

# LIVING FRATERNITY

**Theme: St. Francis of Assisi at a glance...**

In this month of October, we offer this document from the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order, in the festivities for the 800<sup>th</sup> 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.

## OCTOBER 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. **Note to the animators:** Use the most convenient type of study method for your fraternal meeting

### Introduction

Choose a person who can read each paragraph in a calm manner. Take a short pause after each reading so that the members may share their remembrances or their knowledge on the life of Francis.

### Early Life

Francis was born in Assisi, Italy in 1182. He grew up living a privileged life as the son of a wealthy cloth merchant. Francis loved to learn and sing songs as a boy. His father wanted him to become a businessman and taught him about the French culture.

**(Pause – sharing)**

### Going to Battle

About the age of nineteen Francis dreamed of heroic action like knights of old, and went to battle with the army from Assisi against the nearby town of Perugia. Following Assisi's defeat, Francis was captured and taken prisoner. He was held in a dungeon for a year until his father paid a ransom.

**(Pause – sharing)**

### Visions from God

Over the next few years Francis began to see visions from God that changed his life. The first vision was when he was sick with high fever. His first reaction was that God had called him to fight in the Crusades. However, he had another vision that told him to help the sick. Finally, when

praying in a church, Francis heard God tell him to "repair my church, which is falling in ruins".

At this point, Francis, against his father's wishes, gave all his money to the church. Because of this, his father became very angry with him. Francis then left his father's home and took a vow of poverty.  
**(Pause – sharing)**

### **The Franciscan Order**

After Francis began to live his life of poverty and to preach about the life of Jesus Christ, people began to follow him. By 1209, he had around 11 followers. He had one basic rule which was "To follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his footsteps."

Francis was a devoted follower of the Catholic Church. He and his followers traveled to Rome to get the approval of the Pope for their Order and their rule of life. At first, the pope was reluctant since he saw in front of him men who were dirty and poor. However, eventually he understood their vow and blessed the Order.

**(Pause – sharing)**

### **Other Orders**

The Franciscan Order grew rapidly and many men joined the first followers and made vows of poverty. At a certain point, even a woman from Assisi, Clare Offreducci, wanted to follow the model of life and make the same vows. Francis supported her and helped her start the Order of the Poor Ladies (Order of Saint Clare or PoorClares).

He also started another order, the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (later called the Third Order of Saint Francis) that was for men and women who didn't take vows or leave their jobs, but lived out the principals of the Franciscan Order in their daily lives. **That lay Third Order is now known as the Secular Franciscan Order.**

**(Pause – sharing)**

### **Love of Nature**

Francis was known for his love of nature and animals. There are many stories about Saint Francis and his preaching to animals. It is said that one day he was talking to some birds when they began to sing together. Then they flew into the sky and formed the sign of a cross.

It was also said that Francis could tame wild animals. One famous story tells of a vicious wolf in the town of Gubbio that was killing people and sheep. The People of the town were frightened and didn't know what to do. Upon their request, Francis went to the town to confront the wolf. At first the wolf growled at Francis and prepared to attack him. However, Francis made the sign of the cross and told the wolf not to hurt anyone else. After the encounter, the wolf changed and became tame, living in the town in harmony with the inhabitants.

**(Pause – sharing)**

## **Death**

In the last years of his life, Francis suffered from many illnesses and ultimately became blind. He died in 1226 while singing Psalm 141. He was declared a saint of the Catholic Church only two years after his death.

### **Reflection:**

After sharing your thoughts during the pauses, do you see any links with articles from our Way of life, our Rule? Do these articles have any parallel with certain parts of the presentation:

Article 4?, Article 6?, Article 10?, Article 18?

Have a copy of the Rule to verify if the links seem to be in the articles noted above.

### **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 October, we suggest that you look at the wonders of our God Creator, with the eyes of our patron saint, Francis of Assisi ...

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

Suggestion: The prayer for peace, attributed to Saint Francis.

### **At home**

Do the reading of the Canticle of Brother Sun when you are outdoors, in nature, on your balcony or on your patio during a sunny day.

#### **The Canticle 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.