

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: The gift of the stigmata to Saint Francis ...

In this month of September 2024, we offer for your reflection some extracts from Br. France Salesse, OFM CAP's presentation given during our annual gathering – Fraternité 2024 - on the gift of the stigmata to Saint Francis.

Good reflection and sharing.

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

SEPTEMBER 2024 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting

With a hymn, a prayer from the Ritual or another, chosen by the fraternity, the meeting begins.

First stage:

3S,14 :

His heart was so wounded and bruised at the memory of the Passion that, throughout his life, he would bear the stigmata of the Lord Jesus in his heart : that very well appeared miraculously and clearly visible on his body.

When Brother Francis heard the voice of Christ crucified in the little church of Saint Damien, his heart was transformed. When he embraced and healed the lepers' wounds, his heart was wounded by the very wounds of Christ nailed to the cross. Jesus burned his heart with the same fire of love that he had for humanity when he shed his blood on the cross.

Reflection and sharing:

Let's name some situations or people that help us to see that Christ is still wounded today. "Who then is God that we can wound so deeply by wounding man?"

Take the time to share your thoughts.

The Mystical Event:

Seeking to become in all things conformed to Christ crucified in death, as he is in life, Francis climbed the mountain to meditate on Christ's passion in solitude. A fiery angelic being, a mysterious Seraphim, came to meet him.

It was then that Francis realized that on this mountain, Christ's passion would be renewed. First in his soul through love and compassion, and in his body through the imprint of the Stigmata. Spiritually ablaze, **Francis sees himself transformed into the formal likeness of Christ crucified.**

This admirable vision, disappearing after a long space of time, and these secret words, left the heart of St. Francis with an unbounded ardor and a flame of divine love, and left in his flesh a marvellous image and imprint of Christ's Passion.

Spiritual experience

LM 13, 3

It was not the martyrdom of his body, but the love setting his soul on fire that should transform him into the likeness of Christ crucified.

Secretly, Brother Francis confided this to one of his brothers: "I began to contemplate with devotion the immeasurable love of Jesus crucified, and the immeasurable pain of his Passion; and the sight of him bore in me such compassion, **that it seemed to me, strictly speaking, to feel that Passion in my body.**"

Francis thus became the image and likeness of Christ crucified. In his hands and feet were the marks of the nails, and in his right his right side, the wound of the spear. His soul and heart already conformed to the love of Christ, his body already damaged by time and austerity, was now marked by the wounds of Christ crucified.

It was thus given to St. Francis to participate in a privileged way in Christ's redemptive sufferings. He also received an eternal seed of life, as on Easter morning. By imprinting his crucifixion wounds into Francis' body, Jesus deposited in him an eternal seed enabling him to share in his resurrection and become a new creation in Christ.

2 Cor. 4:10:

We bear in our bodies the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

He understood that, just as it had been given to him to follow Christ in the acts of his life, so he was to follow and be conformed to him, in the afflictions and pains of the Passion.

(Become the One you contemplate. Saint Augustine)

"Jesus deposited in him an eternal seed which enabled him to participate in his resurrection and become a new creation in Christ."

Reflection and sharing:

Let's name the signs, however discreet, that make us see and hope for the birth of a new world.
Take time to share your thoughts.

Here is a prayer Second stage:

Reflection and sharing:

Let us share our thoughts using the following questions

- 1- How can we get through trials in a spirit of Christian faith?
- 2 - In what way does the care we give to the suffering and dying offer a Christian meaning to suffering?
- 3 - In our presence with the sick and dying, what human and spiritual strengths are revealed?

Take the time necessary so that the members can really share.

Third stage:

Finally, in the current context of our society (which legally recognizes medical aid in dying), a) what Christian meaning can we give to suffering and death?

b) what possible alternatives can we propose to our world?

Take the time to share your thoughts on the preceding questions.

“He committed himself through self-denial to becoming familiar with death, which at the end of his life he called our sister, bodily death.”

Reflection and sharing:

Together, let us share our reactions on the following questions.

1. Do the various experiences of death we've had since birth help us to contemplate with serenity and faith the ultimate death that awaits us?
2. How can we bear witness to our loved ones that the inevitable exit from this world is an open door to a greater, more beautiful and eternal Life?

Fourth stage:

Brother Matthew recounts that, in a dream, Saint Francis told him the following:

I began to contemplate with devotion the love without measure of Jesus and the immeasurable sorrow of his Passion; and its appearance bore in me such compassion that it seemed that I was, in a very real sense feeling that Passion in my body; and in his presence the whole mountain shone like the sun...

Then, after some time, Christ departed and ascended into heaven. I found myself marked with these wounds. *“In his presence, the whole mountain shone like the sun.”*

May our contemplation of Christ crucified, and our desire to resemble him make burst in us a new springtime in the wounds of humanity.

Life Objective

During this month of September, let us take time to celebrate the glorious cross on September 14th and the gift of the stigmata on September 17th, very precious moments for our Franciscan family ,,,

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

Suggestion: recite the **Psalm 7 by St. Francis of Assisi:**

People, acknowledge the Lord, give him honor and praise, acknowledge the glory of his name. Give of yourselves, and you too bear his cross, obey his commandments to the end. Let all the world tremble before him, say to all peoples: The Lord reigns through the Cross!

At Home Here is a prayer to say at home.

My God, you are all tenderness for me.

I ask, through your beloved Son: that I may be filled with mercy
and love all that you inspire in me.

Give me compassion for those who are afflicted,
and to go to the aid of those in need.

Grant that I may bring relief to the unfortunate, offer shelter to those in need,
comfort the afflicted, encourage the oppressed.

Grant that I may bring joy to the poor, support those who mourn,
forgive the debt of those who owe me.

Give me the power to forgive those who offend me, to love those who hate me,
to always return good for evil, to despise no one, and to honor all men.

Help me to imitate the good, to renounce the company of the wicked,
to practice the virtues and to avoid vices.

Give me, Lord, patience when things go wrong and moderation when all goes well.
Give me the ability to control my tongue, and to put a guard over my mouth if need be.

Finally, my God, give me contempt for passing things and thirst for eternal good.

Saint Anselm of Canterbury Italian Benedictine monk (1033-1109)