

Monastic Scribe XC: May 23, 2025

This blog is an adaptation of a homily I gave to the Catholic community at Mass on May 18th. I have been encouraged to share this talk with a larger audience. I apologize if the context of Catholic worship comes across as an exclusive view on the topics at hand which really pertain to all people of faith. And, yes, the spoken talk was shorter!

LOVE BEGETS HOPE

Pope Leo XIV has formally begun his ministry as Bishop of Rome and as the focus of the unity of the universal Roman Catholic Church. I had noticed, before the election, that he was on the long list of possible Popes but I did not expect him to be chosen. His election was a real surprise. As the Cardinal-electors gathered to vote in the Conclave, we were being told that there was no front-runner and it could take days to elect a Pope. But, then, 133 representatives from all over the globe decided differently and chose Leo in a short spate of time. That impressed me. The Holy Spirit was really present and the electors actually listened!

Upon reflection I pictured the crowds of hundreds of thousands persons fervently gathered to witness this event. And the world wide reaction was similar. They wouldn't all agree with this man's beliefs and statements but they felt elation. A big part of this reaction was the relief felt in the choice of someone who would continue the way that Pope Francis had lived. But there was something else that seemed to be happening. This man from Illinois, about whom almost nobody knew anything, was a symbol. In a world of chaos with right wing governments and religions that are based on power, greed and certitude, here was someone who stood for something deeper. I believe he has been a symbol of hope.

Not everyone has been enthusiastic about the choice. There are commentators and individuals who are critical of the new Pope. And I am sure that, in time, many groups and individuals will find fault in his teachings. So much is expected of him. The universal Catholic Church is the most prominent world organization that speaks with some moral authority. Truth and not deceptions, people and not possessions, a belief in a transcendent power beyond our misguided authorities. There is more to this world than science and technology to guide us, more centers of value beyond the unfettered consumerism that tries to sell us what we are worth. A poor man from Nazareth has taught us something more valuable. Christians, as well as members of other religions, have struggled, not always successfully of course, to live lives that follow the gospel of Jesus Christ or similar religious ways of life. Yes, our Catholic Church has been stained by the sexual abuse crisis. Yes, clericalism has undermined the good work of other priests and

Monastic Scribe XC: May 23, 2025

nuns. Yes, women have had a second place in a male, hierarchical structure. The church has almost broken apart many times in 2000 years of existence but it keeps revivifying. Pope Francis and now Pope Leo offer hope and light and direction.

The People of God, particularly here in the USA, are scattered and divided. We can be easy followers of simple minded authoritarian leaders. Today's scriptures testify that Christianity is really about something else of which Francis and now Leo bear witness. It is not about power, rules and mere acceptance of beliefs. Rather, the gospel of John gives us these words of Jesus, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Not an easy task. But it is possible if we believe that God first loves us, fully and without limit.

Love is demanding and it takes most of us a lifetime to really live by it. The reading from Acts of the Apostles on that Sunday proclaims, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." Then the book of Revelation promises that this path of love will finally lead to a new heaven and a new earth through Christ's resurrection. "See the home of God is among humans. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his people and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes...."

The path of love embraces all humans as Pope Francis demonstrated. Black and white, man and woman, neighbor and stranger, migrant and citizen, Jew and Muslim, gay and straight, young and old, rich and poor. "What you do to the least of my brethren you do unto me." (Matt. 25.)

Many people, many of you, are on this path of love. It shows in everyday interactions. The other day, a beautiful warm day, my friend and I stopped at an outdoor ice cream stand, for rest of course! On a table near us I saw a teenage boy on an automatic bike. He was beset with disabilities, little control over arms and legs, perhaps cerebral palsy. Next to him a man, presumably his father, kept looking after him while patiently granting the boy as much freedom as he had dared to share. Many parents love like this. Many of you love like this. Many people love like this. Love is something we live in giving ourselves to others in need. Love is a lifestyle of showing respect and giving care to every human being, even strangers and people who are different from us.

Monastic Scribe XC: May 23, 2025

In a world of uncertainty, fears and confusion, the gospel with the promised Holy Spirit, still guides us. The Church is a reminder of that path of life, a celebration of that presence. In his inaugural speech, the Pope proclaimed a church of love and not of power. We humans are on this earth to help and love one another. The church opens up a community that sustains us in our commitments. So we pray for Pope Leo today and we pray that the power of the gospel, the power of love, will prevail among us so that we live in hope and come to a new heaven and a new earth. Do you have hope? What sustains it for you? You can write me at joycet@glastonburyabbey.org.

Fr. Timothy Joyce, OSB, STL

Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.