

The Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi
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“Life begins at the end of your comfort zone. Yearning for a new way will not produce it. Only ending the old way can do that. You cannot hold onto the old, all the while declaring that you want something new. The old will defy the new; the old will deny the new; the old will decry the new. There is only one way to bring in the new. You must make room for it.” (~Neale Donald Walsch)

Throughout the perpetual, unfolding journey of our lives, we are constantly being presented with moments of transition and change which are either welcomed or uninvited...moments that conclude one chapter within our lives, only to simultaneously begin a new one. Rarely are we graced with the privileged opportunity to either choose or create our own transitions or challenges in life and, when we do, we are quickly reminded of our limited humanness. ...And whenever we encounter such significant transitions as death, birth, illness, marriage, change in employment, accidents, or even advancement in age, we can quickly become callused and inattentive towards what each of these transitory moments might be teaching us.

Instead, we continuously try to mask that momentary pain of transition, by desiring to rapidly return to our fast-paced life which can often resemble a soccer match. When you think about it, we are constantly running between two, opposing goals...always running and, at the end of our day, judging ourselves according to how much we have accomplished.

Routines and habits become dominant and eventually overtake our lives. Yet, amidst this unrelenting busyness exists a threshold...a solid and immovable anchor, a quiet stillness which speaks...a stillness who is Christ. ...And as soon as we become permanently aware of that presence, we realize that within the chaos of our everyday lives, we are not so much being asked to run, but to stop and to walk over to that immense solitude, so that we can better feel the “pulse of life” which is the Love of God.

This evening, we gather together to both commemorate and reflect upon the life of St. Francis of Assisi, a legend of a man who contended with the numerous pressures and expectations that were placed upon him by both his family and society, only to be eventually overcome by the undeniable presence of God. Truly, the life of Francis teaches us that the only way to transcend beyond something is by first meeting the Transcendent and forfeiting our comfort zone. Otherwise, we will continue to yearn for change, but never actually initiate it.

In an incredible way, Francis was able to stop running between the demands of life and fully enter into the moment...to transition from a chaotic world and become alone with He who is the Alone. Although his parents may not have necessarily understood Francis’ call, Francis was secure enough within his Faith to confidently depart from the old way...appreciating the lessons and formation it offered...and adopted a “newness in Christ”. Sometimes, in order for us to reach Him in whom we do not know, we must take a path with which we are not familiar.

The life in which Francis transitioned into and adopted was one of immense poverty and struggle. However, the authenticity and integrity through which Francis lived the Gospel Life had not remained unnoticed. Slowly, men and women began to notice the radical and prophetic vocation which Francis was living, and gravitated towards it. Respectively, Francis grew to realize that the love and gifts which he was receiving could not be contained solely by him. Suddenly, the people of Assisi were provided with an illustrious example whose simple life advocated a profound message...that, namely, we are a circumference people who are always afraid of entering into the true “Core” of life...unless, of course, we are forced into it by either love or trauma.

The human example of Francis serves as a reminder to each of us that, as human beings, “nothing human can be foreign to us”. Just as Francis was able to transcend beyond his own routine in order that he might grow more accustomed to the new divine perspective, so also are we encouraged to share in that same prospect.

The early community of Friars and Sisters, which Francis’ pure love for Christ had attracted, serves as an underlying testament to the importance of community within those encountered “touch-stone” moments of transition and change, which we so regularly experience. Francis seemed to realize that a community provides

different facets, different perspectives, and different faces of a tremendously loving and communal God. Often, I feel that the importance of community is overlooked within our society. Community enables us to uncover more meaning within the vast mystery of life than we would ordinarily be capable of doing by ourselves.

Francis sought wisdom – and wisdom was imparted to him...and the wisdom that was given to him was simply that the Gospel message was and is true. Francis had enough faith to implement the teachings of the Gospel within his own life and to share it with others. As he cooperated...as he journeyed...and as he listened to that wisdom, he learned that life is all about sharing whatever we receive from God with one another, because, when we share, God is showing us that we are ultimately never alone...and that we never have to walk alone in life. The example of Francis relentlessly invites us to become “Brothers and Sisters” to others, to society, and to the entirety of creation.

Have you ever found yourself in a moment of sorrow, in a moment of panic, of pain, or of anguish, where you felt completely and utterly alone...where no one could understand you? Perhaps somewhere along the line, someone entered into your life and simply shared. In that moment of immense vulnerability, that person had become a brother or a sister to you. That is the power of community, especially during our transitory moments in life. The voice of Francis is as prophetic now as it was 800 years ago. He encourages us to open our minds and hearts to those that surround us, and to share our blessings with them. Perhaps it's *something that we can say...something that we can do...something that we can give...* just to instill life and hope within the individual. How fortunate and blessed is the human being who comes to know and recognize his or her capability of making a positive impact within the life of another individual.

As we embark ever forward on our own respective journeys in life, may we be constantly reminded of Francis' commission that: *“While there is time, we should always seek and strive to do good.”* May we be more mindful of the copious, transitory moments in our lives and begin viewing those moments as invitations towards growth. May we always create a community of support which is attentive and affirmative towards the needs of others. May we leave our comfort zone only to depart from our old ways in life in order to adopt the new...and, most importantly, may we ask God to give us the grace, to give us the strength, and to give us the guts to believe that all of this is true.