

Homily – The 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2018
by Rev. Bob Schramm, OSFS

It has been dawning on me lately that my experience of Pope Francis is different. I don't experience him as a kind of super-cardinal or as the CEO of the Church or as the boss of all the bishops throughout the world.

**I'm reminded of Ken Untener, the bishop of Saginaw,
who died in this house in 2004
of a rare form a cancer.
He used to say that bishops are not branch managers for the pope.**

**Pope Francis is not a cleric's cleric.
He's not at the top of this kind of clerical pyramid.**

**He is clearly the leader of the Church.
I sense he sees himself as a kind of cheerleader for the whole Church,
not just for the bishops or even for all the clerics.**

**He leads, above all, by example.
He doesn't rely on the trappings of power.**

**He talks a lot about leaders in the Church smelling like the sheep they lead.
We heard from the prophet Amos this morning.
I mentioned his rank smelliness last week.
Amaziah the cleric didn't take well to Amos.
But God stood Amos on his feet and said to him "GO."**

**Jesus sends this apparently ill-suited group of no-accounts on a mission.
He sends them out in pairs with nothing more than the clothes on their backs.**

However, what they do go out on this mission with is really quite remarkable.

The letter to the Ephesians sums it up magnificently this morning.

**God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens . . .
He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world
to be holy and blameless before him in love.
In Christ, we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of our sins,
according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.
You were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit . . .
to the praise of God's glory.**

**Apostles are sent in a sense to say to all of us,
"If we can do it, you most certainly can, too."**

Imagine with me for a moment that you are desperately poor.

You find yourself unable to pay the medical bills,
worried about paying your rent, afraid your car will give out.
And then you get a phone call: you have won the lottery.
No, no, the caller says, it's really true! You've won millions in the lottery.
The state administrators of the lottery are now doing the paperwork.
By the end of next month, the check will be in the mail.
Now what?

Well, you still can't pay the medical bills this month,
and all the other bills are going to be a big problem, too.
You are still desperately poor – this month.
But you will face your poverty very differently
once you know you have won the lottery, won't you?
The problems are all still exactly the same,
except that you know you have won the lottery.
Your problems are not going to last.
The check is in the mail.

That's exactly what the writer of Ephesians is saying to us:
The check is in the mail.

It's said to all of us. I'm reminded of some very important words addressed to lay people at the Second Vatican Council:

"The laity share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ.
They have their own role to play in the mission of the Church and in the world.
They are today's apostles by their activity
of bringing the Gospel and holiness to the world . . ."

Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,
1965: paragraph 2.

Pope Francis has a unique role.
He is a cheerleader for us all,
Laity, religious, deacons, priests, bishops.

Travel LIGHT.

It is a fact that our planet is the only one at least in our solar system
to produce topsoil.

It took some three billion years of evolution to do that.

And now, even though we know how to farm in sustainable ways,
we in the industrialized nations choose mainly to farm in ways
that destroy 25 billion tons of topsoil every year.

In this situation, what might it mean to travel light?

So Jesus sends us today, urging us to travel light.
He first feeds us at this table before we go.
And he has given us a wonderful cheerleader.