



**Five Important Spiritual Thoughts from the Liturgy of the Word
...and follow up for the Secular Franciscan
October 6 – October 12**

1 -- "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Lk 11:9)

...When I pray the prayer of petition, do I ask with the belief that the Lord truly will answer in the way *He* wants?

2 – "Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there." (Lk 11:26)

...a frightening thought from Jesus: evil will never give up.

3 -- "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." (Lk 11:28)

...An extended meditation:

What would you feel like?

We were gullible teenagers in a high school designed to help us discern whether we had a vocation to the priesthood or not. Our spiritual director, a kind man that every one of us trusted was giving his usual Wednesday evening talk in our chapel. He came into the chapel and walked slower than usual up to the front, turned to us, very slowly, paused for a long time, it was an uncomfortable silence, and said: "I know something that I wish I didn't know." We were interested, to say the least. He paused with more silence. Then he continued: "When I finish this talk, I know that one of you is going to leave chapel like he always does, walk through those doors back there, and fall over dead."

He paused, again for a long time. Now, what do you think of at a time like that—the man's crazy, but he is holy—he wouldn't be wrong; I hope the man's crazy; who is the person that will die; what if it's me. It really upset a number of us, and you wonder whether he really should have got our attention that way. To this day, I remember well having a very uncomfortable feeling. He did not say anything for the longest time. Finally, he continued: "Now what if that were true. What would you do about it?" And he went on to say that we should be prepared, and he wanted us to read a spiritual magazine. I remember everything about that moment, especially when we were leaving the chapel and going through the doors very cautiously. He got our attention, and I have never forgotten it.

In many ways, Jesus's whole life was a way of getting our attention. He calls us to "listen" to him often throughout the Scriptures.

SHAPING THE FRANCISCAN FOOTPRINT

by Father Mike Scully OFM Cap., Regional Spiritual Assistant



Listening is among the most important virtues that we can have as a human being. Actually it is the most important part of communication which I believe to be the most important principle of leadership for anyone. One of the songs of not too long ago by a group called The Fray was about communication and listening; it was cleverly named "How to Save a Life." In general, the song said that the way to save a life is by communication, and the most important part of communication is to listen.

We do not listen well. What we tend to do is what has been called "selective hearing" or "hearing what we want to hear."

What we are interested in, of course, is "listening to Jesus." I believe that we have the same problem as listening on a human level: we "hear what we want to hear" or "selective listening." There are certain things that we know that the Lord says to us in the Gospels especially, and we often hear only a part of it. We know what Jesus has said about how we treat others—all others. We know what Jesus' words and actions are concerning prayer—and the need for more of it. We all know the basics of what Jesus says in the Scriptures. Often we simply do not want to follow through with what we have heard.

One of the skills that is taught to anyone in a caring profession is the skill of active listening which involves four steps: stop, look, listen and respond. Applied to our listening to Jesus, it means:

- **stop** what you are doing—do only one thing—pay attention to the words of Jesus;
- **look** at the person directly—study the words that Jesus says;
- **listen**—as though nothing else mattered at this moment than what Jesus is saying;
- **respond**—do what you can to move yourself to what the other has said.

God is talking to us. We should be actively listening to what God is saying, as well as what God is trying to say to us in particular.

4 – "Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" (Lk 17:18)

...Do I say "thank you" enough to God and to the people who help me?

5 -- But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you." (Lk 11:41)

... I must remember my Franciscan charism. Am I giving enough of what I have to others?