

# The Flame of St. Francis

See the Church again—for the First Time

A Publication of Saint Francis de Sales Church, Moorhead, Minnesota

"Seek the Lord in All that You Do!"

Vol. 2, No. 2

[www.stfrancismhd.org](http://www.stfrancismhd.org)

March, 2017



## The Law of the Gift

By Anthony Schefter

We all aspire to goodness with our lives. I think even the Hitlers and the Maos among us thought they were doing good for themselves or their countries. Put another way, St. Thomas Aquinas says that the human person will always choose an apparent good, not an evident evil.

So there are false goodnesses that are really evil; and then there is true goodness, which is what we should all hope for.

Of course, choosing the really good alternative is not always easy, and we often fail. But on the subject of vocations, a wise priest once asked me, what do you find beautiful? You have the chance to do the most beautiful thing you can conceive of with your life, in fact even more beautiful than your limited mind can conceive, if that is what you choose. Each of us only gets one chance. The great tragedy of the human race is, most of us fall short. But none of us has to fall short. What do you dream of? What inspires you? How do you want to give yourself to God, to live what Pope John Paul II called "the Law of the Gift"?

The hawk gives himself to the wind, and trusts that in return the air will support him. This is a kind of communion, and it is the very nature of Reality itself. The Creation is a communion, our families are communions; the Eucharist, Holy Communion, is the ultimate communion of God and man. We give ourselves to God with our lives, and trust that He will in turn support us. It is an extraordinary kind of free-



The Sheyenne River Valley near Fort Ransom, N.D. Prime redtail hawk country.

*"The hawk gives himself to the wind, and trusts that in return the air will support him. This is a kind of communion ..."*

dom to live without a net, but it is the vocation that we share as lay Christians.

For this life, the possibilities of the whole world are open to us. We can choose to serve as doctors or soldiers, farmers or auto mechanics. We bring Jesus with us wherever we go, by virtue of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The Holy Trinity dwells in our hearts and goes out in us to the world; we become the voice, the hands, and the feet of God in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, and our families. We join together as a Christian community at Holy Mass where we give all these cares of our daily lives to God and receive His own life back from Him.

The Law of the Gift.

The whole world is being remade by us through the power of the Eucharist. Have you ever thought what would have happened if Jesus had not founded the Church? I think the world would have fallen into darkness and ruin centuries ago. The Church is the leaven for the whole world that keeps everything together and linked to its Creator. And together with this old Creation, the power of God through His Church is forging a New Creation that will surpass our wildest dreams. Have you ever used your spiritu-

al imagination to contemplate what Heaven will be like?

I have plans for Heaven. Big plans. On my short list there are a few experiences I can't wait to have: flying, running like a tiger, visiting ancient Ireland, meeting St. Benedict, and travelling to the farthest star (to see what it feels like to be so far from home). Mostly, though, I expect to take a long vacation, with plenty of days lying out in the warm sunshine and being friends with whoever passes by.

I think Jesus smiles at my aspirations, because they are such a tiny fraction of what He has planned for me. It is as St. Paul wrote, "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). We are far greater than we imagine. Do not fear your goodness, and you will learn to always choose the good, because you will have no fear of any kind. Then you will be truly living the Law of the Gift.

## The Season of Lent

by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



We will begin the Season of Lent on Ash Wednesday, March 1. While many look forward to this time for opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal, quite often many of us see it as a liturgical season to dread. We focus on "What am I going to give up?" "How long can I live without whatever it is I am going to give up?" "How many more days before I don't have to give up whatever it is

that I am giving up?" Who wouldn't dread a liturgical season with such a narrow focus?

Over these next few weeks, we are all encouraged to begin reflecting anew on the real purpose of Lent, the power such a season can hold for us, and the real potential for a deeper commitment to our Catholic faith, and most important, a deeper communion of love with God. Such a deeper understanding could give us a new attitude toward Lent.

Baptism is one of Lent's foundational focuses. At the Easter Vigil, the catechumens (referred to as "the elect") will be fully initiated as Catholics through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

It is no coincidence that on Easter Sunday, all the baptized will renew our baptismal promises. Note that I said we are going to "renew" our baptismal promises and not merely "repeat" them. "Repeating" simply recalls something that happened in the past. "Renew" is entirely different. "Renewing" our baptismal promises recognizes something still foundational in our life.

Renewing our baptismal promises opens our hearts to God's grace. Grace reveals God's great love for us and God's purpose for our life. This great divine love energizes our own love and leads us to a deeper commitment to live these promises more faithfully.

Easter is one time in the liturgical year for us to remember that we are baptized once for a lifetime and not merely once in a lifetime. Our world, our country, and our Church all need us to rediscover the beauty and power of Baptism and our call to be co-redeemers with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Baptism calls us to a life of holiness that reveals Jesus' great and merciful love to all humanity and all creation. Our faith also commits us to restoring the human community and all creation to a life of justice, peace, and solidarity. Lent is the time set aside to renew ourselves so we can renew the world.

### **What is The Flame of St. Francis?**

The Flame of St. Francis is an occasional journal of articles, prayers, apologetics, and other written words devoted to moving the reader to a deeper conversion in Christ. The purpose is to inspire, to evangelize, and to re-evangelize the community by showing the beauty and power of the Catholic Faith. Readers are invited to "See the Church again—for the First Time" through new eyes and in a way that will bring new hope. Any article that is evangelical, apologetic, or inspirational in nature is welcome to be submitted for consideration. Send all submissions to [anthony@stfrancismhd.org](mailto:anthony@stfrancismhd.org).