

**Embracing Sine Proprio
(The Franciscan Lens to Vocation
Response and Fidelity)**

A Lord's Flock Worship Service Topic

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Franciscans will be celebrating the 800th death anniversary of St. Francis this year. St Francis was a young man from a rich family, spirit-inspired, charismatic and romantic at heart. However, he was ahead of his time; he aspired to knighthood. He participated in a war between Assisi and Perugia, but he was captured and held prisoner for nearly a year, during which he became ill and began his spiritual shift. He converted and gave himself to Jesus and even gave up everything – “sine proprio” (not possessing anything of his own). He was canonized by Pope Gregory IX on July 16, 1228. Thus, his exemplary life epitomizes a faithful submission to the will of God.

1. St. Francis left a legacy that has stayed for 800 years. He called God *“the highest and most glorious; he asked God to be enlightened and to give him right faith, certain hope, and perfect love.”*

1.1. Right Faith in God means we must let Him be God. Let him guide us.

1.2. Certain hope is not hope about what we want; it is knowing that God's will shall be done at the right time.

1.3. Perfect love means charity or love in action. Love and sacrifice go together; one is willing to offer effort with a smile for the other. Otherwise, it is not love, just sentimentality. Conversely, sacrifice without love is cruelty. When love is perfect, we can sacrifice for the good and give our all.

1.4. St Francis asked to be enlightened. Understanding is a sense and a gift from God. Let us make time to think about our day, to understand ourselves, and realize God's message for us. On the other hand, knowledge is not just about facts. Let us ask the Lord for discernment - to help us know His will and if He agrees with what we want.

2. St. Francis desired to carry out God's true and holy will.

2.1. God called “Francis, Francis, Francis!” He called him three times which means His call was personal and intentional. Similarly, God's initial call to each of us is personal and comprises: **a passive stance** – our default stance is being a member of the community; **an active stance** - our response involves being willing to give up anything that

undermines doing God's will. Our active response is regularly finetuned/renewed.

2.2. God instructed Francis *“go and repair my house which you see is falling to ruin.”*

2.2.1 God calls us just the way we are because something is **falling to ruin**. God calls us in our context - not perfect or experienced. God begins His work wherever we currently are and with whatever we have. When God calls, we must respond. We should not wait, nor let Him wait until we think we must accomplish other things first. If we feel we are not enough, God will strengthen us. Having the desire to be better is enough.

2.2.2 “Go repair my house.” He calls us to a mission, a task according to His will and purpose. When God calls us personally, the important thing is to pick a partner/s who will help make us holy and we can go forward and make our family (or community) holy. Let us try to be forgiving of one another (parents and children) and learn from our mistakes. Let us choose people who will lead us to Jesus. No person can fulfill everything we want. Only God fulfills. Ultimately, we all must return to God.

3. St. Francis stigmatization in 1224. He had a vision in La Verna of a crucified Christ adorned with 6 wings of a seraph. The vision enkindled in him mixed feelings of sweet joy and compassionate sorrow. Later, he discovered that the marks of the wounds of Jesus – the stigmata had appeared on his body; he bore the nail wounds (gaping wounds that bled) for the final two years of his life. He committed to do what God wanted; not what he wanted. He became poor; humble, lowly, disciplined and committed in service to others. He prayed for two graces which gave him the stigmata:

3.1. To feel in his soul and body that pain which Jesus endured in His bitter Passion.

3.2. To feel in his heart that exceeding love which Jesus chose to bear willingly for us sinners.

4. Similarly, love requires us to give ourselves. If we love like God and love what God loves, then we will never go wrong. God's love is the true and correct love. When death comes, we do not fear, because this will lead us to Jesus. St Francis did not fear, because he was reconciled in his heart.

CONCLUSION: St. Francis desired to have a heart totally dedicated to Christ. Likewise, let us walk in the Spirit and allow the Spirit to lead us.

REFLECTION: Every day, let us ask the Lord, “how do You want me to be your disciple?”

SCRIBES Ministry

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