

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Dialogue and Friendship in Society ...

In the month of May 2022, we offer Chapter 6 of the *Fratelli Tutti* Study Guide prepared by Fr. Pat McCloskey, OFM. The author for this chapter is Fr. Charles McCarthy, OFM Conv, who serves Native Americans in New Mexico. He is the author of "Our Household Church: Sunday Agape in Time of Pandemic" (swfranciscans.org/sundayagape).

Recall: Our monthly meeting should favour *an encounter with Christ*. A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and a good preparation promotes communal experience.

MAY 2022 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting if it happens

The members can offer suggestions for a song. After the chosen song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

Introduction

This guide serves as an overview to the chapter featured but cannot in the space available do justice to the richness of each chapter. The person animating the meeting should make sure that each member has a copy of Chapter 6 of the encyclical letter. If possible the copy should be distributed before the meeting so that the fraternity members can do a first reading of its contents, thus avoiding reading during the meeting.

Summary of Chapter 6

Pope Francis calls on the witness of his namesake: "Francis' fidelity to his Lord was commensurate with his love for his brothers and sisters [and] Francis went to meet the Sultan with the same attitude that he instilled in his disciples: [do] not 'engage in arguments or disputes, but...be subject to every human creature for God's sake'". Saint Francis urged that a humble and fraternal 'subjection' be shown to those who did not share his faith".

Saint Francis called followers in the early communities to go into the world to transform it by living minority (being servants of the Gospel). Pope Francis challenges us to do the same. As Saint Francis stood with the Sultan, so Pope Francis calls us to stand with people with whom we stand opposite. The call is not to engage the divide but to understand which in us, is common: human dignity.

In the chapter's four sections—Social Dialogue for a New Culture, The BASIS of Consensus, A New Culture, and Recovering Kindness—Pope Francis engages us to look beyond retrenchment into individualism and isolation in light of the pluralistic societal reality of the current world. His

call is a dynamic call to move forward in an attitude of encounter, willing to engage the strengths of the societies we find around us—instead of standing in perpetual opposition.

Francis notes that consumerist individualism and relativism offend human dignity. The monologues fostered by these two positions divide our society. “Feverish exchange of opinions” lead self-isolated audiences to “parallel monologues”. This dichotomy, fueled by half-truths, corrupted information, or outright lies, prevents what is true, wholesome, and authentic to be known in the people and cultures we call “other.”

Pope Francis calls the developed world to open hearts, minds, and awareness to indigenous cultures to encounter a way forward. Cultural tolerance is more than “putting up with” another way of thinking, living or being. A culture of encounter is not surmising who I am and who “they” are. A culture of encounter is the “art” of “transcending our differences and divisions”. A culture of encounter facilitates perceiving and honoring the common good.

Quotes from Chapter 6

- Monologues engage no one. In a pluralistic society, dialogue is the best way to realize what ought always to be affirmed and respected apart from any ephemeral consensus. Three realities [the interests of society, consensus and the reality of objective truth] can be harmonized whenever, through dialogue, people are unafraid to get to the heart of an issue.
- “Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter”. The word *culture* points to [the] most cherished convictions [of a people’s] way of life.
- A people’s culture...has to do with their desires, their interests and...the way they live their lives. To speak of a “culture of encounter” means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone...an aspiration and a style of life. The subject of this culture is the people.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

After the person animating the period of discussion or reflection reads the question, take the necessary time so that the members can express their thoughts.

1. When have you felt shut down by someone closed to a thought or opinion you expressed? What was that experience like? What similarity/difference has this experience to bullying? What could have made the experience different?
2. When have you cut someone off, or rejected an opinion out of hand, totally disinterested in what the person was thinking? What similarity/difference has this experience to bullying? What was that experience like? How could you have handled it differently?

3. What is the process of coming to know a culture other than my own?
How does a person start?

Biblical Reflection:

Read the texts of Sunday or of the day, or the preceding or following day of the meeting.

- Take a moment of reflection; then underline words or inspiring phrases ...
- Share your thoughts on the gospel: a) How can it be integrated in our life

Linking points from the Study Guide to the Rule and the General Constitutions

While preparing this document, we found Article 14 of our Rule, Chapter II – the Way of Life and Apostolic Activity and the articles 19.1, 19.2, 20.1 and 20.2 of the General Constitutions presented links to this study.

Rule

Article 14

Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone “who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself”, let them exercise their responsibilities competently in Christian spirit of service.

General Constitutions

Article 19 1

Secular Franciscans should always act as a leaven in the environment in which they live through the witness of their fraternal love and clear Christian motivations.

Article 19.2

In the spirit of minority, they should choose relationships which give preference to the poor and to those on the fringe of society, whether these be individuals or categories of persons or an entire people; they should collaborate in overcoming the marginalisation of others and those forms of poverty that are the fruit of inefficiency and injustice.

Article 20.1

Secular Franciscans, committed by their vocation to build the Kingdom of God in present situations and activities, live their membership both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality.

Article 20.2

As the primary and fundamental contribution to building a more just and fraternal world, they should commit themselves both to the fulfilment of the duties proper to their occupation and the professional training that pertains to it. With the same spirit of service, they should assume their social and civil responsibilities.

Life-Objective:

In this month of May, let us take time to live this Paschal season with more fervour and gratefulness for what the Lord has done for us ...

Let us also pray for our brothers and sisters suffering in Ukraine ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

End of the meeting: (song or prayer chosen by the fraternity)

Suggestion: As we are in May, a song to Mary would be a nice way to end our meetings.

At Home

Here are a few articles that should add to your reflection.

198. Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word “dialogue”. If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue. There is no need for me to stress the benefits of dialogue. I have only to think of what our world would be like without the patient dialogue of the many generous persons who keep families and communities together. Unlike disagreement and conflict, persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine.

212. If something always serves the good functioning of society, is it not because, lying beyond it, there is an enduring truth accessible to the intellect? Inherent in the nature of human beings and society there exist certain basic structures to support our development and survival. Certain requirements thus ensue, and these can be discovered through dialogue, even though, strictly speaking, they are not created by consensus. The fact that certain rules are indispensable for the very life of society is a sign that they are good in and of themselves. There is no need, then, to oppose the interests of society, consensus and the reality of objective truth. These three realities can be harmonized whenever, through dialogue, people are unafraid to get to the heart of an issue.

216. The word “culture” points to something deeply embedded within a people, its most cherished convictions and its way of life. A people’s “culture” is more than an abstract idea. It has to do with their desires, their interests and ultimately the way they live their lives. To speak of a “culture of encounter” means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone. This becomes an aspiration and a style of life. The subject of this culture is the people, not simply one part of society that would pacify the rest with the help of professional and media resources.