

## Living the Spirit The Visit

I am writing this on Monday, after a few days – or even a week – of being glued to the TV. You will understand why this was so. Pope Francis. There is so much that could be said about all he told us. After all he is the first and supreme teacher of our Church. There was certainly even more, the example of his living the Spirit.

As I thought about what I would write in this insert to our bulletin, I thought of what I had read earlier in the Office of Readings for Monday. It was Psalm 40 at Daytime Prayer. Let me share this thought:

*How many, O Lord my God,  
Are the wonders and designs  
That you have worked for us....  
Should I proclaim and speak of them  
They are more than I can tell.*

To try to sum up all the spiritual richness of Pope Francis' words seems to me a task beyond my ability. They are surely more than I can tell. Just like the Word of the Lord.

I watched him and I listened to him. Perhaps some of his messages were a surprise. As one who has studied the theology of the Church, and its canon law about the work of the Pope as Vicar of Christ and first teacher, governor and sanctifier of the Church, I know that there are limitations. Yet I find myself unwilling to parse his words about subjects that are clearly not directly matters of faith or morals.

There is something, however, that may indirectly touch on the Gospel message in all that he has set forth for our nation, our fellow citizens and our brothers and sisters in the faith community. So often we find ourselves with thoughts and actions revolving around ideas without weighing their moral value. Pope Francis was trying to help us do that.

I have hardly thought about many things that I see as not being in my own little world. May I say what these have been? Immigration, the work of politicians, the question of environmental concerns. These problems are in my state of life of less importance, since I can do so little about them. Of course I can recycle all my old inserts! There are other themes that I do dwell upon, like freedom of religion and family life.

I will let it to the pundits to analyze all the many speeches that Pope Francis made for their political significance. I must also allow others to implement his clear suggestions – as they pertain to their work as bishops, political leaders, and makers of our culture.

Let me simply pick out a few things that touched my very soul. Seeing the Holy Father embrace and bless that afflicted young child at the welcoming at the Airport. Did you see that? Seeing his obvious love of children – recalling how Jesus said that He wanted them to be able to come to him. Hearing his noble words about our nation's best values at Independence Hall.

**“Dreams”** I heard him speak about dreams. I heard him call for the use of our memory to relive, if possible, those dreams. Let me share what my youthful dreams were. I thought of the poem I wrote (very much edited by the priest in charge) for my school’s literary book. In it I wrote of my dreams to save souls. Perhaps even to be a kind of missionary. I thought of the years when I was making reality of the central dream, the great hope, that I would someday be a priest. [What joy to have dreams fulfilled!]

Have you, dear reader, had dreams in your memory bank? I have to think you have many. I think of the many I have known who must have had great dreams about their future lives. The married who are faithful. Even those whose dreams managed to die, or remain unfulfilled. Surely there is some spiritual message there in all this. I cannot find it for you; you must find it for yourself.

**“Home and family”** Pope Francis spoke of both in many ways. “When ever we come together in a family, we feel at home.” He tells us we have reason to thank God for the welcoming. We are to see in such relationships, however they are defined, (this is my thought) “open futures, opportunities, which abound.” We must find a place for sharing hope and struggles and making homes into the domestic church. [The family has often been called that.]

I was delighted when the Holy Father spoke of how he found in St. Joseph the one to go to when he had a problem. I recalled how St. Teresa of Avila used to say simply: “Go to Joseph.” Those three words were on the altar covering of the side altar of the church of my youth. But my meditations went further. I have seen so many Josephs in my life. My maternal grandfather for one, my close priest friend and others I will not name. I join to those actually named Joseph those who are or have been my “spiritual Josephs.” I think especially of teachers, parishioners, doctors, nurses, drivers, and my group of bulletin stuffers. This is just the start of my list. Do you have one?

I hope you will think of how you can enhance your spiritual life, your living the Spirit, by acknowledging those who are you constant friends. Perform those acts of love that are called “small miracles.” Do not be afraid! Say it. Do it! “How we work expresses our dignity and the kind of persons we are.” Let us work at living with joy the inspirations of the Spirit. We will do so because we know how to love. Our ability to do so comes from the simple fact that we have first been loved. God loves us!

In all his messages that I can recall made to us, his spiritual children, Pope Francis asked at their conclusion for us to pray for him. Perhaps you will take time to do just that. I will as soon as I finish this writing. Here is a prayer from the Sacramentary:

***O God, shepherd and ruler of all the faithful, look favorably on your servant Francis, whom you have set at the head of your Church as her shepherd: grant, we pray, that by word and example he may be of service to those over whom he presides, so that together with the flock entrusted to his care, he may come to everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*** [Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be...]

*God love and bless you always!*

*Monsignor Morrison*

*October 4, 2015*