Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).

Jon 1:1–2:1- 11; Luke 10:25-37

St. Francis of Assisi

The annual commemoration of St. Francis of Assisi has inevitably become a kind of report card on Pope Francis, who chose the name to reveal his agenda as pope. What St. Francis attempted—a life of radical poverty and compassion for the poor, concern for the Earth, reconciliation with Islam, and rebuilding the church by evangelizing the world with the joy rather than judgment—have all been the hallmarks of Pope Francis’ program.

Today’s readings from the Book of Jonah and Luke’s Parable of the Good Samaritan, both focus on God’s unconditional love, even for enemies, and the challenge to us to show the same compassion to everyone as our neighbors. These themes typify the life of St Francis and the goals of Pope Francis.

The life of a prophet is not easy, and Pope Francis has perhaps at times felt like Jonah after lots were cast to finger him as the cause of the stormy seas threatening to sink the ship. Pope Francis’ foes would throw him overboard if they could for the troublesome questions he has asked the church to face. His call for basic changes in governance and ministry by proposing a synodal and pastoral church instead of an autocratic and juridical one is a revolution. Just when many thought Vatican II was safely behind them, Pope Francis has invoked its vision as essential to the survival of

the church.

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan demonstrates that the Great Commandment of love of God is inextricably bound to love of neighbor. Clergy returning from their sacred worship were confronted by the embodiment of that worship on the road to Jericho. The scholar of the Law wanted Jesus to define the limits of his obligation to be neighborly. Jesus turns his world inside out by saying that his neighbor is anyone in need. The priest and Levite fail to show compassion to the victim on the road, while a Samaritan, Israel's hated enemy, fulfills the law of love.

St. Francis of Assisi was neighbor to the leper he embraced and cared for, and by his mission to meet with the Sultan to talk peace in the midst of the violence of the crusades. Pope Francis has gone to the margins to embrace struggling and suffering Catholics and by his travels to Muslim nations to find common ground based on justice and respect. We celebrate both past and present on the feast of St. Francis and rejoice in the Holy Spirit, who moves through history to renew the church in every age.

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