

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Are we ecologists? »

In the month of September 2016, during our fraternal meetings, we are proposing a look at certain excerpts from the fourth chapter of the encyclical letter from Pope Francis «Laudato Si». Our reflection will be on environmental , economic and cultural ecology.

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

SEPTEMBER 2016 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

The ecology of daily life (*Article 147 of the Encyclical*)

Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives. These settings influence the way we think, feel and act. In our rooms, our homes, our workplaces and neighbourhoods, we use our environment as a way of expressing our identity. We make every effort to adapt to our environment, but when it is disorderly, chaotic or saturated with noise and ugliness, such over stimulation makes it difficult to find ourselves integrated and happy.

- **Sharing:**

How does the environment in our homes, work areas and neighbourhoods affect our quality of life?

Share your answers to this question during about 15 minutes.

The situation of the poor (*Article 149 of the Encyclical*)

The extreme poverty experienced in areas lacking harmony, open spaces or potential for integration, can lead to incidents of brutality and to exploitation by criminal organizations. In the unstable neighbourhoods of mega-cities, the daily experience of overcrowding and social anonymity can create a sense of uprootedness which spawns antisocial behaviour and violence. Nonetheless, I wish to insist that love always proves more powerful. Many people in these

conditions are able to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome. This experience of a communitarian salvation often generates creative ideas for the improvement of a building or a neighbourhood.

Sharing:

Take a good moment to answer the following questions:

How are the poor affected by the lack of resources, the over population, the lack of open spaces and adequate housing?

The Principle of Common Good (*Article 156 of the Encyclical*)

An integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics. The common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment”.

Reflection:

Take sufficient time to reflect on the following question:

Pope Francis speaks of the « common good». What does he understand by this?

Justice between generations (*Article 159 of the Encyclical*)

The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity.

Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a generations basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us

The Portuguese bishops have called upon us to acknowledge this obligation of justice: “The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next”. An integral ecology is marked by this broader vision.

Reflection:

After the reading, take the necessary time to share your answers to the following question:

What are the consequences of seeing the earth as a gift freely received and one that we must share with others, including those who will come after us?

In the Footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the Admonitions, Article 7, François d'Assise, Écrits, Vies, témoignages, Éditions du Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

The Apostle says: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life." (2 Cor 3:6). · Those have died by the letter who desire to know only the words, so as to be esteemed as wiser among others and be able to acquire great riches to be given to relatives and friends. · And those religious have died by the letter, who do not want to follow the spirit of Divine, but rather desire only to know the words and to explain them to others. And those have been vivified by the Divine Letter, who do not attribute every letter, which they know and desire to know, to the body, but in word and example render them to the Most High Lord God, of whom every good belongs.

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 as message of hope? Other kind of message? Why and how is it?

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule 15

Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life , they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

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 18.4

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.

Article 22.1

Secular Franciscans should « be in the forefront ... in the field of public life.» They should collaborate as much as possible for the passage of just laws and ordinances.

Article 22.2

The fraternities should engage themselves through courageous initiatives, consistent with their Franciscan vocation and with the directives of the Church, in the field of human development and justice. They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference. They should offer their fraternal service to the victims of injustice.

Life – Objective:

During the month of September, let us encourage our members to protect and enjoy 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.

Remind members to pray for the success of the Spiritual Conference happening in October.

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

At home

In order to continue the reflection, we suggest the reading of article 160 of the Encyclical.

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? This question not only concerns the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal. When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if those issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.

After reading the article, try to answer the questions presented in the text.