

## LIVING FRATERNITY

**Theme: « What does the Gospel say about creation? »**

In the month of June 2016, during our fraternal meetings, we are proposing a look at certain aspects of the second chapter in the encyclical letter from Pope Francis «LaudatoSi». Our reflection will be on three fundamental relationships: the relationship with God, with our neighbour and the one with the earth.

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 copy of Living with Christ. Also, each member should have in hand their own copy of the Rule.

*Good preparation – Good meeting*

### JUNE 2016 MONTHLY MEETING

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

**Reading:** (choose a person who reads calmly) Introduction

#### **Introduction**

The story of Creation is central to a reflection on the relations between man and the other creatures, and on how sin brings down the equilibrium in the whole of creation : « These stories suggest that human existence rest upon three deeply linked fundamental relationships: the relationship with God, with our neighbour, and with the earth. According to the Bible, the three vital relationships have been broken, not only outside, but also with in us. This break is sin».

**Wisdom of the biblical stories** (*Excerpt from Article 66 of the Encyclical*)

This rupture is sin. The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.

This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. *Gen 1:28*), to “till it and keep it” (*Gen 2:15*). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. *Gen 3:17-19*). It is significant that the harmony which Saint Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of that rupture. Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence. This is a far cry from our situation today, where sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse, the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature.

## **Sharing:**

According to Francis, the Bible teaches that the harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation has been disrupted by our pretention to take God's place and our refusal to recognise that are milited creatures.

- What is meant by pretending to take God's place?

Share your answers to this question during about 15 minutes.

## **Preserve ... or .. dominate ... ( Excerpt from Article 67 of the Encyclical)**

We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. This allows us to respond to the charge that Judaeo-Christian thinking, on the basis of the Genesis account which grants man “dominion” over the earth (cf. *Gen* 1:28), has encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by painting him as domineering and destructive by nature. This is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church.

The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. *Gen* 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature.

## **Sharing:**

Take a good moment to answer the following question:

How does Pope Francis interpret Genesis 1, 28 that gives humanity the right to dominate the earth?

## **A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature (Articles 91 and 92 of the Encyclical)**

A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. This compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment. It is no coincidence that, in the canticle in which Saint Francis praises God for his creatures, he goes on to say: “Praised be you my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love”. Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.

We have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of cruelty towards any creature is “contrary to human dignity”. We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality: “Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism” Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together

the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.

### **Reflection:**

After the reading, take the time to answer the following questions:

1. What has touched me in this text?
2. How am I touched, moved, distressed or encouraged by it?
3. What do I want to retain as being the most important?

### **In the Footsteps of Francis**

*(Excerpt from the Admonitions, Article 9, Écrits, Claire et François, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2003)*

The Lord says: "Love your enemies; [do good to those who hate you, and pray on behalf of those who are persecuting and calumniating you]" (Mt 5:44). · For he truly loves his enemy, who does not grieve because of the injury, which he did to him, · but, concerning the sin against his own soul, burns for the sake of the love of God. And he shows love for him by (his) deeds.

### **Biblical Reflection:**

Note: If you prefer sharing on the Gospel of the day, or on Sunday's Gospel, take the time necessary to read and internalize it, then if you wish, share your reflections using one or two of the following questions:

1. What does this gospel teach us?
2. To whom does it speak?
3. How does it reach us personally?
4. Is it a message of hope? Other kind of message? Why and how is it?

## **Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General s**

### **Rule 13.1**

As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the first-born of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.

### **Rule 18**

Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

## **General Constitutions**

**Article 18.2** They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.

**Article 18.3** They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to "create worthy conditions of life" for all and to work for the freedom of all people.

**Article 18.4** Following the example of Francis, patron of ecologists, they should actively put forward initiatives that care for creation and should work with others in efforts that both put a stop to polluting and degrading nature and also establish circumstances of living and environment which would not be a threat to the human person.

### **Life – Objective:**

During the month of June, let us encourage our members to admire God's work, in our respective areas, in nature and everywhere in the creation surrounding us ...

### **Events and Information from the Church and the Order**

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

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

### **At home**

We invite you to read article 93 of the Encyclical – The common destination of goods

Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone. Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged.

The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and “the first principle of the whole ethical and social order”. The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property.

Saint John Paul II forcefully reaffirmed this teaching, stating that “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, *without excluding or favouring anyone*”.<sup>72</sup> These are strong words. He noted that “a type of development which did not respect and promote human rights – personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples – would not be really worthy of man”.