



By Pat Haggerty

Most of us are still basking in the memories of Pope Francis' visit to the United States. What a glorious time for Catholics, for families and for the world at large! One cannot erase the memories of Francis riding in his pope-mobile, greeting President Obama, embracing the children, speaking before Congress and walking up the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral. There are so many images that they must be compartmentalized and categorized in our minds.

No matter our memories, it is the messages that ring out loud and clear. We cling to his words about social justice, compassion, empathy, and embracing one another. The Golden Rule takes on new meaning and has become our mantra. We have renewed interest in his four American exemplars. No doubt Amazon saw an increase in sales of books by Thomas Merton. Hopefully, there is a greater awareness of the Catholic Worker Movement in our country and beyond. When we are ready to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January, we will remember the words of Pope Francis. Lastly, the contributions of Abraham Lincoln will resonate more deeply in our hearts as Americans and lovers of equality.

All of this is what some call the "Francis effect." It is an aptly coined phrase. One leaves marks of our own passages through this world in different ways. Francis has left his mark on all of us by his remarkable visit to our country. It is not only through what he said but, more significantly, by what he did.

This got me thinking about Jesus and the mark he has left on our lives. As readers of his Word, as participants in his Eucharistic banquet, as travelers along the road to wholeness, we should be feeling an effect from our relationship with him. We should be feeling the “Jesus effect.” I think we are, but we don’t always realize it. Jesus has left his mark on us through what he did--through his sacrifice, through his examples of love, through his relationships with those he came in contact with (both the exalted and the lowly).

Let us be more cognizant of the “Jesus effect” in our lives. Let us each live in the glow of it, as if we had just received a directive from our Master and Lord. For indeed we have. Ponder the words from the gospel for the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time. In the Letter to the Hebrews we hear (4:12): “Indeed the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.”

I think it is a good thing to feel the Francis effect, but it is even better to live the “Jesus effect.”