

**HOMILY**  
**Parish Celebration of St. Francis of Assisi**  
**October 5, 2014**

Sisters and Brothers, as is appropriate today on this wonderful feast, I want to talk to you about St. Francis of Assisi. But not the St. Francis who only sat passively in the woods with all the animals. I want to talk to you about the St. Francis who transformed the Church. For Francis, the Church was not only the priests and beautiful buildings but the people of God- women and men, poor and rich, sinners and saints. The whole world was his cloister and , as Franciscan Richard Rohr says, “the marketplace was his cathedral.” Pope Paul VI made it clear that the Church exists to evangelize. Therefore, we cannot talk about the Church without talking about evangelization.

St. Francis changed the Church by the way he evangelized. Francis always looked to Jesus of the Gospels as his guide. Jesus did not just wait around in the Temple and synagogues for people to come to him, he went to where the people were to share his message of a God who loved all people, especially the poor and outcasts of society. The central message of Jesus was of mercy, reconciliation and liberation. People listened to him because he practiced mercy, encouraged reconciliation and promoted liberation. St. Francis knew that people would not listen to his brothers if they did not first live the message of the Gospel they proclaimed. He made this clear to them when he wrote: “Let the brothers preach by their example.”

As you well know, brothers and sisters, our world still needs to hear the Gospel message of mercy, reconciliation and liberation. Our brothers and sisters in West Africa cry out daily for more help to confront the Ebola epidemic that has killed over 2,000

people. After centuries of war, the people of the Middle East continue the violence against each other that generates hundreds of thousands of innocent victims, mostly women and children. After the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, distrust is growing between minority groups and local police forces. In our own neighborhood, since homeless people have been forced off Market St. and BART trains, the 100 block of Golden Avenue is now full every night on both sides of the street with men and women who do not have a safe place to sleep.

Brothers and sisters of St. Boniface Church, we are Catholics in a Franciscan parish of many cultures who speak many languages. How are we being called to evangelize today? I do not have any answer for you because you will come up with the answer yourselves. We have beautiful liturgies and programs within our church property but now it is time for us to move beyond the security these buildings provide. Within the next few months, I will be visiting members of our different parish communities to help them develop a concrete and practical evangelization program that relates to their particular cultural and social makeup. Each evangelization program must be Franciscan---moving beyond the security of our parish buildings to preach the Gospel in the marketplace. These evangelization programs will begin by the end of this year and their progress will be shared at the Lenten Day of Retreat in March of next year.

Our first reading today from the Book of Sirach says in reference to St. Francis, "Behold him in whose time the house of God was renovated, in whose days the temple was reinforced." As St. Francis renovated and reinforced the Church of his day, with new evangelization programs this year, we will renovate and reinforce St. Boniface

Church. St. Paul says to us in the second reading, “All that matters is that one is created anew.” Now is the time to create something new in evangelization at St. Boniface. Jesus says to us in the Gospel today, “Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.” Brothers and sisters, when we desire to take on the “yoke” of spreading the Gospel, Jesus promises to teach us all we need to know in a gentle and humble way. He is waiting for us to begin our new ways to evangelize in the Franciscan tradition. Once we begin, I am convinced Jesus will empower us with his Holy Spirit to bear the fruit of mercy, reconciliation, and liberation for the glory of God. HAPPY FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS!!!!