

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Go, in confidence with Jesus Christ »

For May, we present a third excerpt from Pope Francis' exhortation - *The Joy of the Gospel*. The excerpts are from the second chapter - *Yes to the new relationships brought by Christ* - and particularly from numbers 87, 88, 90, 91 and 92.

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 in hand their own copy of the Rule.

Note : Is our meeting place favorable, welcoming, warm? This is an important point to consider for encouraging our members to express their various points of view on the subject.

JULY 2014 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

Yes to the new relationships brought by Christ

Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a “mystique” of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage. Greater possibilities for communication thus turn into greater possibilities for encounter and solidarity for everyone. If we were able to take this route, it would be so good, so soothing, so liberating and hope-filled! To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us. To be self-enclosed is to taste the bitter poison of immanence, and humanity will be worse for every selfish choice we make.

Reflection:

After the reading of the paragraph, are there any expressions in the text that apply to our fraternity? If yes, name them. (about 15 minutes)

Continue with the following reading once the reflection is finished.

The Christian ideal will always be a summons to overcome suspicion, habitual mistrust, fear of losing our privacy, all the defensive attitudes which today's world imposes on us. Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspect of the Gospel. For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provided by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.

Sharing: (about 15 minutes)

1. What has touched me in this text?
2. Why?

Continue with the following reading once the sharing is finished.

Genuine forms of popular religiosity are incarnate, since they are born of the incarnation of Christian faith in popular culture. For this reason they entail a personal relationship, not with vague spiritual energies or powers, but with God, with Christ, with Mary, with the saints. These devotions are fleshy, they have a face. They are capable of fostering relationships and not just enabling escapism. In other parts of our society, we see the growing attraction to various forms of a "spirituality of well-being" divorced from any community life, or to a "theology of prosperity" detached from responsibility for our brothers and sisters, or to depersonalized experiences which are nothing more than a form of self-centredness.

Reflection:

In the preceding paragraph, you will find the expression « spirituality of well-being » and also « theology of prosperity ». What do we understand by these expressions? (about 15 minutes)

Continue with the following reading once the reflection is finished.

One important challenge is to show that the solution will never be found in fleeing from a personal and committed relationship with God which at the same time commits us to serving others. This happens frequently nowadays, as believers seek to hide or keep apart from others, or quietly flit from one place to another or from one task to another, without creating deep and stable bonds. This is a false remedy which cripples the heart and at times the body as well.

We need to help others to realize that the only way is to learn how to encounter others with the right attitude, which is to accept and esteem them as companions along the way, without interior resistance. Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas. And learning to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity.

Sharing: (about 15 minutes)

In the previous paragraph, what is the relationship with one another

1. for me?
2. for the fraternity?
3. Whom am I supposed to see?

Continue with the following reading once the sharing is finished.

There indeed we find true healing, since the way to relate to others which truly heals instead of debilitating us, is a *mystical* fraternity, a contemplative fraternity. It is a fraternal love capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbour, of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does. Here and now, especially where we are a “little flock” (*Luke* 12:32), the Lord’s disciples are called to live as a community which is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. *Mt* 5:13-16). We are called to bear witness to a constantly new way of living together in fidelity to the Gospel. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community!

Sharing and Bible research:

With a Bible, go and find the excerpts mentioned in the preceding text. Read them and invite everyone to meditate them while listening to them.

Reflection:

Let us listen to the reading of today’s Gospel... then take a moment to share.

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the 1st Rule, Chapter 11, verses 5, 6 and 9, Écrits, Claire et François, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2003)

And that they love one another, as the Lord says: « This is my commandment, that you love one another as I love you. » And that they show by acts the love they have for one another, as the Apostle said: « Do not love in words only, but in acts and in truth. » And that they be modest, showing leniency for all men.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the 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 Scriptures, 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, Article 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:

During the month of July, think of praying saint Anne ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

Remind the members to offer a prayer for the success of the International Chapter.

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

At home

In order to continue our reflection, go and see in the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the articles 292, 358, 365 and 401. In the Catechism, the articles 1701 - 1706, 1738, 1747, 1878 - 18809, 1890 - 1891, present us with aspects of our life in relation with God and our neighbour.

May every one of you enjoy a very nice summer!