

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Celebrating the Centenary of the Canticle of the Creatures ...

In this month of November, we offer this text prepared by CIOFS. The Canticle of the Creatures or of Brother Sun is one of 5 texts offered for the 800th Centenary of the Franciscan Family.

Recall: Our monthly meeting should favour an encounter with Christ. A spirit of prayer will ensure a meeting that will promote a good experience for all the members.

NOVEMBER 2023 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting

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

Francis of Assisi was almost completely blind by the time he composed the Canticle of the Creatures. Nevertheless, with the eyes of faith, and filled with gratitude, he contemplated the wonders of creation and perceived the presence of the Creator who gave them meaning. To him, all creatures, mirrors of the divine perfection, were brothers and sisters because they were the work and gift of the same Author. Together they constituted the chorus of creation, which contemplates, praises and thanks God the Creator, “the Great Almsgiver” who gives generously and with goodness (2 Celano 77, FF 665).

The Canticle is the final expression and confession of the Poverello’s life. It summarizes his entire journey of conformation to Christ, the beloved Son. His faith in the fatherhood of God becomes a song of praise that proclaims the brotherhood and the beauty of all creatures. In fact, “In beautiful things he contemplated Beauty itself and through the footprints impressed in things he followed his Beloved everywhere, out of them all making for himself a ladder through which he could climb up to lay hold of Him who is utterly desirable” (Major Legend 9: 1, FF 1162).

Celebrating the Centenary of the Canticle of the Creatures as a Franciscan Family leads us to a radical change in our relationship with creation: we shift from possessing creation to caring for our common home. In fact, each one of us must respond sincerely to these questions: How do I want to live out my relationship with other creatures? As a ruler who claims the right to do what he wants with them? As a consumer of resources who sees them as an opportunity to be taken advantage of? Or as a brother who pauses before creation, who admires its beauty and safeguards its existence? We are faced with an anthropological and ecological challenge that will determine our future, because it is linked to the future of our Mother and Sister Earth. We are called to face contemporary society and reintroduce “the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world”

(Laudato si' 11).(Pause and sharing on the questions underlined in the paragraph.)

The current ecological crisis shows us that “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together” (Laudato si' 48). This realization also allows us to understand that the human environment and the natural environment can, in the same way, protect and enhance each other. However, taking care of our common home without taking care of our interior home – our heart – will not work. We need conversion that is both ecological and integral at the same time, because “the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion” (Laudato si' 217). In fact, the last verse of the Canticle reminds us that only those with open hearts, capable of disarming the mindset of hatred and revenge through forgiveness, can become instruments of reconciliation and harmony and offer a prophetic vision of fraternity, like Francis himself, who lived “in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself” (Laudato si' 10)

Our being in Christ

“Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day and through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.” (Canticle of the Creatures 3-4, FF 263).

Objective To develop a contemplative outlook that is able to recognize the presence and beauty of the Creator, who reveals himself in all creatures.

Activities

- Frequently schedule adequate time to contemplate the creation, to grasp its beauty and thank God for it.
- Use the Canticle of the Creatures as an inspiration for prayer and meditation, so that we may better understand the bonds that unite us to all creatures.
- Carefully examine, and responsibly implement, the practical proposals found in the encyclical Laudato si', making use of the numerous aids that the various offices of the Franciscan Family have published.

Our being brothers and sisters

“You are three and one... You are beauty” (Praises of God 3-4, FF 261)

Objective

To rediscover the importance of our calling to be in community, which stems from our being created in the image and likeness of the Triune God.

Activities

- Create opportunities to meet with other members of the Franciscan families and fraternities so that we can discover the beautiful and positive elements they contain and thank God for them. Our being in Christ Our being brothers and sisters
- Identify the activities that deteriorate our bonds with creation, and aggravate the current ecological crisis, so that we might counter them responsibly.
- Undertake a decisive journey of integral ecological conversion, enabling us to care for our common home, promote and strengthen the practices of waste reduction, the reuse of materials, recycling, and the responsible use of water and other resources in our families and fraternities. (Sharing – in the above mentioned actions, which ones would seem to you as possible?)

Our being in communion

“Creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rm 8:21).

Objective

To become more aware of our ecclesial responsibility to foster healing in the relationship between the Creator and His creatures and to restore its original harmony.

Activities

- Deepen our awareness that we all share the same home and, therefore, we must all care for it.
- Promote initiatives aimed at achieving an inclusive economy, in line with the Church’s social teaching, as a concrete and alternative response to social structures that “discard” people who are not economically productive
- Give more time and visibility to ecclesial groups promoting Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. (Sharing – among the activities mentioned above, do you know of any?)

Our being in the world

“God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good” (Gn 1:31).

Objective To grow in the awareness that the human environment and the natural environment can protect and enhance each other.

Activities

- Collaborate with all people of goodwill to make our common home more habitable. • Promote networking with the various social and religious organizations that share our concern to hear and respond to the cry of the earth and the poor.
- Foster a culture of dialogue and fraternity to overcome the culture of profit and waste, through initiatives that involve everyone, without distinction as to language, culture, ethnicity or religion. (Sharing – among the activities mentioned above, which one seems possible to realize?)

Reference

Canticle of the Creatures FF 263; Assisi Compilation 83, FF 1614; Mirror of Perfection 100-101 and 120, FF 1799-1800 and 1820; 2 Celano 165, FF 750; Major Legend 9: 1, FF 1162

Links between the Rule and the General Constitutions

The following Articles from the Rule and the General Constitutions are links to the text.

Article 18 of the Rule

Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High”, and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

Article 18.4 of the General Constitutions

Following the example of Francis, patron of ecologists, they should actively promote initiatives that care for creation and should work with others in efforts that both put a stop to polluting and degrading nature and also establish circumstances of living and environment which would not be a threat to the human person.

Biblical Reflection:

Read the Gospel of the day or of the Sunday following your meeting, in order to be prepared to hear the celebrant's homily.

Share your thoughts on this gospel, using the following questions:

1. To whom does it speak? What does it teach us?
2. How does it reach us personally?
3. Is it a message of hope? Another kind of message? How and why?

Life- Objective,

In this month of November, we suggest choosing among the activities in this text that you could accomplish or even discover in you local area ...

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

As a final prayer, recite the Canticle of the Creatures (of Brother Sun).

1. Most High, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.
2. To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
And no man is worthy to mention Your name.
3. Praised to You, my Lord, with all your creatures. especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light
4. And is beautiful and radiant with great splendor, and bears a likeness of You,
Most High One.
5. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them
clear and precious and beautiful.
6. Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind. and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.
7. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and
precious and chaste.
8. Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night, and he
is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
9. Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us,
and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.
10. Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love and bear
infirmity and tribulation.
11. Blessed are those who endure in peace, for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.
12. Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can
escape.
13. Woe to those who die in mortal sin. Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most
holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.
14. Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.