



April 10

Blessed James Oldo

Good day, good people! May the Lord give you peace!

Death, loss and grief affect many of us profoundly. We are never the same. Ironically, the darkness we so often feel in the death of a loved one, brightens our vision so that we clearly see what is the meaning and purpose of our life. Our perspectives change, our understandings broaden and our actions are pivoted toward horizons that can enrich our lives and the lives of others. Because death is the sure end point for all of us, our close encounter with it can be the moment we are awakened from our slumber to build something beautiful for God and others.

Blessed James Oldo's life radically changed while attending the funeral of his closest friend. One could say he was slapped into consciousness and realized that the purpose of this life was not about selfish pleasure and vanity alone. So much of his and his wife's life were lavishly spent and centered on themselves. Death taught him that life was a circular journey; we all come from God and we all must make our way back to God.

All of Blessed James' efforts, including the severe penitential practices, mortifications, and fastings were so severe that his spiritual director required that he eat at least three times a week. His extreme penances were intended to lead him, his wife and his mother back to the gates of heaven. After his wife died, he decided to live out his life as a Franciscan priest and practice penances of even greater intensity.

Franciscan spirituality includes the practice of penance. Penance is synonymous with conversion. And conversion is the purpose of penance. Keeping one's eyes fixed on Christ and walking in the footsteps of Christ are made possible when the self is diminished and Christ is increased. The famous monk of our time, Thomas Merton, who attended the Franciscan University of St. Bonaventure, captures the rhythm and purpose of our appreciation of penance, "In order to become myself I must cease to be what I always thought I wanted to be, and in order to find myself I must go out of myself, and in order to live I have to die." In other words, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ in me."

Let us pray.

O Divine master grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. To be understood, as to understand. To be loved as to love. For it's in giving that we receive, and it's in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it's in dying that we are born...to eternal life. Amen.

Blessed James Oldo is a friend of God, the company we welcome today.