

Sample Pulpit Talk

Eight hundred years ago a young man from Assisi felt a call that God wanted him to do something different than what he was doing. By the world's standards, life was pretty good for this young man, Francis as he was called. He was the son of a successful merchant. He was popular with the other young people in his town. He wanted for nothing.

But God had greater plans for him. The Church was not perfect. Just as in many times before and after, corruption and misplaced priorities had infiltrated the Church. The changes were to come from the laity more than the clergy. Francis was called to rebuild the Church, not just in his neighborhood but throughout the world. His calling unfolded gradually, but he was open to following God and his Gospel. He always revered the clergy and kept a respectful love for the Church, the bride of Christ.

His love for Jesus Christ was so intense that he received the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, as a sign of his solidarity with the one that he loved. His love for Christ was so intense that it drew attraction from some of his friends from his town. This movement of following the Gospel in an intentional way grew quickly beyond his town and still continues to this day. The Franciscan Order is the largest order in the world.

Being a secular Franciscan is a way that I can live my life, intentionally following the way of the Gospel modeling the spirituality of St. Francis and his love for Christ. Franciscan spirituality is marked by an intense love for the Eucharist; a strong fraternal communion among Franciscans locally, regionally, nationally, and worldwide; simplicity in living in solidarity with the poor; a sense of humility with the idea that we are servants and not superior to anyone; a complete abandonment to God trusting in his loving care; a process of daily conversion and transformation through the message of the Gospel; and a commitment to peacemaking. Growing in this spirituality has opened me up to explore more of the wonderful ways I can be in communion with the Trinity as well as my neighbor.

You see that Franciscans wear a tau. The tau, as a symbol of sanctity, comes from Ezekiel 9:4, "Go through the city of Jerusalem and put a tau on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." It is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and looks very much like the letter "T". St. Francis was present at the Fourth Lateran Council where he heard Pope Innocent III announced that for him, for the Church, and for every Catholic at the time, the symbol they were to take as the sign of their Passover was the tau Cross. From then on, the TAU became Francis' own coat of arms and he often used it in his writings as his personal signature. It remains so today. The TAU carries with it all of the symbolism of the Cross of Christ as well as Francis' ideal of life and dream for himself and his followers.

If you feel called to explore this way of life, please see me after Mass or visit divinemercuryregion.com for more information or to find a fraternity near you.