

**Pastoral Reflection**  
**27<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT**  
**October 2-3, 2021**

Since the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi is this week I wanted to highlight some of Francis' more difficult challenges. When Francis began his conversion of the heart he was not well received by his father. As a matter of fact his father dis-owned him. Francis punctuated this break by appearing before the bishop and an assembled crowd and stripping naked as a way of saying "you can have it all back"! As far as we know he and his father were never reconciled. So he had the heartache of being emotionally orphaned.

As Francis began to espouse a life of poverty he was immediately associated with an heretical group called the Cathari. They were "way out", even going so far as saying everything must go and life must end. Because of Francis call to poverty church officials were suspicious of his beliefs. So now he had his church wondering about him.

Even Francis' body challenged him. He suffered from severe gastritis which led to anorexia. He had a stomach ulcer, and spleen and liver problems. What was most debilitating were recurring bouts of malaria (I have had it and you don't want it!). He seems to have also suffered a minor stroke. The ugliest of his ailments was a horrible eye disease that he picked up in the Middle East. All kinds of treatments administered by a number of doctors were attempted. The worst experiment conducted by a leading doctor was to cauterize his eyes with red hot irons! The cure was worse than the disease! So Francis had his body tearing him down.

Perhaps the most painful challenge he faced was when he had to resign from his own Order. He told the friars: "From now on I am dead to you". He resigned because there was a violent power struggle going on among the friars. He hoped that his removal would forestall a permanent split in the Order. So even his own Order challenged him.

Do still want to be a saint!?! But Francis had the peace of prayer, the love of God and the beauty of creation. If Francis could maintain his faith in the midst of all that befell him maybe we can "gracefully" handle whatever comes our way.

St. Francis - pray for us.  
Fr. Jack (he/his)