

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Saint Louis and Spiritual Life »

In November, we are presenting a first text on Saint Louis of France. We are in the Jubilee year and therefore we want you to better know a patron of our Secular Franciscan Family. The texts come from the International Council and are authorized by the Diocese of Versailles, France.

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, and warm? This is an important point to consider for encouraging our members to express their various points of view on the subject.

Good preparation --- Good meeting

NOVEMBER 2014 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

Turn your life Godwards

“Dear son, my very first teaching is to love God with all your heart and all your strength for without that no-one is worth anything.” (*From a spiritual testament to his son by St. Louis*)

“Men are strange; they make a crime out of my assiduity in prayer but would say nothing if I spent hours playing cards or dice, tracking wild beasts or hunting birds.” (*Attributed to St Louis by Joinville*)

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: “SAINT LOUIS – A ROYAL ORANT”

St Louis prayed a great deal. Every day he attended mass, prayed the divine office (breviary) and spent long periods in prayer. When he could, he withdrew to the Cistercian abbey of Royaumont to deepen his communion with God in meditation and prayer, and through this renewal, to go ever more frequently “from gospel to life and life to gospel”.

His inner life was rooted in his desire to follow Christ and to be united with him in the debasement of the cross. Ever avid to learn, he enjoyed listening to the teachings of theologians. He gladly welcomed St Thomas (Aquinas) and St Bonaventure to dine at his table.

Saint Louis had a strong awareness of sin and of divine forgiveness; did not his mother Blanche de Castile tell him: “My son, I love you, AFTER God, more than all things, however I would rather see you dead than guilty of a single mortal sin”? He went to confession every week and submitted his body to a severe asceticism. He also gave generous alms to the poor, whom he willingly served in person.

Pause

Take a 5-minute pause in order to read, in silence, the previous text and to absorb its content. Afterwards, continue the reading with another person.

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE: “THE CHALLENGE OF INNER LIFE”

The Gospel is the foundation of the inner life of Saint Louis and of any true Christian. Saint Louis often meditated on the Word of the Lord and never missed an occasion to have it explained to him.

If we cannot pray the divine office (hours) as Saint Louis did, we can at least be careful to link every hour of our life to the paschal hour of Jesus. Let us make time each day for a moment of prayer, of communion with Christ and an opening of our heart to the Holy Spirit. May we remind ourselves that fasting fortifies prayer and directs our strength towards the service of the poor (*GC* 13, 3; 15, 3).

Let us use the means that the Church gives us to increase our love of God and of our brothers: the Eucharist feeds our life and gives ultimate meaning to all our commitments. Reconciliation restores our link to God and to others (Rule 7).

Pause

Reading the last paragraph above a second time, we must be prepared to share...

- Are the means proposed by the Church seem compatible with our Rule?
- If yes, read article 7 of our Rule and articles 8.2 and 13 of the Constitutions again (About 10 minutes) then continue the reading with another person.

FROM SAINT LOUIS TO TODAY

A group discussion of 10-12 minutes follows which can be animated by the director of formation to be done by reading of the following text in which you will find questions for sharing.

Spiritual Life

St Louis managed to reconcile his royal duties with a fervent and intense practise of Christianity. What space do we allow, in our often-busy daily lives, to our inner life of prayer? (Cf. *Rule* 8)

We take on various responsibilities: family, profession, clubs and associations ... what means can we use to step back and see these commitments in their true light? How can we help young people to discover their inner spiritual life (Cf. *GC 8, 2*)?

Sacraments

St Louis participated frequently and intensely in the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation: how do these sacraments nourish my faith and commitments as a Christian? How can I make this clear to those who are close to me?

Formation (Religious/Spiritual Education)

Ever mindful of the teachings of theologians, St Louis attached great importance to the understanding of faith. Do we feel this need to deepen our understanding of faith? What can we do to better understand our faith and root it in His Word (*Rule 4, GC 8, 2*)?

Of the world

St Louis gave little consideration to how he appeared to others, but sought to be true in God's eyes. When and where do I manage to overcome my attachment to this "appearance"? What can help me to free myself from my fear of how others see me?

Following Christ

St Louis had a particular desire for communion with Christ of the Passion. What does living in union with Christ, poor and crucified mean for me? (cf. *Rule 10, GC 10*)

Reflection:

Now, let us listen, in silence, the reading of today's Gospel ... then take a moment for sharing.

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from *2nd Letter to the Faithful, verses 19 to 21, François, Écrits, Vies, Témoignages, Éditions du VIII^e Anniversaire, Paris, 2010*)

The love of God and his worship

Therefore, let us love God and adore him with a pure heart and a pure spirit, because he himself, searching for this above all, has said: *the true worshippers will adore the Father in spirit and in truth*. All those, in effect, *who adore him, they must adore him in a spirit of truth*. And they say it with praises and prayers, *day and night* by saying: « *Our Father who is in heaven* », because we must always pray and never weaken.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

On the occasion of this monthly fraternal meeting in November, you are invited to do a research in our Rule and Constitutions.

Find articles 4, 7, 8 and 10 of the Rule, noted in the text and articles 8.2, 10, 13.3 and 15.3 of the Constitutions and read them.

Life - Objective:

During the month of November, if possible, find a book or a text on the Internet on Saint Louis and read it....

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

To continue our reflection, reads the following passage:

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE 2ND VATICAN COUNCIL

Let us listen to the echoing call and invitation of the Church and choose for the coming month, a road to conversion, a point to focus on in our life as baptised Christians. Discuss your chosen focus point in your fraternity. " Since Christ, sent by the Father, is the source and origin of the whole apostolate of the Church, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity's living union with Christ, in keeping with the Lord's words, "He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids that are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy. (5) These are to be used by the laity in such a way that while correctly fulfilling their secular duties in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate union with Christ from their life but rather performing their work according to God's will they grow in that union. In this way, the laity must make progress in holiness in a happy and ready spirit, trying prudently and patiently to overcome difficulties. (6) Neither family concerns nor other secular affairs should be irrelevant to their spiritual life, in keeping with the words of the Apostle, "What-ever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17)." (*Decree on the apostolate of the laity Apostolicam actuositatem, §4*)