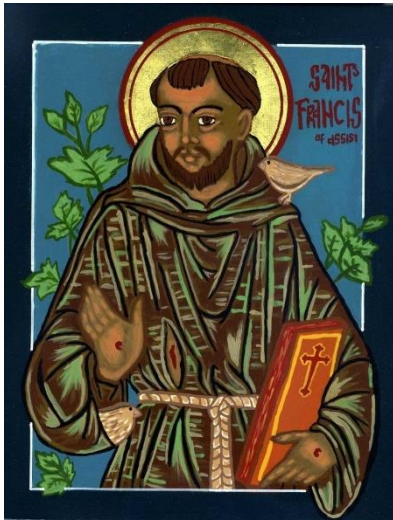


800th Jubilee Celebration of the SECOND LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL (1221) St. Francis of Assisi

I, brother Francis, your lesser servant, with a wish to kiss your feet,
beg and implore you in the love that is God, ^{1 Jn 4:16}
to receive, to put into practice, and to observe, as you should,
these words and the others of our Lord Jesus Christ
with humility and love.
Second Letter to the Faithful #87



We can all imagine the young Francis kneeling in the dilapidated San Damiano, praying before the crucifix, “enlighten the darkness of my mind...” We know the struggles he went through as God revealed to him: *He wanted me to be a new fool in the world. God did not wish to lead us by any way other than this knowledge...*

Assisi Compilation, 18

Returning from Damietta and his visit with the Sultan, Francis saw with new eyes the conditions of his time. He wrote with urgency about the need to understand and to imitate by concrete action, the words and deeds of Jesus Christ by walking in his footsteps and living the Gospel.

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. 1 John 4.16

This was the new kind of fool that was needed 800 years ago.
This is the kind of fool that is needed today!

For eight centuries, Franciscans have seen and heard the call of Jesus to follow the foolish way of the Gospel, countercultural in every time and place if lived authentically. Surely a foolish thing to do, if one plumbs the depths of meaning and implication. Yet, again, we are reminded by Francis in his letter to simply do that – to live the Gospel by receiving the Word of God with kindness, striving to understand each day anew and sharing the good news of God’s love with everyone. Francis assures his followers of the blessing of God in their openness to receive and pass on the message.

For reflection:

- ✚ What are the signs that enable me to know and believe in the love God has for us?
- ✚ What is the foolishness of Jesus’ message for me today?
- ✚ What enables me to constantly go deeper into the implications of living the Gospel concretely?
- ✚ How do I receive God’s blessing in my efforts to live the Gospel?

We pray:

Most high and glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out your holy and true command. AMEN.