

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Go forth today as confident and happy missionaries »

For October, here is another excerpt from Pope Francis' exhortation - *The Joy of the Gospel*. We have chosen passages from the first chapter - *A church that goes forth*.

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 in encouraging our members to express their various points of view on the subject.

Good Preparation --- Good Meeting

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

A church which goes forth

The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him “to go forth”. Abraham received the call to set out for a new land (cf. *Gen 12:1-3*). Moses heard God’s call: “Go, I send you” (*Ex 3:10*) and led the people towards the promised land (cf. *Ex 3:17*). To Jeremiah God says: “To all whom I send you, you shall go” (*Jer 1:7*). In our day Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth”. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.

Reflection:

1. What do I understand by « to go forth » in this text? Explain briefly your reflection.
(About 5 minutes)

Continue with the reading once the reflection is ended.

The Joy of the Gospel...

The Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples is a missionary joy. The seventy-two disciples felt it as they returned from their mission (cf. *Lk* 10:17). Jesus felt it when he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and praised the Father for revealing himself to the poor and the little ones (cf. *Lk* 10:21). It was felt by the first converts who marvelled to hear the apostles preaching “in the native language of each” (*Acts* 2:6) on the day of Pentecost. This joy is a sign that the Gospel has been proclaimed and is bearing fruit. Yet the drive to go forth and give, to go out from ourselves, to keep pressing forward in our sowing of the good seed, remains ever present. The Lord says: “Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out” (*Mk* 1:38). Once the seed has been sown in one place, Jesus does not stay behind to explain things or to perform more signs; the Spirit moves him to go forth to other towns.

Sharing:

1. What do I particularly notice in this text? What calling do I hear? How can we live it? (About 15 minutes)

Continue the reading when the sharing is ended.

The Gospel ... a seed...

God’s word is unpredictable in its power. The Gospel speaks of a seed, which, once sown, grows by itself, even as the farmer sleeps (*Mk* 4:26-29). The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking.

Sharing:

1. What inspires us in the text we have read, on the Gospel as a seed of life?
2. With the help of a Bible, do the reading of the excerpt from the Gospel according to Mark 4, verses 26-29. Share. (About 15 minutes)

After the sharing, continue with the following reading.

A common journey...

The Church’s closeness to Jesus is part of a common journey; “communion and mission are profoundly interconnected”. In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded. That is what the angel proclaimed to the shepherds in Bethlehem: “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people (*Lk* 2:10). The Book of Revelation speaks of “an eternal Gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tongue and tribe and people (*Rev* 14:6).

Sharing: with the help of the following questions:

1. Are we challenged, as individuals and as groups, to play a role in the announcement of the Word?
2. Which one?
3. How? (About 15 minutes)

Continue with the following once the sharing is ended.

Sharing and Biblical Search:

With the help of a Bible, find the excerpts mentioned in the preceding text. Read them calmly. Invite each participant to meditate them for a moment after having listened to them.

In the footsteps of Francis

(Passage from the 2nd Letter to the Faithful, verses 86, 87, 88, Écrits, Vies, Témoignages, Éditions du VIIIe Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

Exhortation, Admonition and Blessing

To all who will receive this letter, I, Brother Francis, your servant most small, I pray and conjure you, in the charity that is God and with willingness to kiss the feet, to generously receive with humility and charity these words and the other words from our Lord Jesus Christ, to put them into practice and to observe them.

And those who cannot read, that they have them read often and keep them with themselves by the holy works until the end, because they are spirit and life.

And all those who will receive them generously, will understand them and will send them to others as examples, and if they persevere in this until the end, that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit shall bless them. Amen.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Note: Although we have often times gone through the articles of our Rule and our Constitutions, it would be good to also take some time - during our monthly meetings - to share on the Rule and the Constitutions brought forward each month that are linked to the theme and the texts presented for our reflection and sharing. Therefore, here are two questions that can favour our reflection and exchanges.

1. Have we fallen into a certain routine, or a certain mildness over the years, on this point?
2. What can we do to renew our ardour and our commitment?

OFS Rule, Article 6

They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.

Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.

General Constitutions, Article 17

1. Called to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made "witnesses and instruments of her mission", secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate is personal witness¹ in the environment in which they live and service for building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.
2. The preparation of the brothers and sisters for spreading the Gospel message "in the ordinary circumstances of the world and for collaborating in the catechesis within the ecclesial communities should be promoted in the fraternities.
3. Those who are called to carry out the mission of catechists, presiders of ecclesial communities, or other ministries, as well as the sacred ministers, should make the love of Francis for the word of God their own, as well as his faith in those who announce it, and the great fervor with which he received the mission of preaching penance from the Pope.

Life - Objective:

During the month of October, we encourage you to read the excerpts mentioned in the preceding texts

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

Remind the members to pray for the success of the International Chapter.

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

At home

To continue our reflection, go to the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and read articles 190 and 429. In the Catechism, the articles 904-907 and 2030-2031 explain our role in the announcement and proclamation of the Word.