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"There is need of only one thing" (Luke 10:42).

Saint Francis of Assisi

[*Gal 1:13-24*](#); [*Luke 10:38-42*](#)

The Feast of St. Francis of Assisi today gives us a chance to reflect on the readings in the light of his extraordinary life and charism and, also, on the work of Pope Francis.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul tells how his entire life was turned upside down by his encounter with the crucified and risen Christ on the road to Damascus. He goes from being Saul, persecutor of the church, to Paul, Apostle to the nations.

St. Francis also underwent a profound conversion from soldier to saint, the patron of creation and the Gospel of poverty and simplicity. His gentle spirit and example became the impetus for a larger reform within the medieval church from wealth and power to greater authenticity. Pope Francis, in choosing the name Francis, invoked the saint's commitment to the environment and to a church of the poor for the poor.

In today's gospel reading from Luke, the familiar story of Jesus' visit to the home of Martha and Mary reminds us that before we can serve we must first listen. Mary is praised for understanding this as she sits at the feet of Jesus while her sister frets about preparing the meal. Both forms of hospitality are needed, of course, but prayer is what informs our ministry. St. Francis was first a mystic and contemplative, entirely focused on God. But from his intimate encounter with Jesus, Francis also knew his vocation to repair the church by promoting simplicity and service to the poor. This was the mission God was calling him and the order he founded to carry out.

Pope Francis has taken this same spiritual compass by focusing the church on the joy of the Gospel -- knowing Christ in our hearts, in the poor and in the gift of planet Earth, our fragile, common home. Francis' witness to the poor has challenged a global economic system that must respect workers and the environment if the world is to survive.

St. Francis invites us today to find Christ in our own lives, to listen to his voice and follow his lead as he goes among the poor. Pope Francis invites us to know the joy of the Gospel and the primacy of love in all our relationships. This is God's will, pure and simple, and whatever we need to live it will be provided. Thanks be to God.

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