

**The Pope is visiting the United States!**

**You may have heard the news that Pope Francis is coming to Philadelphia for an international gathering on the family this fall. Someone asked me the other day if we are doing anything special to celebrate his visit.**

- Is Corpus Christi sending a delegation?**
- Are we doing anything to celebrate his coming?**

**Yes, Pope Francis is an amazing man. He is well known for his gestures especially to the marginalized. His actions show us his priorities:**

**He visits prisoners and washes their feet,**

- He touches and blesses the sick,**
- He calls on the phone everyday persons,**
- He reaches out to the poor and inviting them to his birthday party,**
- He visits the displaced and the immigrants**
- He speaks in simple but profound language.**

**It is easy to image what his Facebook page would be like. My guess is that over90% of people would mark “Like” next to the pope’s name.**

**Yes, People are AMAZED at him and his actions.**

**(Pause)**

**It was the same with Jesus in his day. People were AMAZED at his preaching; AMAZED at his miracles, (the healing of Jairus's daughter and women with the flow of blood in last week's gospel) AMAZED at his power over to expel demons. Amazed at his words.**

**People all rushed to see Jesus just as people rush to see the pope. The Gospel stories tell us that over and over again people were amazed at what Jesus said and did.**

**I have one question for you to reflect on today.**

**What happens after the crowd is AMAZED?**

**What are the responses after they listen to this amazing person called Jesus, this man who preaches so well and cures people and expels demons?**

**There are three reactions, three ways people respond to AMAZING people, whether that be Pope Francis or Jesus.**

**We can simply walk away after having a good experience of being in his presence. Some will go to visit the pope and make it a great religious holiday experience. On that day in Nazareth in today's gospel, some simply listened to this amazing person named Jesus from their town and, having had a wonderful experience, just walked away.**

**But there was a second group that day in Nazareth. They started asking questions:**

- a. They said, “We know this man; we played with him on our streets; we know his relatives and friends; we were his neighbors. We KNOW he could not have any of these powers; he never showed them to us when he lived with us! They can place no faith in him.**

**Finally, there is a third group of people that day; a very small group of people. They decide to follow Jesus.**

- They walked with him;**
- they supported his ministry;**
- they learned his way of living;**
- they attempted to live as he lived.**
- They became his DISCIPLES. (PAUSE)**

**And isn't that the same way with Pope Francis. Large crowds will gather wherever he goes throughout the world. They will all be AMAZED. Most people will simply walk away having had a good experience. Others will see his message and reject it. A few will take his message to heart. And Francis' message is clear. You can see it in the places he chooses to visit.**

- **A few weeks ago he visited Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a small, poor country in Eastern Europe recently formed from a war. A country still struggling to be at peace.**
- **Tomorrow he will visit three of the smallest and poorest countries in South America: Ecuador, Bolivia and Paraguay.**
- **Recently he visited a port town in Italy where refugees are arriving by the tens of thousands from Northern Africa and the Middle East.**

**Notice how all these stops are not to the rich and famous places of our world but to the troubled and the forgotten.**

**And so I invite you to celebrate the coming of Pope Francis to our American shores. Some will go to Philadelphia to see him; others will watch closely on TV. Most people will simply to be AMAZED with him. Others will be threatened by his message and reject him.**

**But I invite you to be part of a third group. This group of people will become a disciple of this disciple of Christ. We will listen to Francis' words challenging us to transform our parish that , into a "field hospital" to serve those in need. We will take to heart his question of why some are so rich in our country and so many in our world live in poverty; we will act so that refugees may find a home;**

**we will work for peace so that they can return to their own homeland. We, along with Pope Francis, will announce that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and find ways in our chosen vocations to form families and communities who wash feet and serve those who come with physical, personal and spiritual needs.**

**(PAUSE)**

**And so, my question to you today might not so much be: “Are you going to see the pope when he comes to the United States?” My question to you and myself is, “What will you do after you encounter this amazing person, this ambassador for Christ, this disciple of the Lord?”**

- Will you walk with him or simply live by the values in our secular world?**
- Or will you reject him because of a lack of faith that God can work through him ... and us?**
- Will you choose to be a disciple with Francis to follow the way of the master?**

**Remember,**

**Many were AMAZED at Jesus.**

**Some flat-out rejected him.**

**And a few, just a few, became disciples ... and Jesus transformed their lives and, through them, he is transforming the world.**