

Pastor's Message by Rev. Dr. Anthony T. Padovano

Sept. – Oct. 2009

Francis and Martin

Twenty- three years ago, the Inclusive Community came into being.

We chose October as the anniversary month to celebrate and recall our origins.

October. gives us the commemoration of the two patrons of our Community. Their lives and vision shape and influence our identity.

The first of these is Francis of Assisi whose feast day, October 4, falls on a Sunday this year. Francis reached out to everyone and ended boundaries, gathering all in an embrace of love. He went, as his gentle guide Jesus did, to those whose bodies or whose hearts were homeless. He made them feel included, valued, honored. He went beyond acceptance of his brothers and sisters to the earth itself that he loved and to the animals he celebrated. The inclusive vision of Francis touched the hearts of the world and inspired millions of people through the centuries to follow his example.

Our other patron is Martin Luther. He began the Reformation on October 31, 1517. Reformation Sunday is the last Sunday in October. Luther sought to remove the boundaries between Church officers and baptized Christians. He saw the Church as a discipleship of equals and called for a priesthood of all believers. He wanted no rank but rather a community of service. He preferred the word “minister” (which means “service” in Latin) to prelate or pope; he called the leader of a Christian community, “pastor” (which means “shepherd “ in Latin) rather than priest. Luther believed Christ was the head of the Church and that Christ called everyone to the table of life and faith.

Francis and Luther had an influence so profound that the second millennium of our era is different, better, more liberated because of them. Francis was the poet whose heart sang of God and of love. Luther was the prophet whose spirit yearned to make the Church a community of friends and family.

Twenty- three years after our beginnings, we thank God for these guiding spirits, these angels of life who made us think as we do. And dream as we have. Francis stressed the beauty of creation and the lyric of life. Luther focused on the sanctity of conscience and the centrality of the Gospel. Both of them served Christ with a freedom and authenticity that made us want to form an inclusive community of poetry and prophecy, with vision and courage.

Anthony