

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme : « To go forward with more life, more enthusiasm? »

During the year 2013, we have gone through the text by Fr. Pierre Brunet, ofm: « *Lord, want do you want me to do?* » We are very grateful to have had his presentation to sustain our monthly reflection.

In January 2014, we will be deepening excerpts from a text by Fr. Roland Bonenfant, ofm on *The reason for a Fraternal monthly meeting in the OFS*. A first text from a series that will vary in the coming months.

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

Good preparation - Good meeting

JANUARY 2014 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who can read calmly)

The local monthly meeting in a Fraternity

The Catholic and all apostolic man that Francis was, having understood that the essential of the Kingdom of God was the fraternity and the communion of hearts that it supposes, would exhort us to more fidelity and would entreat us first to rejoice at being gathered in the name of Christ and being especially conscious of it.

This keen conscience has the capacity to transfigure any meeting! It is an honour to be the disciples of Christ in the manner of saint Francis, to meet together in view of something rare: celebrating his Resurrection, proclaiming that He is alive and that He wants live among us, living as well in the place where we are. Afterwards to go from there more alive, with a keen conscience to be called to work with others, in the Church ... to go forward more enthusiastic than ever in our mission of artisans of love and peace working together, there is the fruit of a successful meeting. Before any other content, this is the principal content of a monthly meeting.

Sharing:

In small teams (with one person to give a brief report afterwards). 20 minutes
Do we leave more alive? More enthusiastic? Are our meetings fully successful?
If yes, why and how? If not, what can we do to remedy the situation?

Plenary session, then continue with reading the following paragraphs:

Together being Communion and Body of Christ

It is this fraternity and this communion that we are called to receive; the communion of the Bread of Life (Eucharist) is the sacrament, the sign. It is only the sign. It is for us to realize this communion! In other words, even if we have received the Body of Christ, - the maximum in principle, - it is almost nothing if we do not become together the Body of Christ. And we are truly, the Body of Christ, when we become Alive, like him, and we favour life!

Only the Life. Otherwise, we are like the awful dead wood, the disenchanting beings that only walk with the cadavers ... Otherwise, we are only semblances of Fraternity, the anti-Fraternities only just ready to squabble among each other and to exert themselves in power struggles. The two to two evangelical, - the fact of being together, - is of extreme importance.

This is what I would say in an introduction on the mystery of grace that represents the fraternal meeting. It is a mystery of grace where the world is reborn, as in an hymn to the Virgin Mary.

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Here is made legitimate the fact that our having committed ourselves by promise to build community ; here this also authorises us to say without joking the first word in the Our Father : our. It is this simple word, the word Father, that constitutes us brothers and sisters in Christ, all equal in his eyes. Therefore, we must become equals, in our Fraternity, without prejudice of race, of class, or of sex, without any discrimination as regards to the various functions in the Church.

The idea of service (ministry) abolishes all hierarchy (a very bad word in a Christian mouth) ; the only hierarchy that the Gospel allows, is to reverse the terms : that the greatest become the lowest (Jesus, in Luke 9, 48) .

Questions for sharing, after having taken a few minutes to reflect

We must become ... what does this imply for each one of us, in our fraternities? In the Church?

Continue the reading with the following paragraphs:

These simple words our Father says family, gathering, fraternisation, union of hearts in becoming, and in a journey of realization. The Spiritual Assistant himself is one of you, no more important than the smallest among you, no more advanced in living the faith and charity than the least generous of any family member. He is, like those who have other service functions in the Fraternity, on the same level as any other member of the Fraternity facing what constitutes the greatest challenge today: building community, building Church, building fraternity, that is to pass the isolated puzzle piece in its corner, to the assembled one forming an overall scene; that is to also go from the situation of dead stones to living stones, as saint Peter wrote (1 P 2, 4). An immense challenge, that is counter-cultural to our modern world, but that shows very well all the originality of our baptism and our membership in an ecclesial fraternity.

This is what a meeting of the local Fraternity serves.

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We can all, individually, read the Gospels and imbue ourselves, but on the model of the small troop that followed Jesus, the Master, we are invited to do this exercise in groups, by confronting our personal life with the message of the Gospels, « by going from gospel to life and life to gospel » according to a cherished expression in the OFS.

Our OFS Fraternities can resemble a School of Gospel Sharing. One of the advantages that a sharing has over a preaching, that keeps all its value, understandingly, is that it falls into the minds like a fine rain that fertilizes the earth. The fine rain often has more long term effects than a heavy downpour. The Gospel sharing allow the development of confidence between the members of a group, because each person is a carrier of the Spirit of God. It is the most welding element of the evangelical Fraternity. The Fraternity, as a place of concrete apprenticeship for an egalitarian vision, is a fruit of the welcomed Gospel.

Questions?

Have we read today's Gospel? If yes, take the time to read again.

Sharing (10 minutes). Simply share what speaks to you and how you follow it.

Continue the reading

The grace of the fraternity is to abolish all prejudice of class, race, sex, social conditions, to arrive at being one in Christ, all artisans of the unique peace. Here is why the life in Fraternity, with its frequent sessions, is comparable to a true University of Fraternity. A local Fraternity includes people of diverse origins and cultural traditions, living the ordinary experiences of secular life, and therefore all these persons become one in Christ because he brings them together. As in the community of Clare and Francis of Assisi, in the beginning!

The vitality that reigns in the interior of a Fraternity, thanks to the message of Christ, is what it must do to shine outside. It brings everywhere the charity of Christ. Nothing is too difficult for it; its spiritual vigour deploys itself, according to the needs of a place. Its needs become release mechanisms for all the generosities.

This apprenticeship of life in Fraternity does not occur by itself. It needs witnesses, true disciples of Christ in the manner of saint Francis.

This Fraternity, when it is lived and realized, is the seal of Franciscan charisma, as in the manner of forming a living Church, fundamentally egalitarian.

All the other values, such as poverty, detachment from worldly goods, the search for the Lord's will, prayer in itself are in the service of this essential reality that is the Fraternity. It is a concrete illustration of the mystery of the Charity of Christ.

Roland Bonenfant, ofm Spiritual Assistant

The complete French text can be found on the following site: http://www.fraternite-franciscaine-paca.com/pages/Le_pourquoi_dune_reunion_de_fraternite_dans_IOFS_Sherbrooke-776225.html

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the 2nd Rule, Chapter 6, verses 7-8, Écrits, Vies, témoignages, Éditions du VIIIe Anniversaire, Paris, 2010)

And everywhere the brothers are and whenever they meet, they shall show themselves to be of the same family. And that with assurance they will manifest to one another their needs, because, if a mother nourishes and cherishes her earthly son, with how much more affection must each one not cherish and nourish his spiritual brother?

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions OFS Rule, Article 21

On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister who are elected by the professed according to the Constitutions. Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community. Within themselves the fraternities are structured in different ways according to the norm of the Constitutions, according to the various needs of their members and their regions, and under the guidance of their respective council.

General Constitutions, Articles 31.2 and 31.4

31.2 The office of minister or councillor is a fraternal service, a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the fraternity so that each one will realize his or her own vocation and each fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society.

31.4 The leaders should see to the spiritual and technical preparation and animation of the meetings both of the fraternities and of the councils. They should seek to inspire life and soul into the fraternities by their own witness, suggesting appropriate means for the development of the life of the fraternity and of apostolic activities in the light of the fundamental Franciscan options. They should see to it that the decisions made are carried out and they should promote collaboration among the brothers and sisters.

Life - Objective:

During the month of January, think about finding ways of improving our interpersonal and intercultural relationships. We are brothers and sisters not only because we are identical to 99.9% (because of our DNA) but because we have one only Father and that in Jesus Christ we are members of his Body, this body that He is the head and we are the members. He is the Vine, we are the branches.

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

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

At home

To continue our reflection, go and look in the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the articles 401, 404 and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the numbers 1877-1878 and 1881.