

March 30

St. Louis of Casoria

God day, good people. May the Lord give you peace.

Our Franciscan company today is a friar of the 19th century. His example for living and interpreting the gospel is close to what many believe are the essential actions of a faithful Christian. Unlike many of the friends of God we have met this Lent, Louis of Casoria was not born into wealth, did not practice exacting penances or perform extraordinary miracles. Instead, he was apprenticed to be a cabinet maker. After experiencing what he called a "cleansing" transformation, he joined the Franciscan Order and was ordained a priest. His first ministry was to teach newcomers to the Order philosophy, mathematics and chemistry.

After five years in this work, he spent the rest of his life serving the needy poor, building dispensaries and orphanages and opening places of refuge for the sick. Education for the poor also was achieved. Empathy and compassion for others were the virtues that energized this friar. He put even more on his plate when he founded two religious communities, the Gray Brothers and the Franciscan Sisters of St. Elizabeth.

Charity was the lens through which he interpreted and lived the gospel. The constant inspiration used to describe his spiritual life was called "a Divine Love." This is a clear reminder to us that once we are touched and moved by God, we do what is ours to do with conviction and clarity. This overarching experience of God's love is captured in the lore of Franciscan wisdom: "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you're doing the impossible."

While there is no mention in the writings that he was familiar with this phrase attributed to Francis of Assisi, we do know that Louis of Casoria practiced it. The number of places and services he provided to the underserved of his day was achieved because he began with the necessary and possible. The impossible was manifested in the number of services and caregiving this friar of poverty and simplicity brought forth in and through his love for God's poor.

Let us pray.

Lord, you called St. Louis of Casoria to spend his life in service to the poor with a most tender love. As you directed him along the path of life, he shared with others the hope born of compassion. May his love of charity teach me to put into action my better impulses. Grant that I may realize the goodness of doing small acts of service with great love. It is the little things of life that often create great differences. I ask this in the name of Jesus who live and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

St. Louis of Casoria is a friend of God and the company we welcome today.

