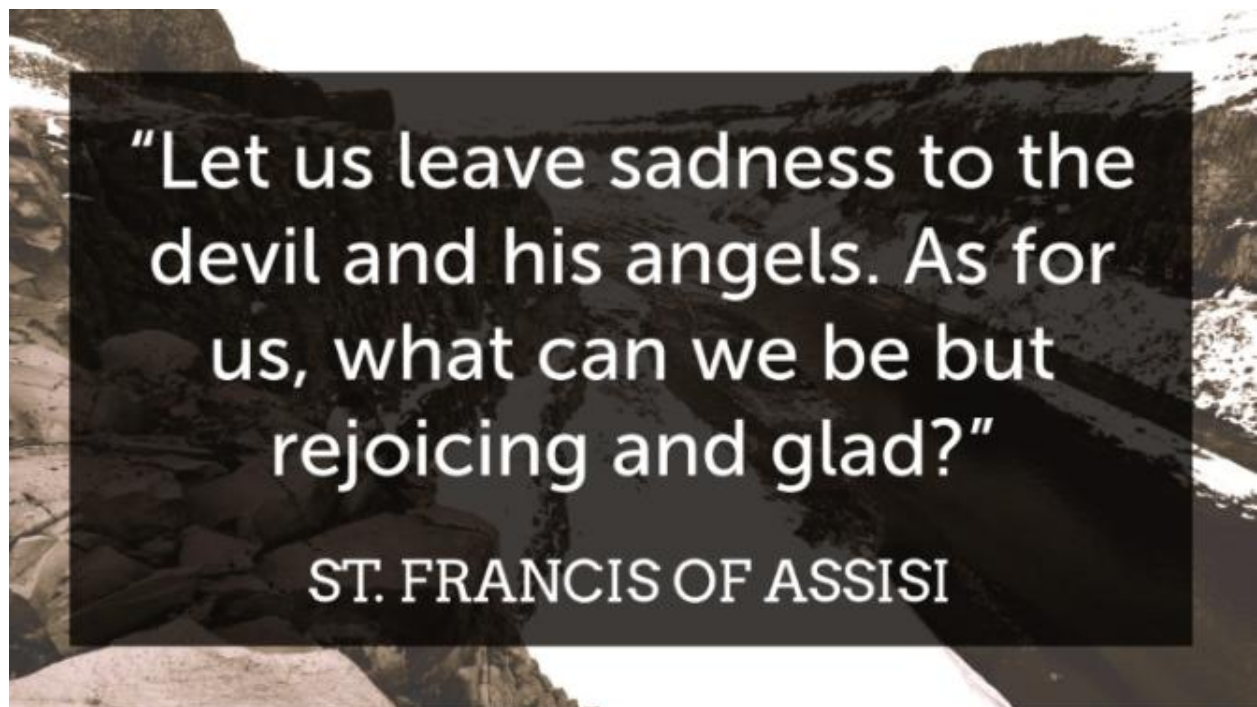


FROM FATHER JOHN: *"But this is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds and I will write them upon their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his fellow citizen and kinsman, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from least to greatest. For I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sins no more."* ~ Hebrews 8:10 – 12



During the second Iraq war, I saw these two pictures in the paper. The first showed an innocent looking American soldier next to an Iraqi boy with her arms draped over the boy's shoulder. The soldier had an innocent smile on her face and the boy was beaming. The scene was heart-warming, it reminded me of the old movies of soldiers in World War II giving chocolate bars to kids in war torn Europe. The picture was just what we expect to see of our men and women in the armed forces.

The next picture showed the same young woman. However, this time it was a completely different picture. Her smile was not innocent. It was sadistic. It was a picture of her participating in the abuse of Iraqi prisoners.

How could it be the same person in both pictures?

How could it be the same person in both of those pictures from Iraq? Simple, it's sin, it's the evil nature of sin, it's the sin that is pernicious and evil and has terrible consequences that go way beyond the person who commits the sin. Sin is in all of us, sin is part of the human condition, it's what Christ came to destroy, it's what Christ came to lift us out of, it's what we must battle each moment of our lives. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from heaven, died on the cross, rose on the third day and has ascended into Heaven to lift us, to lift you and me, out of the deep, out of the darkness of sin and death.

Jesus prays to the Father in John's gospel, *"I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth."* (John 17:15 – 19)

In doing so, He calls us to put sin behind us, to truly become His witnesses in the world; to witness to the Truth of God, to the Goodness of God, to the Beauty of God, to the Love of God, and to the Mercy of God. We are called to give testimony to the Love of Christ Jesus, the love that reaches down into the darkness of sin and death and lifts us up and carries us into God's heavenly kingdom.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

A black and white portrait of a man with a long, full beard and mustache, wearing a light-colored, possibly white, robe or tunic. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and indistinct.

John of Kronstadt

Never confuse the person, formed in the image of God, with the evil that is in him: because evil is but a chance misfortune, an illness, a devilish reverie. But the very essence of the person is the image of God, and this remains in him despite every disfigurement.

AZ QUOTES