

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme : « Lord, what do you want me to do? »

For the month of February, we suggest continuing our deepening of the meaning of the text « *Lord, what do you want me to do?* », presented at *Fraternité 2012*, by Fr. Pierre Brunet, ofm.

We will go deeper into the journey taken by Francis during his conversions. We will ask ourselves the following questions: Have we lived similar moments? Are we ready to share any of these in particular?

Reminder: At the monthly meetings, the fraternity should have in place a Bible at the disposal of the members, at least one copy of the General Constitutions, an example of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and at least one Living with Christ. Also, each member should have in hand their own copy of the Rule.

Good preparation - Good meeting

FEBRUARY 2013 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening prayer or song

(According to the Ritual or chosen by the fraternity)

Reading:

While one person calmly does the reading of the following text, the others will listen.

Recall of the conversions of Francis of Assisi

In the following, we can see him journeying in his search for answers to recognize the will of the Lord in his life. In fact, he does not perceive his vocation and his mission at first: it will take him 7 to 8 years to discover a suitable answer.

Here are some significant points in his personal journey:

1. Illness and convalescence (1202-1203): the body and the disturbing of his self.
2. Project of a military career (1205): his dreams of glory and his ideal.
3. Periods of breakdowns (1205): his need for prayer, solitude and help from the bishop of Assisi.
4. The service for the lepers (1205-1206): his alms, his service toward the poorest, and his change of values

5. Period of the restoration of chapel (1205): his charity in the service of churches and his questioning before the Cross in Saint-Damian and his meeting with Christ.
6. His divesting before the bishop (1206); his civil and family emancipation; his choice of living publicly in the service of God.
7. His radical listening to the Gospel (1208): by his putting it into practice, his change of lifestyle and his start as a penitent preacher in popular preaching.

After having listened to the reading of the examples of the choices of lifestyle that Francis had reflected upon, choose one. Once the choice has been made, the members are invited, during a few minutes to share their choice and to express the reason for their choice.

Recollection

Now let us continue with the reading of the following text. (It would be good to change the person reading).

On the road to Spoleto

Francis' questioning begins during a relapse in his illness. At 24 years of age, he goes to the *Pouilles* with a nobleman from Assisi (3S4), to fight under the banner of Gaultier de Brienne. He had had a vision of a palace filled with arms.

Here is the interpretation that he gives of his dream

This palace is for him and for his soldiers. Francis dreams wildly: he wants to be someone, *a great prince*. On the eve of departure, he gives his new armament to a poor knight. Then, he takes the road towards the South of Italy.

THE DREAM IN SPOLETO

Having set course and arriving in Spoleto, he begins feeling a little ill. Although preoccupied, he succeeds in falling asleep. During a half slumber, he hears someone asking him where he wishes to go. When Francis tells him everything about his project, his speaker says: « *So who can do you the most good? The master or the servant?* » « *The master!* » Francis answers. « *Then, why do you abandon the master for the servant and the prince for the vassal?* » It is then that Francis answers: « *Lord, what do you want me to do?* » « *Return to your country and someone will tell you what you must do, because this vision that you have had, you must understand it differently* » (3S 6).

His project aborts, because of a relapse. This forces him to renounce his dream of glory. His self is shaken: he must turn back without really knowing what to do. We could translate this text « **Return to your country** » by « *Return to your childbirth* », « *where your can be reborn* ». The continuation of the Legendas shows that he will put his personal ambitions in the service of God in the world, little by little. **His life's success deepens on his link with God; and he will have to pay the price.**

Let us take a moment of silence, and read for one another the preceding passage and be prepared to answer the following question:

Question: Has it ever happened to you, that a dream has affected one of your life's decisions?

Sharing

Sharing should be kept to one or two interventions ... A few minutes should be sufficient.

Let us continue with reading of the following text:

We shall now consider TWO EXAMPLES OF DISCERNMENT lived by Francis, relating to a question on which we can share.

In 1209, the small primitive fraternity returns from Rome with the approval from the pope on their form of life. In the valley of Spoleto, the fraternity asks itself the question: *do the brothers live amongst men or do they retire to solitary places?* It is Francis who solves the dilemma: *he chooses that they should not live for themselves alone. He wanted to win souls for God.* (1C 35)

A few years later, he confronts the same dilemma for himself: is it better *to live amongst men or to retire in solitude?* He consults two contemplative persons, Brother Sylvester and Clare. They both do not consult each other yet they answer in the same manner: **he must preach as the herald of Christ.** (LM 12,2)

Do we not in fact see more clearly for others than for ourselves? Francis and the primitive fraternity's experiences show the importance of searching and of praying, of trying to answer in practice, in consulting some « wise men » or persons of confidence to know the will of the Lord for ourselves. To go through time with patience.

Sharing

After a few moments of personal reflection, share the following question:

How can we decipher the crucial moments in our life? What are they?

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpts from the Legenda Major 12, 2, in Bonaventure, Écrits, Vies témoignages, Édition du VIIe Centenaire)

True « minor », he was not ashamed to ask for little things from lesser persons, he who had learned many great things from the supreme Master. In a particular application, he was in the habit of searching by what way or in what manner he could most perfectly devote himself to God according to His good pleasure. This was his supreme philosophy, this was his supreme desire for as long as he would live: to seek from the wise men and simple ones, the perfect and imperfect ones, the young and the old in what manner one can achieve efficiently the summit of perfection.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and General Constitutions

OFS Rule, Article 5

Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of Saint Francis, who often said, « I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except his most holy body and blood, » should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life.

General Constitutions, Articles 9.1

The spirituality of the secular Franciscan is a plan of life centered on the person and on the following of Christ, rather than a detailed program to be put into practice

Life - Objective:

For the month of February 2013, it is suggested that we again read the excerpts that we have gone through and together deepen them during our monthly meeting ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Recall of National, Regional and Local activities.

End of the meeting with a prayer (choice of the fraternity)

At home

In order to continue our reflection, a reading of the excerpts from the following gospels: Mathew 12, 36-37; Mark 4, 8-10, Luke 8, 4-8 and John 12, 48-49.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we can find, in the following articles: 94, 021, 2038 and 2518 more points for reflection.

In the Writings of Saint Francis, we can also find the following excerpts:

Life of Saint Francis, by Thomas of Celano, 1C35, the Legend of the Three Companions, Chapter II, Articles 4 and 6.