

June/July 2022 Newsletter

To Thine Own Self Be True

~Shakespeare

It was the 13th Century in Assisi, Italy when Francesco (a young man in his early 20s) found himself standing before the bishop, in a cathedral, naked, pleading his case. In that large cathedral with large ceilings and stain-glass windows with the faces of the patristic fathers painted on them, a large crowd stood around and pointed at him and scoffed at him and mocked him for being in the nude. Francesco was standing before the bishop with his father, Pietro, who had taken him to what we would call nowadays, "Court."

His father, Pietro, was a very wealthy affluent merchant in the small city of Assisi. Francesco—being born into privilege and wealth had a radical religious experience after becoming a prisoner of war. And it was that religious experience that led him to renounce his wealth and his affluent lifestyle to follow in the footsteps of Christ by serving the poor. Therefore, he took a boat load of his father's cloth, mounted his horse, and rode through the village to the market where he sold it, with the intent to give the money to the poor. Once his father, Pietro, caught wind of it, he went and found the boy, dragged him through the streets of Assisi and brought him inside of the cathedral, before the bishop (who was acting as judge), and before a crowd of onlookers.

And upon hearing the case, the bishop demanded Francesco to give the money back to his father. Being vexed and perplexed, by his father's actions and his lack of compassion for the poor, Francesco took the money and threw it at his father's feet. Then, he unzipped his garment and began removing his clothes little by little until he was totally naked, and he threw his clothes at his father's feet as well. The crowd gasped in unison.

While covering his mid-section with only his hands, Francesco walked up to his father and said, "No longer will I call you father. Now I will only say, 'My Father in heaven.'" This man went on to lead an entire movement of individuals who were dedicated to Christ through lives of solitude, minimalism, and serving the poor. On July 16th, 1228, Francesco was canonized by Pope Gregory IX as a saint. The young man became known as Saint Francis. To date, his work and his life is still singing a tune of its own...and many people all over the globe have been inspired by Saint Francis' life and writing, including our current pope, who took the name Pope Francis. But all of this was only because of one man's determination to be true to his own convictions.

I leave you with this: It is only when we become determined to be true to our own convictions that we can leave our imprint on those around us.

Pastor Michael