

August 21, 2022
Pr. Steve

In the name of God, Abba-Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Murder, robbery, deceit--the Bible says there's a fourth one [as important] as these three.
What could be as bad as killing, stealing, lying?
Not...**Remembering the Sabbath!** Seriously?

There is no rhythm to our lives. Our hearts rest after every beat; our lungs rest after each breath.
The whole earth rests at winter time. Even the day 'calls it a day' and rests. But we don't--we're lost. We've lost our way.

We even now say to each other, "We're losing our minds." We've lost that inner compass.
We're losing the sense of joy and delight in life. We are being poisoned by this relentless pushing.

Push, push, push, push. Never stop. Push. You can do it!... Push.

It's poison. It's deadly.

Oh, it's not that bad. You'll get used to it. Just think how fast our grandchildren will be going. We can hardly wait. Right? She's just going to take off, go faster and faster than than we ever could.

Oh yeah. Great expectations. Whew! We're losing it, and this poison is leading us to weariness. I'm not talking about being tired--I'm talking about weariness and life and dullness, and this morbid view that everything is decaying.

Life isn't what it used to be, you know. It's just all--throw in the towel.

Right? I mean, what's the point?

And whining has become popular, especially public officials. Just whine about it.
Because whining is much easier than praising, isn't it?

Saint Francis said, 'The devil's greatest triumph is depriving us of joy in the spirit. The devil travels around with a little box, and inside of it is this very fine dust, and wherever the devil finds cracks and fissures in our minds in our hearts and our attitudes in our bodies and our personalities. The devil is forever sprinkling that little fine dust into the cracks and fissures--until that gloominess sets in. Anybody know what I'm talking about? That gloom which says, 'I don't.. I don't know that anything is worth it anymore.'

And that's evil taking root. We start to waste away. When we're inside of that gloom, it is so defeating you can't come out of it. Works pretty well. Sabotages everything. It's the dust of discouragement.

What can you do about anything?

Prove it to me.

You think you're so great?

And we hear that stuff inside of our own heads, don't we? It's loaded.

The heart of Franciscan spirituality is 'Resist that Melancholy'. Francis never denied harsh things in life-- complexities, demanding times, illness, grief, mourning. That's not what he's talking about. It's the melancholy, that sadness, and blandness, and dullness which neither weeps or nor praises. It won't commit itself to anything.

Just bleh! *Nothing you can do anyway, right?*

It's vicious, and it's unseen, and it works so deeply within us.

What's the antidote? Prayer. Singing. Dancing. Praising. Blessing. Encouraging.

But I know there's not a single thing I can do to persuade you of that. ("Frank, would you get up and dance for us?")

We resist, we hold back from expressing our faith. It's so important to embody our faith, to taste it, to enjoy our faith and celebrate life. Our faith is more caught than taught. Its truth resonates in our bodies, not just our minds. That's why all of the arts are so important, they connect us with life and move us to joy. I freely admit that I cannot logically argue you into praise and joy. Sometimes we can only leap into it so our hearts can release, relax and enjoy!

And so we have to leap into it. That's the truth. You have to decide to say 'It's okay to praise', because I know that's the only thing that can overcome this melancholy, this defeatism, this gloom which wants to sabotage everything.

Because, friends, a successful life has now become a violent enterprise. That's the cost we're paying. That's what that Merton* passage is about. We have to make war on our bodies.

Don't ever get tired again, understand me.? Push, push, push.

We have to make war on our minds on our spirit, on our attitudes. We make war on our children. They're the ones, paying the price, right? We make war on the earth--somebody's got to pay the price!

But more than just personal afflictions, this begins to sabotage questions about community. Does it really matter? I mean, how much time can we actually offer to a community? What's the payoff? It undermines our willingness to understand the suffering of others. Can we really do anything about it? Should we even bother? It colors that sense about working for peace within-- and peace around.

(How far have you danced in the last year-and-a-half, Lori? Would you tell us?)

See if we put these pressures on, sabotaging under my name, zapping the joy and delight in life for which we were made. The Bible is screaming from the get-go with Creation stories, 'How beautiful everything is!'

Can we live into that? And I'm saying there's a gap. You bet! But we have to open ourselves through the prayer, in the singing, in the blessing, to experience it, and share it with others.

Remember the Sabbath means **Remember...to delight in your life**. This is it!

Remember that you are blessed with life. It's a gift of infinite magnitude.

Remember to consecrate time, to nourish the blessings, the wisdom, the grace, and the mercy that you need. Remember, because the Bible full well understands--we will forget.

Remember to come to the sanctuary, because it's here that the insights and blessings that your heart is longing for are going to be experienced, and made real. They can happen elsewhere, but that's pretty random.

And--

Remember that you are a sanctuary. You are an abode of the living God meant to be this blessing of compassion and understanding for others.

As that line in Hebrew says, 'What we have come to is nothing known to the senses.'

It doesn't make sense, because we're so used to being drug down. But now you know it's just a little dust, and so you've got to start singing and dancing and playing, right? Right where you are.

How many of you turn the music on at home and just start dancing around the kitchen from time to time? I do--and see how many friends you've already got here. Who else are you? Just gotta feel it sometimes, right? And that brings us to life. It's like this clapping...generating hope in the simplest ways.

It's a great insight in Judaism which teaches,

'Remember it is not Israel who kept the Sabbath; it is the Sabbath who has kept Israel.'

Remember it is not we who keep the Eucharist; it's the Eucharist who keeps us alive.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.