

October 4, 2023



House Circular #
Subject: Feast of St. Francis

“The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus, to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see a leper. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what seemed bitter to me turned into sweetness of soul and body.”
Testament 1-3.

Dear Sisters and Associates,

I am drawn to the story of St. Francis kissing a leper. Thus, as I pondered on what to share for the Feast of St. Francis, I consulted the Testament of St. Francis. This story challenges us as we face lepers in our lives and as we struggle to be in touch with the feelings that come from embracing lepers as well as the feelings we experience when we avoid them or refuse to acknowledge them.

Many know the story of St. Francis kissing the leper and how that experience changed him; he went from avoiding them to being among them. How did that transformation unfold? Francis gives us the answer when he says: “The Lord Himself led me among them (the lepers).” Francis acknowledges the grace of God leading him to do something that was impossible before that graced moment. God continues to invite us to embrace lepers and he offers us conversion just as he offered it to Francis.

Who are today’s lepers? They are those among us who are outcasts. Today’s lepers are those people we label as being different from us and those who think differently from us. Today’s lepers are the immigrants we choose to ignore, the homeless we judge, those in the LGBTQ community we do not accept, and the poor we find unrelatable. Furthermore, the leper might also be the self you refuse to embrace-areas in your life waiting to be transformed. We might also be lepers to others. Consider this: our lepers can lead us into a conversion experience when we embrace them.

Think of a time in your life when you reached out to someone, even your Sister in Community, whom you had avoided. How did you feel? If you experienced joy, sweetness, and peace you were blessed with a gift from God because you responded to the invitation to embrace a person you had previously ignored or avoided.

May today’s feast help us to draw closer to people we have avoided in our lives. May we experience the sweetness of soul and body as Francis did.

HAPPY FEASTDAY!

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