

# LIVING FRATERNITY

## Theme: Religions at the Service of Fraternity in Our World ...

In this month of September 2022, we offer Chapter 8 of the *Fratelli Tutti* Study Guide prepared by Fr. Pat McCloskey, OFM. In the Eighth and final chapter, Pope Francis talks about true religion and emphasizes that only erroneous interpretations of religious texts lead to terrorism. The author of this chapter is Jim Puglist, SA, Director of Centro Pro Unione in Rome.

**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.

## SEPTEMBER 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 8 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 8

In this chapter (271-287) Pope Francis talks about true religion and emphasizes that only erroneous interpretations of religious texts lead to terrorism. True religion is actually at the service of fraternity because it is rooted in transcendent truth that enables men and women to achieve full identity.

All religions are invited to enter into a journey of peace, thereby guaranteeing religious freedom for all. Walking together is a familiar theme in Pope Francis' thinking as well as working together and praying together. There is a particular role for the Catholic Church to play: that of going out of herself, "not restricting her mission to the private sphere" (276) — not engaging in politics but at the same time remaining engaged in the public dimension of life according to evangelical principles.

At the end of his letter, he returns to the agreement signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in 2019 at Abu Dhabi that makes a pressing appeal for peace, justice, and fraternity.

Pope Francis concludes by returning to the principal intuition that has characterized his Pontificate: “Remember the poor.” He does so by evoking the person of Blessed Charles de Foucauld, who sought to surrender himself to God by identifying himself with the poor — namely, to become “truly a brother of all!”

## **Quotes from Chapter 8**

- We are convinced that “when, in the name of ideology, there is an attempt to remove God from a society, that society ends up adoring idols, and very soon men and women lose their way” (274).
- We Christians are very much aware that “if the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth” (277).
- The commandment of peace is inscribed in the depths of the religious traditions that we represent. As religious leaders, we are called to be true “people of dialogue,” to cooperate in building peace, not as intermediaries but as authentic mediators (284).

## **Questions for Discussion or Reflection**

1. If we are to “love our neighbors as ourselves,” what do I know about my neighbor’s religion (and my own!)?  
Knowing is not just noetic but is a deep personal knowledge of the person.  
It means overcoming fear.  
What do I fear most about getting to know my neighbor (and myself)?
2. If the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace, and harmony, how have I .established these values within myself and thus become a person of authentic dialogue?
3. How consistent am I in my stance on sustaining life?  
Do I act equally in resisting certain positions (an arms, death penalty, ecology, abortion, poverty, hunger, welcoming the stranger and so forth) or am I selective and not coherent in my actions and thoughts?

## **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 articles 10 and 13 of our Rule, Chapter 11 – the Way of Life and Apostolic Activity and articles 10, 12.2 , 18.2 and 18.3 of the General Constitutions that have links to this study.

### **Rule**

#### **Article 10**

Uniting themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfil the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions

#### **Article 13**

As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ<sup>23</sup> . A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

### **General Constitutions**

#### **Article 10 - Rule Article 10**

“Christ, poor and crucified”, victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the “book” in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering. They discover in Him the value of contradictions for the sake of justice and the meaning of the difficulties and the crosses of daily life. With Him they can accept the will of the Father even under the most difficult circumstances and live the Franciscan spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity.

#### **Article 12.2 – Rule Article 10**

With Jesus, obedient even to death, they should seek to know and do the will of the Father. They should give thanks to God for the gift of freedom and for the revelation of the law of love. In order to carry out the will of the Father, they should accept the help which is offered to them through the mediation of the Church by those who are given authority in her and by their confreres. They should take on the risk of courageous choices in their life in society with decisiveness and serenity.

**Article 18.2 - Rule Article 13**

They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and marginalisation and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.

**Article 18.3 - Rule Article 13**

They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples. They should commit themselves to “create worthy conditions of life” for all and to work for the freedom of all people.

**Life-Objective**

In this month of September, let us enjoy our fraternal meeting as the special place that it is for our brothers and sisters welcoming each one ,,,

**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)

**At Home**

To help your reflection, read the following article:

277. The Church esteems the ways in which God works in other religions, and “rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines which... often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women”. Yet we Christians are very much aware that “if the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth.

If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, our workplaces, our political and financial life, then we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman”. Others drink from other sources.

For us the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises, “for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all ”