

**Shaping the Franciscan Footprint
Five Important Spiritual Thoughts from the Liturgy of the Word
...and follow up for the Secular Franciscan
March 23 – March 29**

1 -- Jesus said: "How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God?" (Jn 5:44)

...Do I seek too much the praise from others?

2 – "Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.'" (Lk 1:38)

...Like Mary, I have said "yes" to the Franciscan life. Am I living it out in my life?

MARY'S PRIME DIRECTIVE

The liturgy often refers to the Blessed Virgin.

Quite naturally, we are drawn into what in the study of theology is called "Mariology" or the "Theology of Mary" which is based on the fact that Mary is the earthly Mother of the Incarnate Word of God while he was here on earth with us in person.

What should it mean for us? A mother will be someone who both helps a child and acts as a perfect example for the child. Therefore, there are two things for us to consider here. They might be considered to be, in Star Trek language, the "prime directive" of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

First, Mary helps us. The Church has believed from early on that Mary will intercede for us, much the same way that Mary interceded for the wedding couple at Cana in John's Gospel. In the story she was asking her Son to help a couple, asking her Son to relieve their distress, and then offering one of the ten most important lines in Scripture, I believe: saying to the servants, "*Do whatever he tells you*". The way that Mary helps us primarily is to say to us to follow the directives that Jesus gives us. We do not know how this works in reality, but our *faith* tells us that the good that we ask of God through Jesus will have Mary's endorsement.

Secondly, Mary serves as a perfect example for us as we live our Christian lives on earth. She recognizes what God wants of her, and in her famous words at the Annunciation, understands that she is called by God — "*Let it be done according to God's word,*" – saying "yes, I will do it". And she followed through with her "yes." Once she had said that she would follow what God wanted of her, she tried to do it. Without knowing what it meant, she was present for her Son in everything, a lesson for all of us when we say "yes" to our Franciscan faith and the words of Jesus, no matter what happens.

3 -- "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." (Jn 11:25)

...Is my faith (belief AND action) as strong as it should be?

It is a good spiritual exercise to write your own eulogy—what you think your friends will say about you at your funeral, and what you would like them to say about you.

Things like:

- on a scale of 1-10 where 10 is high, how do you score your prayer life;
- on that same scale, do you think about other people in a good way;
- or how would you score your taking care of those less fortunate than you are?
- and so forth...

4 -- "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (Jn 8:7)

...I too readily judge others. This directive from Jesus concerning the woman should "speak" to me.

5 -- He said to them, "You belong to what is below, I belong to what is above." (Jn 8:23)

...I should spend more time with the Lord, more time with what is above.