sufferings, Francis thought God was calling him to rebuild local churches in a literal way. He tried to do it, but for many reasons, he could not. He struggled with his sense of calling. He had tried to do what he understood Jesus to be asking of him. But he met opposition and became so deeply discouraged, that he said, in effect, "I just don't care anymore."

But St. Francis didn't just walk away. He did care. Through the rest of his life, he learned the necessity of caring, of loving. Francis grew to understand that God was asking him to rebuild the church spiritually.

St. Francis threw himself into this new aspect of his calling. He dedicated himself to serving Christ among the poor, the sick and the outcasts of the world. He formed a spiritual community and lived as a beggar. His influence continues through the religious order he founded. That order runs thousands of schools, hospitals, service ministries, retreat centres and parishes throughout the world.

I think that learning how to care, how to love, is perhaps the most important spiritual discipline any of us could ever undertake. We need to care for the world and for ourselves. We need to love, so that our lives will have real meaning. Caring beyond ourselves is good for the world, and good for us.

We are the body of Christ in the world. If the world is to be more Christ-like, more caring, more loving, it will be through us, all of us. Loving care calls for such action as prayer, generous thoughts, and kindness even where kindness is difficult. We all have differing strengths and weaknesses. But we are all called to do our part in building up God's kingdom. St. Francis tried one way and failed spectacularly. Then he tried another way and he was brilliant. That is the message of St. Francis to us today: Do what you are called by God to do and do it well. We can live a life that matters by caring about the things that matter. None of us can do everything, but all of us can do something.

In the spirit of St. Francis, let us all pray for our world In the words of St. Francis:

"Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen."

God bless you all.
Please pray for me as I pray for you.

With love,

Joan.