



St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity, Triangle Virginia

20240713

# On-Going Formation

Christ: Way, Truth, and Life

Francis and Transforming Friendship

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# 2024 On-Going Formation Theme

- Living in Friendship with Jesus and Francis: Manifesting Our Savior and Our Seraphic Father in Our Daily Lives



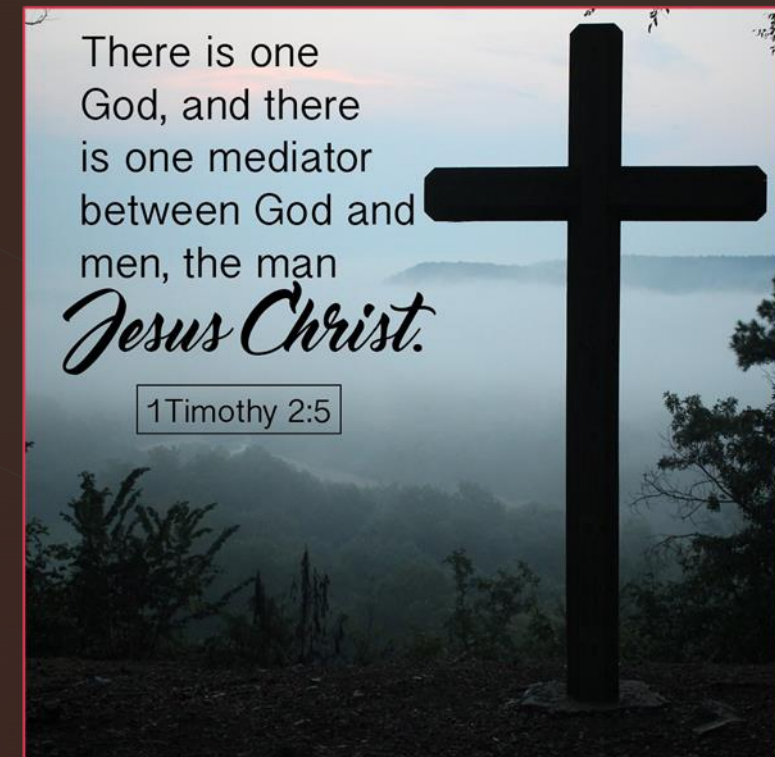
“Forgiveness is redemptive suffering.”





# Christ: Mediator Between God and Men

- “There is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5, Gal 3:19-20, Heb 8:6).
- A mediator is one who brings about union between people who are separated from one another.
- In a sense there is no separation between God and men, because God’s presence in man is so intimate that (as St. Paul says) “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).
- In another sense, *sin completely cuts man off from that intimacy with God to which He was raised by grace.*
- God could have restored this union in a direct way, without the intervention of a mediator, but He chose to repair the damage done by sin and re-establish man as a son of God, through the Incarnation of His Only-Begotten Son.



# Christ: Way, Truth, & Life

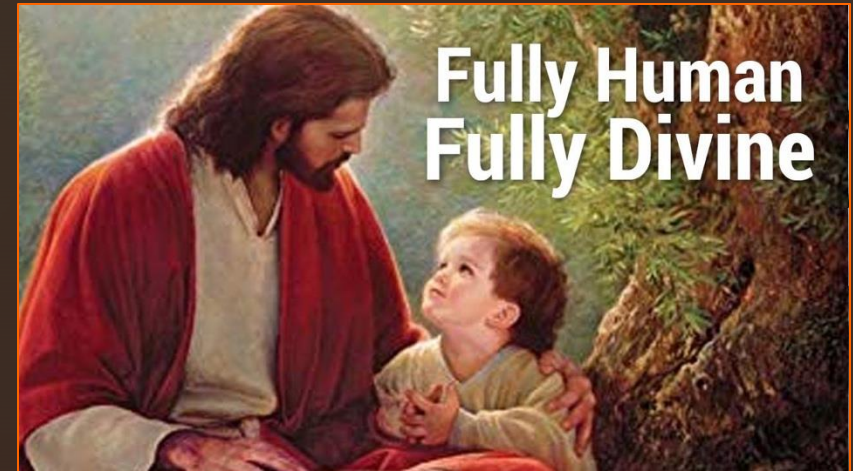


The Mystery of Jesus Christ (pages 164-198)



# Christ: Way, Truth, and Life

- "...One must make a distinction between error, ignorance, and not-knowing.
  - Error means **regarding something false as true, or vice versa.**
  - Ignorance means **not knowing something that one ought to know** (a lack of due perfection).
  - Non-knowing is **not knowing something that one need not know.**"
- In this sense, **error and ignorance have no place in Christ.** They would go against the dignity of His Person and against divine Providence itself, for not endowing Christ's human nature as befitted His mission as Teacher.
- But it is correct to say that **there were things that Christ did not know and did not need to know:** as we have seen, His mind was not omniscient.
- ...the Magisterium has at various times rejected the theory which says that Jesus was ignorant of certain things, including the day of judgment.
- **Ignorance (unlike the capacity to suffer pain) was not necessary to the redemptive mission of the Son of God.**



# Jesus Christ: Priest of the New Covenant

- In the Letter to the Hebrews, Christ is depicted as the High Priest of the New Covenant (Heb 8:1).
  - Priestly Kingship
  - Royal Priesthood
- The Messiah would save his people through his suffering.
  - Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Is 42: 1-7, 49: 1-9, 50: 4-11, 52:12-53:12)
- To say that the people are saved through the sufferings of the Messiah means that his death is redemptive, is a sacrifice in the strict sense of the word.
- The author of the Letter to the Hebrews not only makes our Lord's priesthood the central theme of his message, but depicts the entire messianic work of Christ as a "priestly mediation", describing Him as the great priest of the New Alliance.
- Think about the Last Supper and the Eucharist.

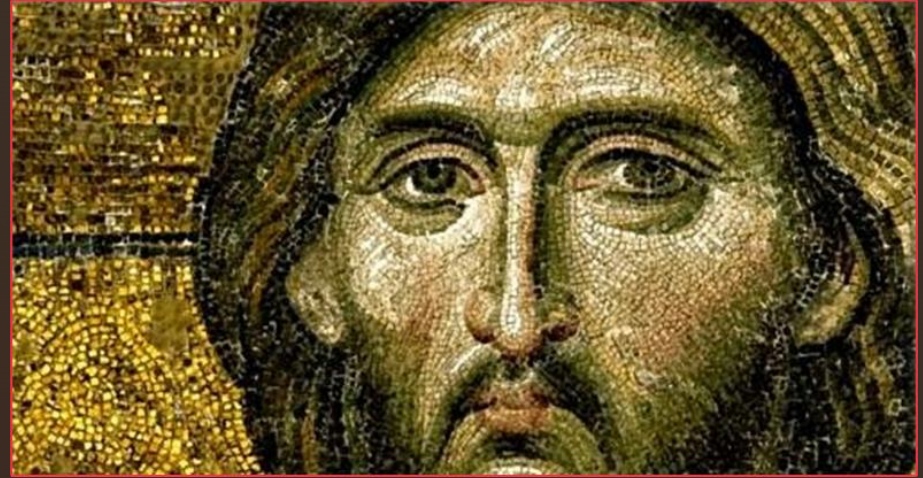
Jesus never called Himself a priest. However, Christ's priesthood is the central theme of the Letter to the Hebrews.





# Jesus Christ: Priest of the New Covenant (cont.)

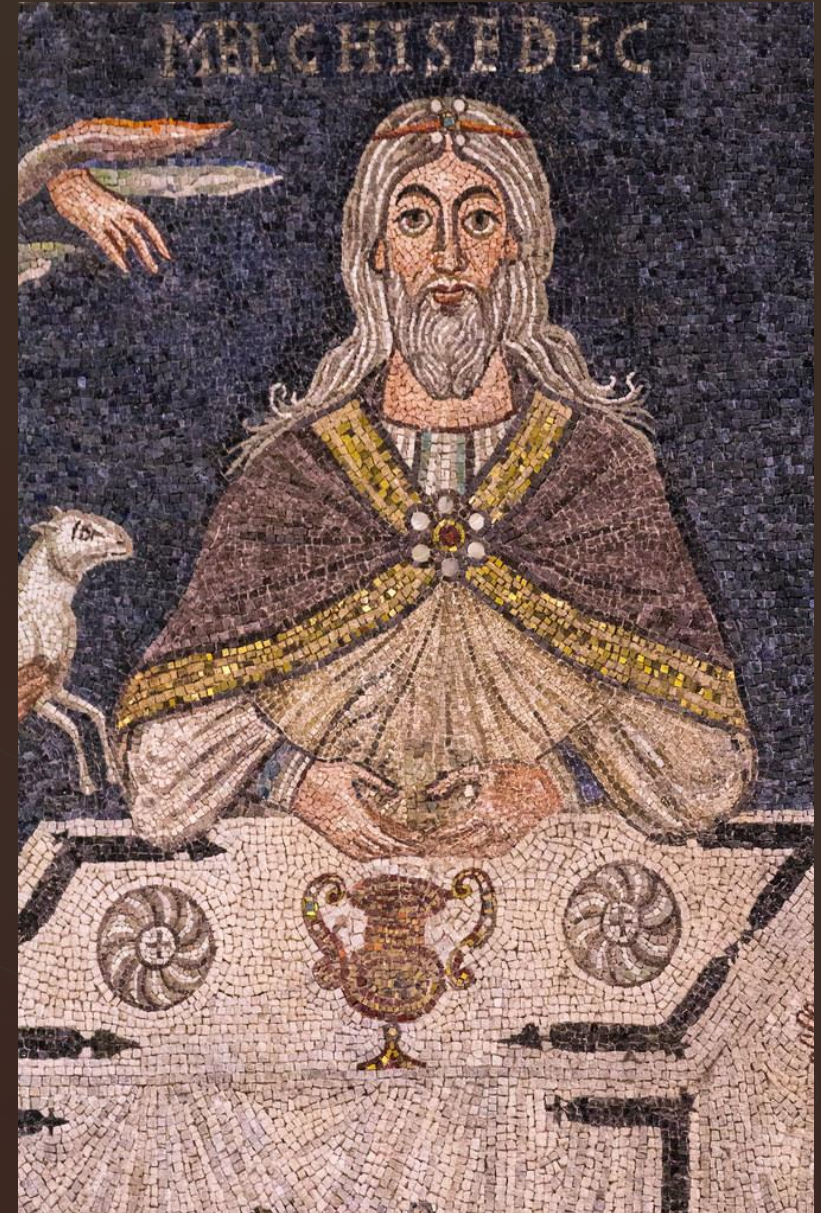
- It is enough to recall what Jesus says at the Last Supper when he refers to His death as the sacrifice of the New Covenant, which He offers for the forgiveness of sins.
- The fact that Christ Himself identified His death as a sacrifice implies that he is a priest: the offering of sacrifice is the act proper to priesthood.
- The underlying argument of the Letter can be summed up in this way: the covenant implies sacrifice, and therefore a mediator with priestly function.
- When Hebrews speaks, therefore about a new covenant it also speaks of a new priesthood.
- The very nature of the covenant (called “new” to distinguish it from “old”) created a need to examine in what sense Jesus Christ continued the Old Covenant and in what sense He superseded it.





# Jesus Christ: Priest of the New Covenant (cont.)

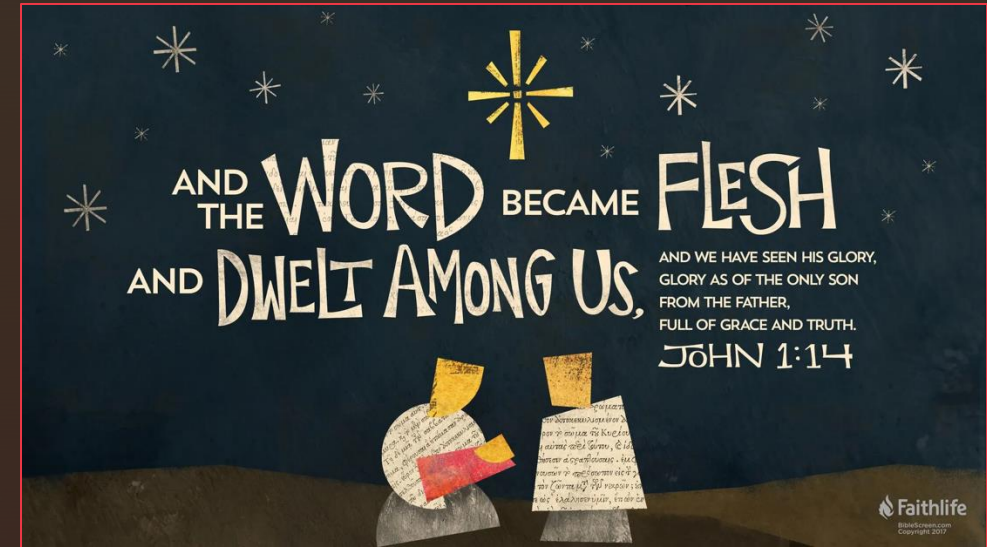
- If the death of Christ was a sacrifice which superseded the old sacrifices, and it was prophesied that the Messiah would be a priest and king, *his priesthood must similarly have superseded the Levitical priesthood.*
- The fact that *the Old Testament speaks of the priesthood of Melchizedek* shows that the Levitical priesthood was not the only one, and so, *although Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, it must be said of Him (as Psalm 110 does) that He is a priest.*
- Indeed, his is the only priesthood, superseding all others, just as his sacrifice is unique and supersedes all others.
- *If the death of Christ was a sacrifice which superseded the old sacrifices, and it was prophesied that the Messiah would be a priest and a king, his priesthood must similarly have superseded the Levitical priesthood.*
- He is a priest in the order of Melchizedek, a priest forever.





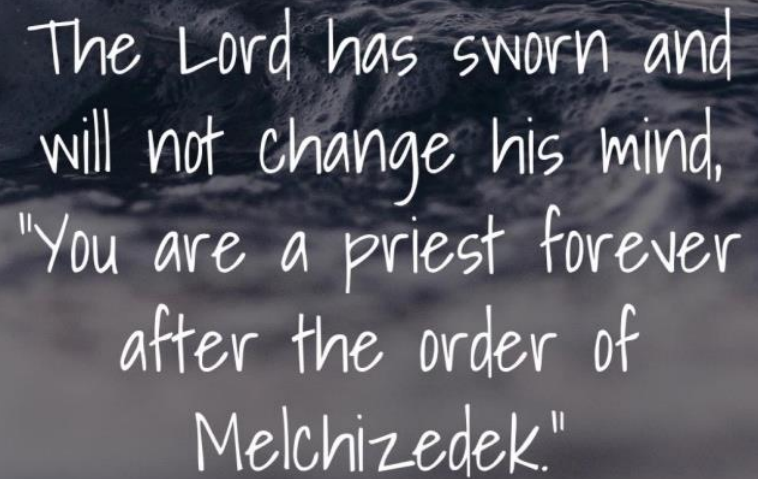
# Jesus Christ: Priest of the New Covenant (cont.)

- The Letter to the Hebrew expressly propounds a concept of priesthood in two passages, each time in connection with sacrifice (Heb 5:1-2 & 8:3).
  - Heb 5:1 – “Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.”
- ***It is essential for the priest to belong to the human family (“chosen from among men”) and to have been chosen and established by God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.***
- Christ’s mediation (1 Tim 2:5) is more effective and on a different level from that of the prophets (Heb 1:1), the angels (1: 4-6), and Moses (3: 2-3):
  - “Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises” (Heb 8:6).
- ***Christ’s mediation is linked up with His redemptive death*** (Heb 9:15 and 12:24).



# Jesus Christ: Priest of the New Covenant (cont.)

- This priestly mediation includes (Hebrews stresses) the fact that Jesus shares our flesh and blood and has also partaken of our suffering and death (2:11-18).
- He partakes of everything that is ours—with the exception of sin (4:15), because it was fitting that our High Priest should be holy and spotless so that, not needing to offer sacrifices for himself, he could offer for all the people the sacrifice of his own body and blood (7:26).
- He is a mediator who does not stand in need of anyone else's mediation; He is a perfect priesthood.



The Lord has sworn and  
will not change his mind,  
"You are a priest forever  
after the order of  
Melchizedek."

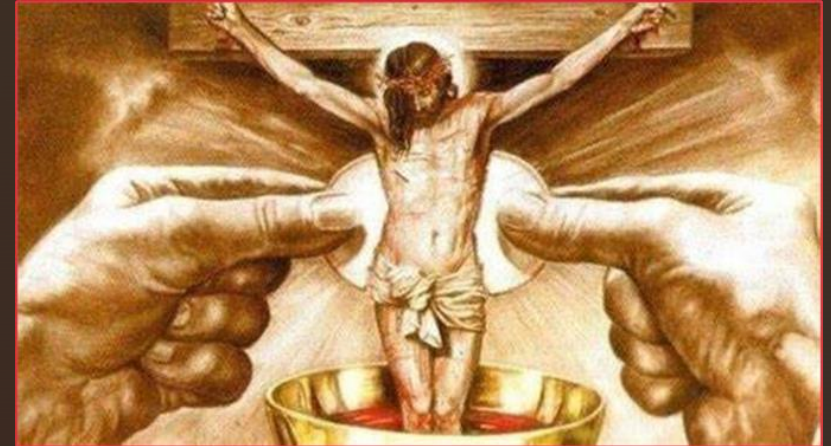
## There are reasons for describing Christ with Psalm 110:

- Because "Melchizedek" means "king of righteousness", and "King of Salem" means "King of Peace."
  - The kingdom of the Messiah will be the kingdom of peace and righteousness
- Because Melchizedek is "without father or mother or genealogy" and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.
- Because Melchizedek blessed Abraham and received tithes from him which showed that Melchizedek was higher than Abraham → This shows the superiority of Christ for whom Melchizedek is a type.



# Jesus Christ: Priest of the New Covenant (cont.)

- Christ's priesthood (already prefigured by Melchizedek) is an ***eternal*** priesthood.
- ***Because He holds His priesthood forever, Jesus is always making intercession for us.***
- However, his immolation was ***once for all***.
- ***Through His death and with His blood, he sealed the New Testament, therefore, He is the mediator of the New Covenant.***
- Christ's identity is the perfect identity between the priest who offers and the victim offered which makes for the perfect unity between internal and external sacrifice, adoration of God "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23).
  - This is always the purpose of the highest form of worship (sacrifice) when it is offered sincerely.
- ***"The unity in the sacrificial act between what is offered and the offerer brings to its fullness what is, in a sense, the universal law of all sacrifice."***



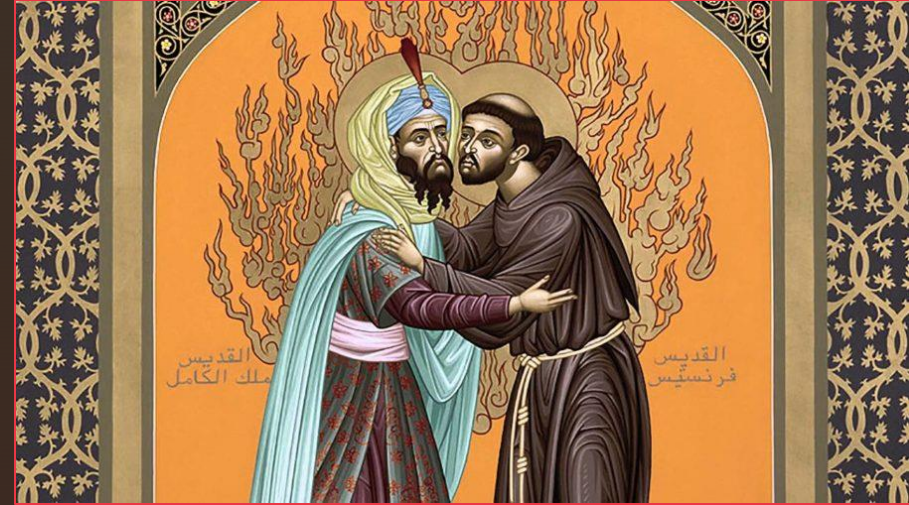
# Francis and Nonviolence

St. Francis and the Foolishness of God (pages 83-103)



# Francis and Facing the Enemy

- The most salient aspect of **Francis' encounter with the Sultan** is that Francis, in the midst of wartime, went to the enemy *unarmed and loved the enemy as a brother*.
- Francis' only rule for life was the Gospel. Thus his unarmed approach, his brotherly love for the sultan, and his extraordinary capacity to contradict cultural norms reflected his understanding of how Christ would have faced the sultan.
- **Francis challenges us to examine how we face those whom our nation names "the enemy."**
- Jesus clearly did not respond passively in the face of violence; rather, by word and deed he resisted the violence of unjust social structures.



Lord, make me an instrument of your **peace**,  
Where there is **hatred**, let me sow **love**;  
where there is **injury**, **pardon**;  
where there is **doubt**, **faith**;  
where there is **despair**, **hope**;  
where there is **darkness**, **light**;  
where there is **sadness**, **joy**;

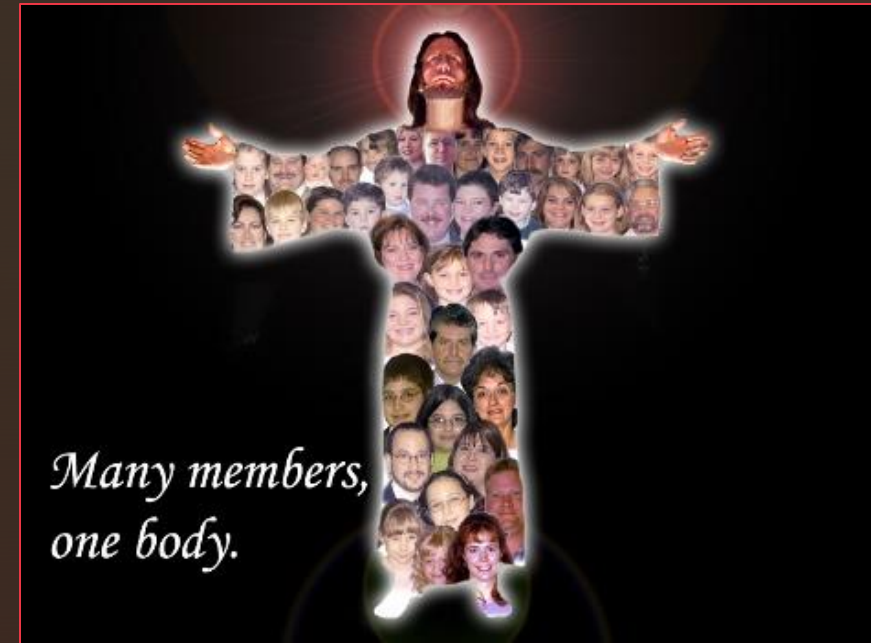
O Divine Master, grant that I may  
not so much seek  
to be **consoled** as to **console**;  
to be **understood** as to **understand**;  
to be **loved** as to **love**.

For it is in **giving** that we **receive**;  
it is in **pardoning** that we are **pardoned**;  
and it is in **dying** that we are **born to eternal life**.

Prayer of St Francis of Assisi

# Enemy Making

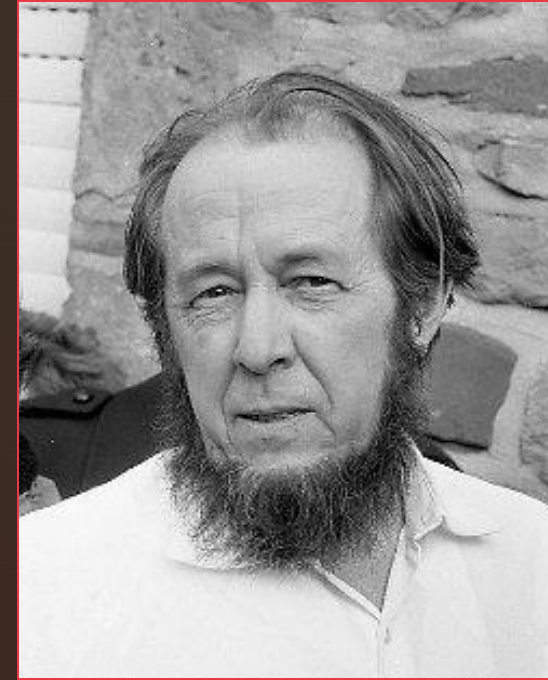
- Francis' example invites us to look at the ancient human propensity for enemy-making.
- *Individually and collectively we enable and accept violence against others by first making them into enemies in our minds, or much more subtly by perceiving others as less worthy or less human than we are.*
- “Us” vs. “Them”
- This dynamic becomes dangerous if we consider “them” not only different but also threatening, hostile, irrelevant, unworthy, or less human than we are. (See Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy*)
  - The enemy is the force of evil.
  - The enemy is barbaric, brutish, unattractive, cruel, and unattached to meaningful life.
  - The enemy is portrayed as insect, reptile, or beast to justify indiscriminate slaughter





# Facing the Demons Within

- One root of enemy-making lies within us.
- We project onto others, onto “the enemy,” the broken or disowned parts of ourselves and our capacity for evil in order to avoid consciousness of these aspects in ourselves.
- Walter Wink said, “My enemy is my mirror. I project onto my enemy everything in myself that I cannot stand, tolerate, acknowledge or accept. My enemy returns the compliment.”
- For Francis, fully and humbly facing the demons within himself was a doorway into a deeper encounter with an infinitely loving God.
- It brought him face-to-face with God’s mercy, boundless love, and grace, which are ever-more abundant than sin.
- Francis invites us to be peacemakers.

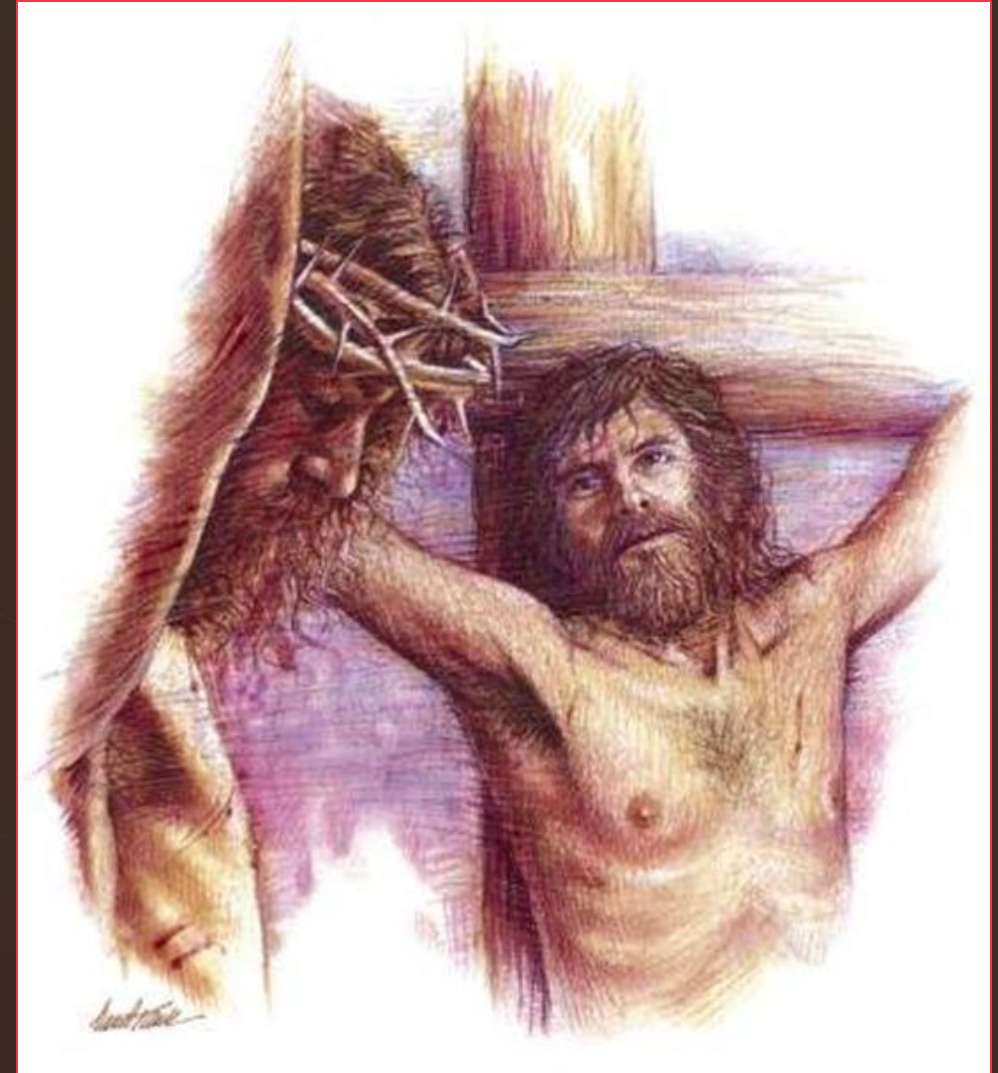


**IF ONLY IT WERE ALL SO SIMPLE! IF ONLY THERE WERE EVIL PEOPLE SOMEWHERE INSIDIOUSLY COMMITTING EVIL DEEDS, AND IT WERE NECESSARY ONLY TO SEPARATE THEM FROM THE REST OF US AND DESTROY THEM. BUT THE LINE DIVIDING GOOD AND EVIL CUTS THROUGH THE HEART OF EVERY HUMAN BEING. AND WHO IS WILLING TO DESTROY A PIECE OF HIS OWN HEART?**

**- ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN -**

# When We are the Enemy

- In the story of our lives, we must ask ourselves:
  - “What character am I in this story?”
  - “What roles do I play?”
- “Crusader culture”
- In the story of Francis and the Sultan, we see the transformative power of non-violence and love for enemy.
  - The Sultan, who had paid gold for the heads of Christians, listened to Francis with intensity, passion, and respect.
  - He protected Francis and his brothers by placing them under his personal security and providing them safe-conduct through Muslim states.
- Are we the Repentant Thief or the Impenitent Thief?





# Questions?

*Peace Prayer of*

## *Saint Francis*

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may

not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

