

**Shaping the Franciscan Footprint
Five Important Spiritual Thoughts from the Liturgy of the Word
...and follow up for the Secular Franciscan
August 4 – August 10**

1 – “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Mt 16:13)**
...Is Jesus the **pattern** and **measure** for everything we do?

2 -- Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself,* take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mt 16:24)**

(...from the Secular Franciscan Gathering 2022)

Extended meditation

There are three elements to the following of Jesus: denial of self, taking up the cross each day, and following Jesus’ steps. If one of the three is missing, then the following of Jesus is imperfect and incomplete and may bring about evil rather than good, even if the disciple is a Franciscan.

It is intriguing to look at the scenario if one of the three is missing for a Franciscan disciple.

+ If we leave out the denial of self, what happens?

The chances are that even as we take up the cross and follow Jesus’ thoughts, we will do it in a selfish way. We become very self-righteous in our approach to what should be and will not admit the possibility of any involvement in evil on our parts. We become judgmental of others and refuse to admit any fault ourselves. We justify ourselves since we argue that we are taking up the cross and following Jesus.

If we do not attack selfishness (the number 1 cause of sin), we will create evil, no matter how religious (Franciscan) we might think we are.

+ What happens if we leave out “taking up the cross”?

The chances are here, that even though we admit our selfishness and try to follow Jesus’ ways, we will not face the crosses that are part of this world, that is, the pain and suffering which are always present in one form or another. And we go into the “pity party”—the “poor me” syndrome—criticizing God and everyone else for making us suffer. We won’t look on the every-day living as something that we must work at, and accept the crosses which are there every day, and work with them.

*There was a great line in the true life adventure of the movie “Apollo 13”. When everything was going wrong, the Director of Operations, Gene Frantz said, we have to **“work the problem.”** He took everything that the trapped astronauts had in their capsule, threw them on a table in front of his engineers, and said those words—work the problem—figure out from what you have, exactly what they have to do. That is, **“Do the best you can***

with the circumstances that you are given as a Franciscan—what might be called the prime directive of the spiritual life. (Television series: Star Trek)

The person who is not accepting the crosses of daily life are not “working the problems” of daily living.

+ And, what if we leave out “following Jesus’ steps”?

Here, we have denied ourselves, and we have taken up the crosses of every-day living, but we don’t have a guide—namely, Jesus and consequently Francis.

We will not consciously do this since we are indeed Franciscans, but it is something that happens because of our **busyness**. We just don’t take the time that we should. We don’t do the meditation, we don’t do the spiritual reading that we should.

Bishop Weisenburger a couple of years ago in one of his writings said that we are spending the majority of our time pursuing these five things, and therefore following them instead of following the Lord:

- **busyness**—we follow our work, play, the things that make up day-to-day living;

- **materialism**—we want more and more things even though we do not need them at all;

- **revenge**—we follow the thought of getting back at people;

- **individualism**—I follow what I want;

- **entitlement**—I want what I think I deserve in life.

Another problem in our Christian world is **ignorance**. And in the same way, one of our major problems might be Franciscan or spiritual ignorance. We don’t do the spiritual reading that we should. We should be reading the thoughts about spiritual development and Christian theology every day in one form or another, and from every point of view, conservative as well as progressive.

The exaggeration of John the Evangelist to close his Gospel is a great one to think about as we think of the reading that we must do: “There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.”

3 – “It is good that we are here.” (Mt 9:33)**

...Do I have a positive attitude in my life right now?

4 – “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” (Mt 9:35)**

...Do I read the Scriptures with the intention of letting them affect my thoughts, words and actions?

5 – “Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” (Lk 12:34)**

...Is my treasure the presence of God in my life?