

**“The Sending of Sister Death”**  
**Transitus of Saint Francis**  
**Reflection Oct. 3, 2011**  
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How many times have we placed ourselves with others of the world-wide Franciscan Family to remember the death of our brother, Francis of Assisi? So often, and rightly so, we ‘cling to’ the final words, expressions and actions of our dying loved ones. Has this gathering, this prayer, this ritual, this reading become ‘what we do,’ merely a practice? How does this ‘dying’ connect with our living and doing the Gospel, truly our work as followers of the poor Francis?”

We image Francis, weak, frail, struggling for one breath ... and another ... then his request that the Gospel of John 13 be read, beginning with the words, “Six days before the Passover...”

Tonight, I chose to open the text of the way Francis died using ‘midrash’ a Hebrew word, using a story as a way to open up the text. In so doing, new insight comes and often a ‘fresh’ perspective. We, humans, tend to focus on what is right before us, as if that is all there is. However, as this drama of the Transitus of Francis was unfolding in Assisi, there is another vast reality on ‘the other side of the veil’ – unseen but real and true – !

The conversation might be like this ... “The Sending of Sister Death”

The Angel Sister Bodily Death could no way call Francis home, could not gather Francis’ blessed soul. Francis was ready it seemed, but not yet. Francis had given the final message, now he would turn over his Life Word.

God said to Francis, “You have been the message without words. Your very life spoke like gentle thunder.” Then God said, “Gabriel, my messenger, go and fetch Francis home.”

Gabriel said, “Ever-living One, how could I presume to snatch such a soul which weighs much more than sixty legions of ordinary spirits? This is beyond an angel’s strength.”

Then God said to Michael, prince of all the angels, “You go and bring Francis home.” With tears Michael begs release, he’d rather bend low in homage of this man of God for Francis was so like Jesus, following in word and deed, there was none like unto Francis.

Then Satan asked for leave to collect the man. Girding with great cruelty, wrapping in wrath and rage, the wicked one came upon Francis, lying naked with seraph marked wounds shining bright. Suddenly the brightness was so bright, beyond bright. The splendor shining through a Cross was bathing all with love.

Francis’ words came forth from inner light, “Begone, Satan. I will not give my soul to you.” So, the Living God comes to do the death, with Gabriel, the peace messenger angel. Then with tender love God glances on the wounds and smiles in the remembering of Jesus – how those wounds healed. Then God spread the sheets, and smoothed the

softness of the pillow flat. Francis having come from God, surrenders. **Then the ever-bending over One, the Creator of all that is – God – bent low and kissed Francis upon the mouth and sucked Francis' soul into God's own self.**

And for a moment, the veil is broken open upon us, each one called and God exhaled and Francis' spirit is alive again in us,

and the words chosen by Francis splatter like sparks over us,

moving deep within us:

“I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do, I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Let us go, be and do the Gospel with our lives!

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