



October 11, 2020

Dear friends of God,

Last Sunday we had a nice gathering of parishioners and their furry and shelled friends including cats, dogs, hermit crabs and goats for a pet blessing in honor of St. Francis of Assisi. October 4 is the feast day of St. Francis. Francis died on the evening of Saturday, 3 October 1226, singing Psalm 141, *Voce mea ad Dominum*: “Lord, I call to you.” I appreciate the blessing of animals on the feast of St. Francis since it is a reminder how St. Francis exemplified the fact that the animals and all of creation are our brother and sister. St. Francis had a deep reverence for animals, for the poor and for all of creation. We are called by God to care for the world as God’s gift to be cared for and cultivated for the good of all. We are to be people that look upon the world with awe and with acts of reverence.

St. Francis is the namesake of our beloved Pope Francis. It is fitting that on this feast day of St. Francis, Pope Francis released an encyclical. Pope Francis signed this letter officially releasing it during a Mass at the tomb of St. Francis. He is buried in the simple crypt of a grand basilica. St. Francis is surrounded by some of his first brothers in the simple way of life that he shared with them. It is a quiet and simple place. I have had the opportunity to meditate there. I find it instructive that during the Mass celebrated by Pope Francis that the pope, with the world watching, simply took time for silence instead of praying. The sacrifice of the Mass said all that needed to be said as Pope Francis shared this new encyclical with us.

A papal encyclical is a letter written to the whole world. Although Pope Francis has written other documents, this is only his third encyclical. An encyclical offers important teaching for our Catholic Tradition. Unfortunately, most people won’t ever read one. I would encourage each of us to take the time to read this encyclical. If you have access to the internet, here is the location on the Vatican website where it might be found:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html. It is free and an interesting read. If you cannot access the internet, I will have some printed and available in the parish office.

This document is about our brother and sisterhood and our social connections as a human family sharing a common home. It begins with these words:

“FRATELLI TUTTI.” With these words, Saint Francis of Assisi addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel. Of the counsels Francis offered, I would like to select the one in which he calls for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed all those who love their brother “as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him.” In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives.

Our human family is fragmented and we have forgotten that we are all children of the one Father in Heaven. I hope that each of us takes time with the letter from Pope Francis as spiritual reading to help heal the wounds of our human family.

I believe that prayer is healing. I am going to have a time of adoration for peace in our nation and in our world as we prepare for our national election on Tuesday, November 3. Beginning Tuesday October 13 until Tuesday November 3, I will have 30 minutes of quiet adoration. It will begin at 5 p.m. and end at 5:30 p.m. There will be no vocal prayers. We will simply sit in silent prayer together. If you are unable to attend, I would encourage each of us to take 30 minutes of silent prayer sometime each of these Tuesdays for peace in our nation and in our world.

Much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Ken" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.