

## *Pastor's Message – Sept. & Oct 2008*

By Rev. Dr. Anthony T. Padovano

### FINDING CHRIST

October is the anniversary month for the Inclusive Community. This October we shall have completed 22 years of service and witness.

As we are aware, October includes the feast day of Francis of Assisi (October 4) and Reformation Day (October 31). Francis and Martin Luther were, perhaps, the two greatest Church reformers of the second millennium. They have helped us to become better Christians.

Though centuries separate them and though their approaches were different, there were striking similarities between them.

Both men took Christ rather than the Church as the model for their life. Francis went right to the Gospel to find Christ rather than going first to the Church and seeking there an explanation of the Gospel and of Christ. He responded to the radical call of the Gospel to make nothing less than God the center of his life. The Church was not unimportant for Francis. He feared, however, that the Church has a tendency to think it is more important than it is.

Luther, likewise, went to the Gospel first and claimed that the Church had to be built from that. The Gospel was not in the hands of the Church. Rather, the Church was at the service of the Gospel.

Both men were willing to give everything for what they believed. Francis was committed to Christ and would let nothing take the place of Christ. He saw the beauty of creation as God's fundamental sacrament of life for all of us. He found God and Christ in every page of the Gospel and in all the life that nature brings us.

Luther was ready to sacrifice his life for the Christ he believed in and the God who summoned him. He chose no easy life for himself. He would not relent even if his life would be taken from him.

In a strange irony, both men made the Church a better place to be even though the Gospel rather than the Church was their focus. They made the Church better by insisting that without the Gospel the Church was nothing.

We are the heirs of these two great prophets and saints. The Inclusive Community could hardly have had better mentors.

Anthony