

Fourth Sunday of Lent



compromised by war, prejudice, fear, and rejection. Pope Francis is doing the work every human institution must do if humanity is to live in peace and harmony.

After visiting the devastated people of Mosul and its minority Christian community, a man in the street said of the Pope, “He is one of us!”

Reflections on John 3:21—The Work

Political, cultural, governmental, and religious institutions find themselves at a crossroads. If these agencies of humanity want to help all of us forge a better World responsive to the needs of the poor and oppressed, they must transcend their tendencies to live in their own bubble.

Consider the recent journey of Pope Francis to Iraq. Francis took a chance, and the World is now a better place. He boldly journeyed to Mosul, a hotbed of terrorism only a few years ago. Isis, centered in Mosul, declared it would conquer Rome with conflict and war. Pope Francis touched the decimated city and its war-weary people with tenderness, love, and hope. In a word, Francis is doing the “work” that needs to be done. It is up to us to be inspired by his example and do the same in all the affairs of our lives. According to our gifts and talents, all of us must build bridges, be a witness to peace, and protect human dignity.

Pope Francis, inspired by St. Francis of Assisi, crossed over borders as he reached out to a persecuted community the World has mostly forgotten. He did so without making accusations or blaming. The Pope appealed to the human decency of all involved as he called for interfaith understanding, respect, and compassion. He deliberately endangered his life for those whose lives have been

The empathy Francis displayed in Iraq, the love and respect he shared with the Nation, sets an example for all those who claim any kind of leadership. Francis has raised the bar of responsible leadership and has, therefore, raised the hope of Iraq and the World. One marvels at how Muslims and Christians came together as sisters and brothers in the midst of danger, uncertainty, and threat. Thank the Dear Lord; they are willing to work together.

For our part, we must resist the voices of those who would dismiss the significance of this event. We must confront those who would sustain the prejudice and fears of the centuries. As Francis followed in the steps of St. Francis, we too must do the work of justice, so peace might have a chance to bless the hearts of all peoples.

Pope Francis, on his final day in Iraq, powerfully said, “If you want clean hearts, you must dirty your hands!”

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The time has come for us to “dirty our hands” with the hard work of repairing the World. Let us roll up our sleeves, committing ourselves to the task of building a better World. Let us confront all the tendencies in our hearts to think understanding, respect, and compassion are not the way to life, hope, and a better life for all.

—Fr. Tom Bonacci
