

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Go confident and happy »

In September, we present a fourth excerpt from the presentation by Fr. Louis Cinq-Mars, ofm cap, « Go, confident and happy! » which Francophones received at *Fraternité 2013*.

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.

Good preparation --- Good meeting

SEPTEMBER 2014 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

In their letter of November 2012, the Catholic bishops wrote: « to be Catholic in a pluralistic society and in a universe of communication and networks, is to be called to meet differences: different faiths, religious practices (or not), convictions, opinions. Our attitude will be that of welcome, openness, benevolent listening and respect ».

As Franciscans, are we not missionaries of joy; the joy of having found this treasure that is Christ, the joy of faith, the joy of the freedom to recognize that we are loved by God.

In order to truly capture what joy is, I suggest making a distinction between pleasure and joy. Many of our contemporaries confound the two (which are both good and healthy) and believe that joy will be found in terms of an accumulation or succession of pleasures.

Let us listen to Francis' definition of true joy.

The same Brother Leonard reported in the same time that one day, at Saint Mary, the blessed Francis called Brother Leo and said to him: « Brother Leo, write.» And he answered:« Here, I

am ready.» « Write», he said, « what is true joy.»

A messenger comes and says that all the masters in Paris have come to the Order; write, this is not true joy. Also, all the prelates from other territories, archbishops and bishops; also, the kings of France and England, write, this is not true joy. Again, my brothers have gone to the infidels and have converted them to the faith; also, I have from God such grace that I heal the sick and do many miracles; I tell you that all that is not joy.»

I return from Perugia and, in a deep night, I come here and it is winter time, muddy, and at a certain point so cold that icicles form on the hem of my tunic and hit my legs, and blood flows from these wounds. And all muddy and cold and icy, I come to the door, and after having knocked and called for a long time, a brother comes and asks: « Who is it? » I answer: « Brother Francis» and he says: « Go away! This is not a decent hour to be circulating; you will not enter.» And I insist, again, he would answer: » Go away! You are only a simple and illiterate man. In any case, you will not come into our house, we are many and as such do not need you.» And I stand again at the door and say: « For the love of God, take me in this night!» And he would answer: « I will not do it. Go to the place of the crusaders and ask there.» I tell you that if I keep my patience and am not shaken, this is true joy and true virtue and the salvation of the soul.»

After the reading of the previous text, read the following one that explains the context in which Francis dictated this passage. Read each paragraph by alternating the person reading.

Reading:

What is the context of this story? Francis returns to Italy because of an urgent request from a brother concerning the difficulties encountered in the Order during his absence. He had sailed toward Damietta at the end of June 1219 where he had met the Sultan in the fall. On the return journey, he stops in Rome and resigns as Minister General of the Order. Therefore, it is in this context of deep upheaval for the Order and for Francis.

Furthermore, the story echoes the new situation that preoccupies Francis: rapid expansion, arrival of educated brothers, arrival of rich or noble brothers, all types of success (conversion, preaching, healing). Also, the Portioncula, the antique place that Francis loved for its poverty is described in monastic terms (porter, timetable). It is a fact that the fraternity tends more and more to develop along the Benedictine style.

Pause. Short reflection:

The story comprises two well-contrasted parts. The first relates to the Friars' success at the religious and pastoral levels; their ministry is powerful, they form a religious Order recognized in the Church and in the world. The second part describes a situation of physical stress and of inner struggle.

Francis must knock and wait a long time before a brother comes to open the door for him. Someone says to him: Go away! You are only a simple and illiterate man ... we do not need you... return to the Crusaders, who are responsible for a lepers' hospice. Francis is rejected by his own brothers who tell him to go back to the lepers for whom the brothers no longer give their attention.

Pause. Short reflection:

The annoyances, the cold and the rejection by his own brothers do not extinguish in him the source of joy nor do they create trouble. His joy, in resembling the Crucified overcomes all suffering! This joy is the fruit of patient humility (knowledge and self-control) It is also the fruit of a contemplation of the benevolent action of God toward us. Often, we react with trouble and anger because our pride is hurt or because we feel ignored or rejected.

The source of Francis' joy is to live as Jesus, to walk in his footsteps and to follow the same journey because he loved: Christ. It is also his ability to see the presence of God in all creatures. It is also that he knows himself loved and called by God, He who creates and maintains us without stopping in the created.

Sharing:

1. What are in my life and around me the obstacles to joy?
2. How can we lead our contemporaries to the love of God in joy and elation?

In the steps of Francis

(Excerpt from Admonition 20, verses 1 and 2, Claire et François d'Assise, Écrits, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2003)

(1) Blessed is the religious, who has not cheer and gladness except in the Lord's most holy discourses and works, (2) and with these leads men forth to the love of God with joy and gladness.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

OFS Rule, Article 19, par. 1 and 2

Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly. they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.

Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.

General Constitutions, Article 26

1. Even in suffering, Francis experienced confidence and joy from: - the experience of the fatherhood of God; - the invincible faith of rising with Christ to eternal life; - the experience of being able to meet and praise the Creator in the universal fraternity of all

creatures. Following the Gospel, secular Franciscans therefore affirm their hope and their joy in living. They make a contribution to counter widespread distress and pessimism, preparing a better future.

2. In the fraternity, the brothers and sisters should promote mutual understanding and they should see to it that the atmosphere of their meetings is welcoming and that it reflects joy. They should encourage one another for the good.

Life - Objective:

During the month of September, make a collective effort to bring joy and peace in our fraternal gatherings....

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.
Reminder of the Jubilee year of Saint Louis of France.

End of the meeting: Prayer for the jubilee year

God, Our Father, We give you thanks for the wonders that you have accomplished through your servant Saint Louis. He consecrated his life to the service of your Kingdom according to the example of Saint Francis of Assisi. This is why he has been chosen, with Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, as co-patron of the Secular Franciscan Order. We therefore ask Saint Louis to be close to each one of us and to the entire Franciscan Family.

Saint Louis, You, who considered your baptism as the greatest gift received, rekindle in us the grace of our own baptism and of our profession in the Secular Franciscan Order. You, who meditated on the Word of God every day, help us to live the Gospel, to conform our lives to the life of Jesus, poor and crucified, and to offer our lives out of love for our brothers and sisters. You, who understood in your youth the horrors of sin, help all young people in the Franciscan Youth to grow in righteousness of heart and in fidelity to their baptism. You, who were a loving husband and father, help our families to be a leaven of unity and peace in our world. You, who served the poor, who sought justice and peace, open our hearts to the overwhelming needs of so many of our brothers and sisters who suffer, and grant us the courage to commit ourselves courageously to say “yes” to life and family. You, who ventured bravely into foreign lands to witness to your faith in Christ the Lord, lead us along the path of the new evangelization.

Lord, through the example and intercession of Saint Louis, grant us to take all of our decisions by going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel, while having life in heaven clearly in our sight.
Amen.

At home

Read a biography of our patron saint and speak of it at our fraternal meeting.