10 Weeks of Franciscan Virtues
October 7 - December 25

Week 3, October 21-27

The thought for this week is Active Listening. When we hear, we hear with just the ears. When we listen, we listen with the whole body – ears, eyes, heart, posture, mind – open and empty.

Many people wrongly assume that listening is a passive process of being silent while another person speaks. We may even believe that we are good listeners, but what we are often doing is listening selectively, making judgments about what is being said, and thinking of ways to end the conversation or redirect the conversation in ways more pleasing to ourselves.

“It was night when Francis arrived at Spoleto, and anxious about his trip, he retired for the night. Half asleep he heard a voice asking him where he intended to go. He outlined for him his whole plan. The voice then asked him: ‘Who can do more for you, the Lord or the servant?’ ‘The Lord,’ he answered. ‘Then why are you abandoning the lord for the servant, and the patron for the client?’ To which Francis responded, ‘Lord, what do you want me to do?’ ‘Go back,’ it said, ‘to your own land to do what the Lord will tell you.’

It seemed to him that divine grace had suddenly made him a different man.”

[The Anonymous of Perugia]

After a time, the Lord gave him a brother. So, one day they went to the city’s church. None of them knew how to read very well. So, they asked the priest to open the book for them. Immediately he read the passage where it says: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell, everything you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” Opening a second time, they came upon: “Take nothing for the journey … When they heard this, they were filled with joy and exclaimed: ‘This is what we want, this is what we were seeking.’ And Blessed Francis said, ‘This will be our rule.’ Then he told both men to “Go and fulfill the Lord’s counsel as they heard it.”

[The Anonymous of Perugia]

The work of active listening takes place up in your head; requiring a disciplined effort to silence all the internal conversation while attempting to listen to another human being. It requires a sacrifice, an extension of oneself, to block out the noise and truly enter another person’s world – even for a few minutes. Active listening is attempting to see things as the speaker sees them and attempting to feel things as the speaker feels them. This identification with the speaker is referred to as empathy and requires a great deal of effort.

Psalm Fragment

“Oh, that My people would listen to Me,
That Israel would walk in My ways! ~ Psalm 81:13

**Reflection Question:**
When was the last time you sat down in quiet and listened to God speak to your heart?

**Action for this week:** Be mindful about listening to the conversations you are engaged in – without interrupting or distractions. Then, spend some quiet time actively listening to God in the Scriptures.

**Prayer for the Week:**
So often I come to you with lists and demands.
Like a tornado I spew them out as commands.
To the next task, I move on with my day
Completely missing what you might have to say.
The noise of the world clogs my ears
And clouds my mind with fog and fears.
I need you to clear my senses, O Lord!
Give me a heart in tune with your Word.
May I be ever eager to hear your voice;
May listening continually be my choice.

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