

Weekly Musing † October 3, 2011

Tomorrow is the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, (1226 A.D.) Francis has been called the “most admired and least imitated” of all the saints. There were many monastics who lived lives of extreme asceticism but St. Francis in his popularity is the one to make many people aware of this rather common facet of historical Christianity. Ghandi, in his famous definition of the seven deadly sins as he saw them (“wealth without work, pleasure without conscience”) included “religion without sacrifice.” In our misguided helpfulness we often try to make things so easy and free of cost that no one values them.



St. Francis and Brother Wolf

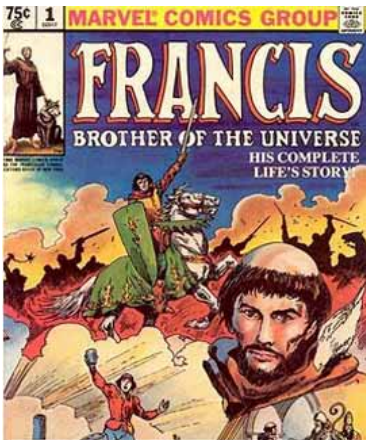


Giovanni Bellini's *St. Francis in Ecstasy*, 1475-80

The story of St. Francis is quite well known and movies have been made about him, most famously Franco Zeffereilli's 1972, *Brother Sun Sister Moon* which featured the enduring music of Donovan. There is a St. Francis of Assisi Omnibus of Sources (1900 pages) that I have in my library. It contains most of the sources of the life of St. Francis, and is well worth having. Although St. Francis attempted to live a simple life, he was far from a simple man. People then, as now, prefer unthinking good to intelligent good. St. Francis often reacted to situations in ways that astounded people, even those who knew him. He kept before him the person and kingdom of Christ and labored to assure nothing stood in the way of either.



St. Francis had his order regularized by Pope Innocent III, who in the Zeffereilli movie is play by Sir Alec Guinness. Innocent III reigned at the high-water mark of the medieval papacy. The grandeur around him shown in the movie is quite genuine. A long time ago I bought the Marvel Comic book of St. Francis to distribute to the young in my parish. It is apparently out of print and now cost \$10 for a used copy.



Marvel Comic Book about St. Francis



St. Francis Receives the Stigmata, from the *Book of Hours of Henry VIII*.

This morning when I did chapel for the 4-year-olds from the preschool I put on my trusty wolf hat (I bought it from the Top of the World Store on the Beartooth Highway) and told them the story of the Wolf of Gubio. The wolf was apparently old and could no longer run down speedy game and so fed on people. The legend is that St. Francis tamed him and told him not to eat people. St. Francis also told the townspeople they had to feed the wolf. A note in my source says that wolf bones were found in an excavation of the old Franciscan cemetery.

St. Francis is popular now because of our rising awareness of the environment. But he also reminds us of what can be achieved for Christ because of sacrifice. This is not an easy lesson for us. We are less and less willing to sacrifice even in order to save the economy. Someone else should sacrifice, or a leader with a magic wand should suddenly appear. I have said before that a saint whose life under careful scrutiny leads us to discomfort, must have something for us from the heart of God. His celibacy alone is a hard sell in this day and age, let alone his asceticism. His most sought after gift from God was the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, which he finally received as reliably reported by his contemporaries. If we bypass these elements of the life of St. Francis we never see deeply into his heart and life.

News from St. Luke's

The rector and our diocesan convention delegates will be at diocesan convention this weekend at Big Sky. In addition to conducting business, this is a time to gather as a community. I especially look forward to the Eucharists.

Remember that we are having a clean up day after church on October 16th. The same weekend is the Ingathering for the United Thank Offer that the Episcopal Church Women sponsor. You can pick up one of the little blue boxes in church or do like I do and write a check.

The youth group goes to the Corn Maize this Wednesday. We meet at the church at 6 pm. We will eat and take off. **Bring a coat and flashlight. Bring a coat and flashlight. Bring a coat and flashlight.** There, that should do it.

Training for lectors and chalice bearers will be held on October 23, following the 10 am service. Training will take about an hour. This is to refresh those already serving and to train those who are new to this ministry. We will walk through Morning Prayer. For questions, call Libby Laird at 655-0151.

Don't forgot our annual Pledge Drive which will be coming up. Rocky Brown will be this year's chair. Pledging is part of the sacrifice of being a Christian. All important things require some sacrifice.

*The Rev. Canon Gary Waddingham
Rector, St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Regional Canon, Diocese of Montana*