

# *Conference of National Spiritual Assistants*

## **Secular Franciscan Order**

**Fr Anthony Fox, OFM Conv.**  
PO Box 21 Kellyville NSW 2155  
Mobile Phone: 0400 404 129  
Email: tony3171@yahoo.com

**Fr Joe McKay OFM**  
21 Adel St Kedron Qld 4031  
Mobile Phone: 0412 076 913  
Email: jmckay@franciscans.org.au

**Fr John Cooper OFM Cap**  
96 Catherine St Leichhardt 2040  
Mobile Phone: 0412 162 946  
Email: johncap@ozemail.com.au

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*Monthly Spiritual Message October 2020*

### **THE MERCY OF GOD AND “LAUDATO SI” IN POPE FRANCIS AND ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI (Part 4)**

Pope Francis reminds us time and time again that SIN does MATTER. Mercy assumes sin.

Francis of Assisi was a man of mercy. In the opening lines of his Testament he wrote: “When I was in sin, the Lord gave me brothers!” St. Bonaventure a Theologian and one of his biographers wrote: “In these latter days the grace of God our Savior has appeared to his servant Francis to all who are truly humble and lovers of holy poverty. In him they can venerate God’s superabundant mercy and be taught by his example to live in conformity with Christ, and to thirst after blessed hope with unflagging desire.”

One of the principals of Francis of Assisi’s personal prayer life was always pleading for the mercy of God upon the whole world. On several occasions the Friars would report they heard Francis groan aloud imploring the Divine Mercy for sinners and weeping for the Lord’s passion as if it were before his eyes.

In “Laudato Si” Pope Francis implores everyone to be people of mercy. We can pattern our loves on the person of Francis of Assisi because he patterned his life on the Crucified Jesus Christ.

When Francis lay dying in 1226, he asked the Friars to sing with him the Cantic of the Creatures. Brother Elias seated by his side protested: “Should you not keep recollected and silent?” St. Francis replied: “O let me rejoice in God, and praising Him in all my sufferings, since by a wonderful grace, I feel myself so close to the Lord that, in the knowledge of His mercy, I can sing again.”

In the Encyclical Pope Francis urges the world powers to see through the eyes of mercy that all our economic and political systems should be guided by values of the Gospel by prioritizing the most vulnerable and to serve the wellbeing of the people and the planet rather than seeking profit and growth that can only be for the benefit of the few.

This is an inner call to all of us to do what is right for the world.

“Be praised my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very useful to us, and humble and precious and poor.” St. Francis wrote in the Cantic.

A concern we are dealing with all over the world, is the debate as to whether Water is a basic human right over the domestic need that relegates this right to corporate and industrial demands?

Pope Francis wrote that water is a “fundamental right which conditions the exercise of other human rights.”

We know that water is necessary for life on earth that has been exploited into a commodity.

This results in life-threatening depletion and degradation that leaves those most impoverished without access to safe drinking water.

Pope Francis writes: “Today, in view of the common good, there is an urgent need for politics and economics to enter into frank dialogue in the service of life.”

“Laudato Si” is now part of our conversation as a Church and also as a world. I feel energized that more people will feel and act upon these connections, seeing that the Social Teaching of the Church and true meaning of mercy are fused together in one document.

Now five years on this Encyclical challenges us to be deeper committed faith filled Catholics and Franciscans so we can become authentic people of the Gospel.

Beyond our Church, people are seeing that “Laudato Si” makes known that we do not stand alone in these issues. They are even being discussed at the highest levels of Government and among ordinary citizens religious. Pope Francis in May 2020 inaugurated a year to explore some of the themes running through “Laudato Si” to unleash the blessing of mercy that will engage Christians and the world in an international reflection process and will spring into action what our shared response should be to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. At the heart of the Pope’s reflections is the question: “What kind of world do we want to leave those who come after us, to Children who are now growing up? In the concluding part of the document Pope Francis prays that our faith in God can shape and inspire our care of the environment. The Sacraments, the Trinity, the model of the Holy Family and our hope for eternal life can teach, motivate and strengthen us to protect the natural world that God has given us. St. Francis gives us the same summary in the Canticle of the Creatures when he added the final verse:

“Be praised My Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living person can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin. Blessed those whom death will find in your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm. Praise and bless, my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility. Amen.

Peace and all good things!

Fr. Anthony P Fox OFMConv.  
National Spiritual Assistant.

PLEASE, DISTRIBUTE THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR FRATERNITY,  
ESPECIALLY INCLUDE THOSE MEMBERS, WHO ARE ISOLATED.  
MANY OF THEM WRITE TO US TO SAY THANKS FOR THE CONTACT.