

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Listening, Discerning, Living the Lord's Call »

In the month of February, during our fraternal meetings, we are sending a reflection taken from Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The text draws our attention to three important aspects: listening, discerning and living the Lord's call in our daily life. Good reflection and good sharing.

Recall: *Our monthly meeting should favor a meeting with Christ.* A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and good preparation promotes a communal experience. At the meeting, having a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the Rule and the General Constitutions, will provide clarity and depth for our edification and experience..

Good preparation – Good meeting

FEBRUARY 2018 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening Prayer and Song: (According to the Ritual or chosen by the Fraternity)

Introduction

Next October, the Fifteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will meet to discuss the theme of young people and in particular the relationship between young people, faith and vocation. There we will have a chance to consider more deeply how, at the centre of our life, is the call to joy that God addresses to us and how this is “God’s plan for men and women in very age” (*Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment, Introduction*).

Even amid these troubled times, the mystery of the Incarnation reminds us that God continually comes to encounter us. He is God-with-us, who walks along the often dusty paths of our lives. He knows our anxious longing for love and he calls us to joy. In the diversity and the uniqueness of each and every vocation, personal and ecclesial, there is a need to listen, discern and live this word that calls to us from on high and, while enabling us to develop our talents, makes us instruments of salvation in the world and guides us to full happiness.

These three aspects – listening, discerning and living – were also present at beginning of Jesus’ own mission, when, after his time of prayer and struggle in the desert, he visited his synagogue of Nazareth. There, he listened to the word, discerned the content of the mission entrusted to him by the Father, and proclaimed that he came to accomplish it “today” (Lk 4:16-21).

Reflection

How do these paragraphs speak to you about your vocation? Take the necessary time to share your thoughts.

Listening

The Lord's call – let it be said at the outset – is not as clear-cut as any of those things we can hear, see or touch in our daily experience. God comes silently and discreetly, without imposing on our freedom. Thus it can happen that his voice is drowned out by the many worries and concerns that fill our minds and hearts.

We need, then, to learn how to listen carefully to the word and the story of his life, but also to be attentive to the details of our own daily lives, in order to learn how to view things with the eyes of faith, and to keep ourselves open to the surprises of the Spirit.

We will never discover the special, personal calling that God has in mind for us if we remain enclosed in ourselves, in our usual way of doing things, in the apathy of those who fritter away their lives in their own little world. We would lose the chance to dream big and to play our part in the unique and original story that God wants to write with us.

Jesus too, was called and sent. That is why he needed to recollect himself in silence. He listened to and read the word in the synagogue, and with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit he revealed its full meaning, with reference to his own person and the history of the people of Israel.

Nowadays listening is becoming more and more difficult, immersed as we are in a society full of noise, overstimulated and bombarded by information. The outer noise that sometimes prevails in our cities and our neighbourhoods is often accompanied by our interior dispersion and confusion. This prevents us from pausing and enjoying the taste of contemplation, reflecting serenely on the events of our lives, going about our work with confidence in God's loving plan, and making a fruitful discernment.

Yet, as we know, the kingdom of God comes quietly and unobtrusively (cf. Lk 17:21), and we can only gather its seeds when, like the prophet Elijah, we enter into the depths of our soul and are open to the imperceptible whisper of the divine breeze (cf. 1 Kg 19:11-13).

Reflection

After reading these paragraphs, share what these lines tell us the manner in which we should listen. (About 15 minutes)

Discerning

When Jesus, in the synagogue of Nazareth, reads the passage of the prophet Isaiah, he discerns the content of the mission for which he was sent, and presents it to those who awaited the Messiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Lk 4:18-19).

In the same way, each of us can discover his or her own vocation only through spiritual discernment. This is "a process by which a person makes fundamental choices, in dialogue with the Lord and listening to the voice of the Spirit, starting with the choice of one's state in life"

(Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, Youth, Faith and Vocational Discernment, II, 2).

Thus we come to discover that Christian vocation always has a prophetic dimension. The Scriptures tell us that the prophets were sent to the people in situations of great material insecurity and of spiritual and moral crisis, in order to address in God's name a message of conversion, hope and consolation. Like a whirlwind, the prophet unsettles the false tranquility of consciences that have forgotten the word of the Lord. He discerns events in the light of God's promise and enables people to glimpse the signs of dawn amid the dark shadows of history.

Today too, we have great need of discernment and of prophecy. We have to resist the temptations of ideology and negativity, and to discover, in our relationship with the Lord, the places, the means and situations through which he calls us. Every Christian ought to grow in the ability to "read within" his or her life, and to understand where and to what he or she is being called by the Lord, in order to carry on his mission.

Sharing

After reading these paragraphs, have you discovered anything new about discernment? Share any discoveries. (About 15 minutes)

Living

Lastly, Jesus announces the newness of the present hour, which will enthuse many and harden the heart of others. The fullness of time has come, and he is the Messiah proclaimed by Isaiah and anointed to liberate prisoners, to restore sight to the blind and to proclaim the merciful love of God to every creature. Indeed, Jesus says that "today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21).

The joy of the Gospel, which makes us open to encountering God and our brothers and sisters, does not abide our slowness and our sloth. It will not fill our hearts if we keep standing by the window with the excuse of waiting for the right time, without accepting this very day the risk of making a decision. Vocation is today! The Christian mission is now! Each one of us is called – whether to the lay life in marriage, to the priestly life in the ordained ministry, or to a life of special consecration – in order to become a witness of the Lord, here and now.

This "today" that Jesus proclaimed assures us that God continues to "come down" to save our human family and to make us sharers in his mission. The Lord continues to call others to live with him and to follow him in a relationship of particular closeness. He continues to call others to serve him directly. If he lets us realize that he is calling us to consecrate ourselves totally to his kingdom, then we should have no fear! It is beautiful – and a great grace – to be completely and forever consecrated to God and the service of our brothers and sisters.

Today the Lord continues to call others to follow him. We should not wait to be perfect in order to respond with our generous "yes", nor be fearful of our limitations and sins, but instead open our hearts to the voice of the Lord. To listen to that voice, to discern our personal mission in the

Church and the world, and at last to live it in the today that God gives us.

Sharing and Reflection

The Lord continues calling us to follow him. Do we always feel questioned by his call? What does this call signify for us today? How can it be realized in our daily life and in our respective environments?

Rediscovering the articles of the Rule

With the help of the Rule, we are now proposing that you work together to find the 4 following passages:

Where is found

1. « Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel »?
2. « let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ ... »?
3. « United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life ... »?
4. « Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should, seek out ways ... »?

Life-Objective:

At the start of Lent, let us place special attention to this time that can be one particularly of listening, discernment and life in preparation to the Pascal period

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

Remind the members to celebrate an important anniversary – the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of our Rule.

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

At home

Search for the message contained in the 4 articles studied together in fraternity, then bring your answers for sharing during the next fraternity meeting.