



## OFS Formation Newsletter October 2014

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### ONGOING FORMATION ORIENTATIONS FOR OFS (2012-2015)

#### Our journey since 2012

In the National bulletin of 2012, I proposed holiness as the objective of continuing education to all the brothers and sisters of the OFS for the period 2012-2015 as the newly elected director of formation at the national level. In doing so, I gave upon a letter written in 2010 by the International director of formation, Benedetto Lino, who said that on-going formation is to be conformed to Christ, with all the intensity that Francis had spent there.

In the National bulletin of 2013, I reproduced the text of the lecture I gave at the elective chapter of OLOTA regional fraternity held in Surrey BC in June. To further explain the goal of holiness for each and every catholic proposed by the Second Vatican Council, I referred to Article 4 of our Rule which invites us to move from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel. I chose five well known texts of the Gospels to illustrate how a teaching of Jesus could be easy to remember but not so easy to put into practice. Thus, for each of these passages, I asked everyone to consider with faith and authenticity where do they stand in regard of these teachings of Christ.

In this National bulletin of 2014, I want to push a little further our thinking on how to achieve holiness in our lives. Also in regard to the application of Article 4 of our Rule, I offer this time we ask ourselves what kind of soil our heart is it set up to receive the Word of God is sown. This line of thought has been proposed to the whole Church in the liturgy of the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 13, while the Gospel according to St. Matthew (13.1 to 23) offered us the parable of the sower.

Whenever I hear this Gospel, I remember the cold sweat that caused me this parable in the early hours of my return to the Church. Was the Word of God sown on the wayside, on stony ground or on soil covered with thorns? While this sentiment is slightly softened over the years, it's not for nothing that the liturgy offers us every year this passage of the Gospel.

#### Am I a good ground?

When I was a child, I had the joy of spending a few weeks a year at the farm of my maternal grandparents. At that time, life on a small family farm was not easy. Located in the beautiful region of the Eastern Townships, the land was not very hospitable to agriculture so we called it the land of rocks. It was useless till the first harvest we were doing was the rocks that arose from the ground tirelessly, year after year. These rocks were stacked field borders to build real walls that took the place of fences.

After so many years to plow my own heart of stone and then allowing increasingly the Lord till my heart to remove the rocks and thistles (*the cares of the world and the seductions of wealth*), can my life bear fruit, at the rate of a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. In my 2013 conference, in addition to emphasizing attentive listening to the Word (Article 4 of our Rule) in order to implement it, I also referred to the importance of article 7. This article urges us to conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls "conversion". It reminds us that human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.

Here I want to bring a little more modern distinction of the concept of *the cares of the world*. While performance, competition, the mad rush after the success

and glory belong to cares of the world since the world began, there now has a value of the world that awaits us, and it is that of ease. So why plow and work hard when we can enjoy life, take it easy. Is not that what advertising offers us constantly?

Follow Jesus in the footsteps of Francis is rowing against the current values of the world, is to tear, clean and even destroy our inner castles to make way for the new, the novel, the unexpected, the love of God. But I have found in my fraternity gatherings that some fatigue takes hold of our brothers and sisters and with good reason, because the age is at work in our bodies. But the heart does not age, at least not spiritually. As long as our heart beats and a trickle of life in our blood, the love of God is at work, He who does not age and that prepares us past the age to live with him in eternity.

But how is it that, knowing those things, I am not yet a saint. I suppose this finding may also be applicable to you. As I mentioned in the previous two texts on the orientations of the 2012-2015 on-going formation program, the ideal of holiness for every Christian was recognized at the Second Vatican Council there is barely 50 years old. Thus, the vast majority of us have received our first Catholic teachings before this council and maybe that goal of holiness was not part of our goal of life on earth. How then achieve a goal that is considered unattainable?

The question is not theoretical. It requires awareness and a difficult fight against defeatism (*lack of confidence in victory, tend to discourage*), the conviction that we will not have enough time, that we no longer have the strength to engage in such a task.

Need we recall that the sacred history has begun with Abraham who was already an old man when he was called by the Lord to leave his country and go to a land that was to be shown to him but which he was not unveiled. And what of his descendants that would outnumber the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore while he and Sarah were well past childbearing age. Leave its achievements and tranquility to follow the call of God is just that the call to holiness. And if the Lord did with a man

already marked by death (Heb 11:12), it is not by chance.

We have no excuses. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was right. He calls us all. If the Church offers us young saints such as Louis of Gonzaga, little Theresa or Katéri Tekakwetha is likely to encourage Christians not to drag their feet. But since we spent this age, let us be inspired by the saints that we have known and have been recognized saints after a long life as Saint John XXIII and St. John Paul II just canonized by Pope Francis. But I am convinced that many non-canonized saints have attained holiness to a ripe old age. I trust, first for myself, the Saints have no age in heaven and that our earthly life time will not matter much in the light of eternity that we will share together .

What we need therefore to discover or rediscover is that sanctity is our first objective to reach for our life on earth. First, I would say «desire». How to ask the Lord for grace that we do not want. Do not we hear the Lord say, «Give me your desire me to do my act». (the english translation doesn't have the same impact as the original french sentence who says «Donnes moi ton désir que j'en fasse mon agir»). In our pre Vatican II Catholic formation, the desire has often been associated with sexual desire, in an age of Puritanism in the Church, so that the very word «desire» seems to have been banned from the religious vocabulary. Yet the Song of Songs is not it an urgent and vibrant desire *to find the one my heart loves!*

## Conclusion

In 2012, my first proposition for on-going 2012-2015 formation program, was to "grow our hunger and thirst for holiness." Desire is not it the water that makes the seed grow deposited in a heart more open, a heart made of good loose soil capable of producing at least 30 to one.

In 2013, I insisted on listening to the Word, listening leads to an honest position of my situation facing a particular teaching of Jesus in order to have a fair idea about the authenticity and strength of my faith that leads to a greater desire to follow Christ.

Why desire holiness? To be like Christ as Francis and all the saints who responded to the call of Christ to follow him. Why answer the call of Christ? To respond to LOVE, this Love that is not loved, as told Francis. So today, and every day the rest of our lives, let's place the LOVE in the center of our lives. The Love of God, the first commandment, and the second like him, love of neighbor. With love that was sown in our hearts by the One who created us in his image and likeness, we cannot miss our vocation, that of love, and to love as He loves us, to seek to be like him more and more. This is holiness that Francis and Clare wanted to live and who is going to ignite us to become lights to illuminate and fire to heat and ignite a world in need of love.

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August 20, 2014

## Living Fraternity

by Françoise Malboeuf , ofs

This document is a tool for the animators who are responsible for on-going formation. This document consists of an example of a plan for a fraternal meeting. The text is based on excerpts from the presentation given during the annual meeting *Fraternité* held in June each year.

We have also used documents that originate from CIOFS. This year, we have used excerpts *The Joy of the Gospel* of Pope Francis.

Our team consists of members of the Regional Fraternity de La Trinité. Micheline Larocque revises the French version while Richard Casavant, the English one. We chose the texts as a team, afterwards I prepare the frame with the addition of articles from our Rule and the General Constitutions as well as some Franciscan writings.

We have had interesting comments which tell us that the document is well appreciated by our fraternity councils. It is useful in the preparation of the monthly meetings.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God Almighty,  
You who are, who were and who  
are to come:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

You are worthy, O Lord our God,  
To receive praise and glory,  
honor and blessing:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

Worthy is the slain Lamb to receive  
power and divinity and wisdom and  
strength, honor, glory and blessing:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

Let us praise the Father and the Son  
and the Holy Spirit:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

All you works of the Lord,  
bless the Lord:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

Give praise to our God, all you God's  
servants and you who fear God, the  
small and the great:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

Let the earth and heaven  
praise the glorious One:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

And every creature in heaven and  
on the earth and under the earth,  
and the sea and everything in it:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**

Glory to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit:

**---Let us praise and exalt  
God above all forever!**