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Holy Faith, Santa Fe
5 October 2025

Feast of St. Francis
Jeremiah 22.13-16
Psalm 148.7-14
Galatians 6.14-18
Matthew 11.25-30

In the name of the one, true, and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we celebrate our feast of title, the feast of our patron, St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis is our patron because the full title of this parish is The Church of the Holy Faith of St. Francis of Assisi – named after the city itself, la Villa Real de la Santa Fe de San Francisco de Asis, the Royal Town of the Holy Faith of St. Francis of Assisi.

But why celebrate the feast of our patron? Why do we remember a saint of the Church who, like Francis, lived eight hundred years ago? Well, optimistically, to do so calls attention to the qualities attributed to that saint, and which hopefully imbue the ethos of the parish. As many of you probably know, Francis was born into a wealthy Italian merchant family in Assisi at the end of the Twelfth Century. At that time in Italy, poverty was rampant and Francis would see beggars and lepers on the city streets. Feeling touched to the core of his being, he renounced all material values and devoted himself to serving the poor, despite intense opposition from his father. Francis would go on to found the Order of Friars Minor, a name he chose to emphasize his desire to be numbered among the “least” of God’s servants. Later in life, due to his poetry, especially “Canticle of the Sun,” [which the choir will sing during the censing at the Offertory,] Francis became associated with love of all God’s creation and love for all God’s creatures. Hence, many churches hold an annual Blessing of the Animals

service near the Feast of St. Francis, and Holy Faith is no exception, so bring your four-legged, or no-legged, or winged companions to the courtyard around the St. Francis statue this afternoon at 4:00 for a blessing.

It's because of these two themes in Francis' life – giving up material values and material possessions to serve the poor, and a love for all God's creation – that we pray in today's collect, "grant unto thy people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world; that, following the way of blessed Francis, we may for love of thee delight in thy whole creation with perfectness of joy." It seems these two forces – the vanities of this world and God's good creation of this world are almost always diametrically opposed: what Qoheleth, the perhaps cynical teacher in Ecclesiastes, calls vanity of vanities...all is vanity," versus the created order as God originally intended before human self-will made a mess of things.

I would suggest that one must renounce the vanities of this world – the power, the prestige, the proud consumption of material goods – in order to delight in God's whole creation. This process of renouncing the vanities of this world in order to enjoy all God has done for us is what I believe St. Paul is referring to in his message to the Galatians as glorying in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to us, and we to the world. Jesus on the cross has already reconciled all the world – vanities and everything – to himself. And we are called to accept him and follow him as Lord so that we can delight in God's whole creation with perfectness of joy. Why do we do this? For the love of God in thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. How do we do this? Gladly – and in following the way of blessed Francis.

The Church of the Holy Faith does this as well, true to the example of our patron. We renounce the material values of this world in exchange for the Gospel imperative to serve the poor. Through the leadership of the Mission & Outreach Committee, the outlays for outreach from your generosity and that of the Women's Guild, your volunteering throughout the community, feeding the hungry in Santa Fe, and working with other ministries, we help alleviate suffering in this community, in this country, and in this hurting world.

And we care for, preserve, and beautify the environment both within and around Holy Faith. We have erected a graceful sculpture of St. Francis in the courtyard; we have added grace-filled Stations of the Cross in the nave; we have restored the holy Chapel of the Good Shepherd; we have renewed the worship space by placing the font front and center at the entrance of the church as a reminder of the centrality of baptism in our lives; we have cultivated flowers in the Breezeway Garden, the Memorial Garden, and in front of the church; all for the love of God so that we may be co-creators with God and might delight in God's good creation. This is called stewardship, stewardship of the environment, stewardship of all with which God has entrusted us, out of thankfulness for all that God has done for us. I'll have more to say about stewardship as our annual pledge campaign gets underway next month, but be aware that almost every Scripture reading can be a springboard for a lesson on stewardship, and stewardship isn't just a month-long endeavor but a year-round calling of Jesus on our hearts.

But even at Holy Faith, the material values of this world can intrude. The vanities of this world can tempt us to glory in something other than the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ. The burdens of this world can sap our energy. But we can find solace and strength in Jesus' words that we heard this morning for the Feast of St. Francis, part of the so-called Comfortable Words that we hear after the confession and absolution at each Rite I liturgy. Jesus says, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Come to me, all who labor and are burdened – burdened by the vanities of this world, burdened by self-imposed demands, burdened by things we cannot control, burdened by grief – and Jesus will give us rest. And then an invitation from Jesus – take my yoke upon you, put my yoke on you, and learn from me, and you will find rest for your souls. There's that promised rest again, resting in Jesus' outstretched arms, resting in Jesus' embrace, resting next to Jesus' gentle and humble heart. For Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden is light.

I don't know if you have ever seen a yoke, but growing up in Vermont near farm country I occasionally would see a pair of oxen in the field, yoked together, pulling a plow behind them. A yoke is a double, u-shaped device, where the opening of the "u" is fastened around the head of each animal, forcing the pair to work together. The animals are side-by-side, eyes straight ahead; they can't go in opposite directions, they're yoked together.

Imagine being yoked to Jesus. Imagine putting Jesus' yoke on you. Jesus says, take my yoke upon you, and learn from me. Jesus is in the lead, and all we have to do is follow. If we're yoked, it's impossible to go in a direction opposite from Jesus. For

Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden is light. Jesus is doing all the heavy lifting. Jesus is lifting all the burdens off our shoulders – all the vanities of this world that weigh us down. Jesus is shouldering the load if we let him.

So on this Feast of St. Francis our patron, gladly renounce the vanities of this world – those burdens that weigh us down and don't build us up – so that we can put on the yoke of Jesus and, for the love of God and through the love of God, delight in all God's good creation with joy. Amen.