

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme : « Lord, what do you want me to do? »

During this 2013 summer, we continue our deepening of the meaning of the text « *Lord, what do you want me to do?* », presented at *Fraternité 2012*, by Fr. Pierre Brunet, ofm.

Let us take the time, even in this period of rest, to reflect and to answer the question : *Facing today's world*, « *Lord, what do you want me to do?* »

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.

Good preparation - Good meeting

2013 SUMMER MEETING

Opening Prayer and Song

(According to the Ritual or chosen by the fraternity)

Reading: (choose a person who can read calmly)

Facing today's world: « *Lord, what do you want me to do?* »

Which world are speaking of? Let us initially define the term.

The **Petit Robert** dictionary gives many meanings to the word, here a few: *the universe* (the unity of all that exists, the stars, the cosmos) ; *planet-earth and its inhabitants* (the peoples; the human kind) ; the world below as opposed to the world beyond: *the temporal world* in regards to *another*.

Jesus says of this world: « *My kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. No, my kingdom does not belong here!* [John 18, 36] »

Recollection

After reading the description of the world in the preceding paragraph, express what we can think about it, say if we agree or not. If yes, why. If not, why? What does Jesus say, in regard to this world? What can we discern in his answer? Why does Jesus speak of this world as it is defined by the world? (We can take about 20 minutes to share.)

Continue with the reading of the following text.

For us Christians, the world is the scene of our humanity: the religious and profane universe. It is *the age*, with its worldly things and *its social life* and (to be born, grow, work, love, to reproduce oneself, to entertain oneself, to become someone, to make a place for oneself in the sun) and the place for our spiritual being.

There is a paradox here: meet God and the others in our world or detach oneself from it progressively to return to God.

In the Middle Ages: there was two types of mentalities:

The negative mentality that is *to leave the world* to shun the City, the social life, to go to the desert, to give one's life, to withdraw from the human race.

The evangelical mentality: the earth chosen by God to give his Son: *For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.* (John 3, 16-17)

Today:

This is the land of our Christian life: « The lay person is born to the world before being born to Christianity. » (K. Rahner)

Question: How to explain the expression « *the land of our Christian life* » today?

Take a few minutes to reflect and then share a few interventions.

Continue with the reading of the following text.

Of accelerated and radical mutations

The world and the Church are concerned

Both of them are living through some rapid and radical changes, especially in the last 50 years.

Disruptions at many levels: loss of models and of references, explosions in the structures, rejection of all form of authority, submission to crushing conformity, distrust for intelligence, reduction of family ties, change in the relation men-women, between generations, etc.

Our losses, compulsory transitions! Of blessings?

We must not give up because of what is happening (personally, socially, in Church, in society).

Something dies, ends, is lost, but something else is born (the family, the work force, the finance, the politics, the Churches). These changes can become a blessing to hear the Gospel resonate, to convert ourselves, to bring us back in line as Abraham. To avoid resignation, cynicism, selfishness, victimising, etc. We are invited to enter into the dynamic of Easter: **to open ourselves to the presence of the living Lord, differently.**

Various Crises:

- o **Of the word:** any speech far from life, any secular preoccupations, any past values; **in the ecclesial discourse:** contraception, pedophilia, minorities, ministries, etc.; **in society:** political scandals, inquiries, commissions, strikes, social medias, great empires, ethnic problems, etc.

Sharing: How can we live through these crises? Give examples. (A few minutes only)

- o **Of visibility and efficiency :** Churches, social groups, Institutions; withdrawal from the usual areas of social intervention, popular animation, hospitable world, etc.

Sharing: Give some examples of visibility or efficiency in our environment. (A few minutes only)

- o **Of structures:** institutional heaviness and reduction of personnel, but no reduction in the needs; Public Office, the administration of dioceses, General and Provincial Chapters. Occasion to consolidate the forces, to simplify, more vigilance in the face of the plurality of functions.

Together, let us find a few examples of occasions to consolidate the forces and then continue with

The Gospel remains in the works even in the time of crisis.

What do we think of it? Is this here the « Occasion of renewals, of new availabilities, of an opening towards creativity from our poverty?» (cf. Recall the Gospel of the 5 loaves and 2 fishes).

Does the Gospel need working witnesses; to cleanse the polluted shores : to frequent new shores? (Remember the Gospel of the wineskins, of the new wineskins?) (Mt 9, 16)

What type of workers and witnesses? Are we among them? How?

After having reflected on the preceding text for 2 minutes ...
Is it still realistic to think this way? What do we say about it?
Take some 10 minutes to answer these two questions.

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the Letter to the Faithful (ILFed), verses 3-7, François d'Assise, Écrits, Vies, témoignages, Éditions du VIIIe Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

Manuscript of Volterra - Of those who do penance

And those who receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who make dignified fruits of penance, oh! how they are blessed and holy, these men and women, as long as they do such things and persevere in such things, the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and will make his house and residence with them; and they are the sons of the heavenly Father of whom they are his works, and they are the spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: According to the newest research, the Manuscript of Volterra is an exhortation addressed to the brothers and sisters of Penance who had just received a rule for their way of life from Rome in 1221.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

OFS Rule, Article 15

Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by their 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.

General Constitutions, 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.
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.

3. The renunciation of the use of violence, characteristic of the followers of Francis, does not mean the renunciation of action. However, the brothers and sisters should take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love.

Questions for personal recollection

Do we listen with our « heart»? Do we speak « the language of the heart»? How? With whom? Are we selective in our choice of activities? Of people?

Life - Objective:

During these summer months of 2013, we invite you to take some time to rest and reflect in nature ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Recall of National, Regional and Local Fraternity activities.

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

At home

In order to continue our reflection, let us look up in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the articles 164, 909, 928, 1742, 1882-1889, 1941, 2478 which concern us as lay persons in the Church.

Here is an excerpt in reference to article 15 of our Rule - in the documents from Vatican II; in the Apostolate of the Lay, Chapter II, The Various Fields of the Apostolate, article 14, par. 1 - The National and International plans.

A vast field for the apostolate has opened up on the national and international levels where the laity especially assist with their Christian wisdom. In the loyalty to their country, in the faithful fulfilment of their civic obligations, Catholics should feel themselves obliged to promote the true common good. Thus they should make the weight of their opinion felt in order that the civil authority may act with justice and that legislation may conform to moral precepts and the common good. Catholics skilled in public affairs and adequately enlightened in faith and Christian doctrine should not refuse to administer public affairs, since by doing this in a worthy manner they can both further the common good and at the same time prepare the way for the Gospel.