

April 9th, 2024 — Mass with Friars and Benefactors

Dear brothers and sisters may the Risen Lord give you his light, his peace and abundance of his gifts. We are gathered in this Church dedicated to St. Anthony to give thanks to God, to be open to his gift of immeasurable love, and to be thankful and appreciative of the many of our brothers and sisters who have open eyes and hearts for those in need.

Doing good and giving thanks – We all know that the majority of St Francis' prayers are precisely prayers of praise, and we all know the Canticle of Brother Sun, which is precisely rhythmized by the praise of God, as are the Praises of God Most High, composed at La Verna.

In Francis, this attitude stems from the awareness that God is the good, the supreme good, and that all good things come from Him. Praise is nothing other than this restitution to God of the good that we receive from him. The whole life of Francis is marked by this attitude of joyful restitution to God of the good received. It is easy to see how this attitude is accompanied by the choice of not appropriating anything: if I recognise that the goods come from God and are ultimately his, the attitude is born of not considering myself master of the goods of which I make use, but rather steward, to return them to their rightful owner, who is God, and to his chosen representatives, who are the poor.

Praise expresses aloud this desire to return to God the goods we have received from him. This gives rise to a feeling of gratitude and

praise that pervades life and makes it different, open to God and to every creature. The closure on oneself that marks those who want to appropriate everything is contrasted by the openness of those who rejoice in what they continually receive and know how to transform every good received into a grateful offering. Only from the awareness of the good we have received can arise the feeling of gratitude and praise that makes our lives joyful. We are then invited to be "in praise of his glory" and to make our whole life a thanksgiving.

The word Eucharist means precisely thanksgiving: in this Eucharistic celebration, the "praise of his glory" is already realised in the mysterious reality of the sacrament, and in the life that awaits us after this celebration it will be able to expand and manifest all its power, to the glory of God and for the good of the brothers and sisters we will meet.

In this eucharistic thanksgiving we would like to recognize and pray for all of you who help those in need in so many ways and help our brothers in their mission. God's love is creative, God's love is innovative. It always finds its way to make this world a better place. It always finds its way to shed a light on someone. We can say the same about Christian love. As we follow our Lord, we become one with him. We become inspired— we become blessed. We become grateful, and we spread grace, love, and hope. There's no better way to testify our Christian and Franciscan calling! There's no better

way to testimony that *we are born of the Spirit*, as the Gospel teaches us.

In one of the thanksgiving prayers to our Franciscan brother and saint, St. Anthony, we recite: *Most loving protector, St. Anthony, what gift can I give you in exchange to show my heartfelt gratitude? With your continued help I will show appreciation to you by being more faithful to God, more constant in prayer, and readier to do good to those nearest me...*

Dear brothers and sisters, both Francis and Anthony can indeed teach us what both a real gratitude and a true and a genuine being there for others mean. Both of them were poor, but rich, they gave everything, but always had a full heart, they were thankful and blessed.

Let us don't look at them as a thing of a past. Let us, led by their example, be thankful and live in gratitude. To be able to that, and do be inspired, we need the Spirit. Let us open our hearts to his beauty, strength, and grace — and be thankful for his enduring presence.