

LIVING FRATERNITY

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

In October 2013, we continue to work on the meaning of the text « *Lord, what do you want me to do?* », presented at *Fraternité 2012*, by Fr. Pierre Brunet, ofm.

Word of God; Good News; Gospel: three ways to name these precious writings. As Secular Franciscans, we can ask ourselves the following question: how to be messengers and heralds of the Word, Good News, Gospel? An engaging question, and one that makes one think about what our mission as lay Christians must be in our present society.

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

OCTOBER 2013 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening Prayer and Song

(According to the Ritual or chosen by the fraternity)

Reading: (choose a person who can read calmly)

Christ and Francis can speak to today's world. We must find their way to place ourselves before the Word. Instead of falling into defeatism, cynicism, discouragement in front of the infertility of the terrain or in final non-reception, in front of the usurary or the sentiment of sowing in pebbles, **make a wager to sow even the pebbles**. Do as Jesus did during mission on earth.

Jesus sows pebbles.

All these terrains so different, hospitable or inhospitable, sown by the sower in a sort of allegory, Jesus knows them well. He has met them often, these people who drink in his words with enthusiasm but who have a hard time inscribing them into their lives, to have them take root and to persevere. And those who are at first resistant but who are nevertheless there, even when they are attempting to entrap him : these scribes, these Pharisees, some whom seem to note and retain everything as already constituting the dossier for his trial. It does not matter that this word, whatever their intention, they hear it. Therefore, who knows? Maybe it will germinate some day in their hearts at the same time as the weed? (J-N. Bezançon, Dieu ne sait pas compter, 32-40).

Our Task?

Go against the current: overtake the caricature and the lack of nuance, the indifference, the aggressiveness. Confront the new forms of atheism (putting God on trial, accusing him of all the woes of humanity, or moreover isolate him and justify it.). *Where does the Gospel call out today?*

Sharing

Following the reading of the preceding text, let us share our answers to the question: *Where does the Gospel call out today?* (about 20 minutes)

We are the disciples from Emmaus

Those whom we meet along the way may not be those to whom we have something to say, but those who, in the image of Christ, tell us, reveal to us what is precious, necessary, indispensable. How many times have we crossed Christ without seeing him, without hearing him, because we had something to say, because we spoke before listening? [*Les pieds dans le bénitier*, 218]

Recollection

Let us take a few moments to reflect on the preceding text. Which word speaks mostly to you? (about 15 minutes)

The ministry of fraternal presence

In our world, carry on the ministry of fraternal presence. Share the gift of fraternity, claiming to belong to the same Father. Go from non-commitment: « Am I my brother's keeper? » (Cain to God, Gn 4,9) to the taking in charge and accompanying the other: « Never without you to go to God and become Church ». In a society that advocates the rights and liberties of individuals (often to the detriment of collective responsibilities), the reversion to oneself, to immediate happiness, to the accomplishment of one's dreams in spite of everything, to the exclusion of others, especially strangers... to arrive at being like the disciples from Emmaus in their walk with Pilgrim stranger. The question that Jesus asks them on the way becomes a point of reality to create the fraternity: « *What are you talking about to each other as you walk along?* » becomes for us: « *What do we have in our hearts to go forward?* »

Recollection

How can we answer the question: What do we have in our hearts to go forward?

Our fraternal presence in the world and in the Church passes through **the ministry of listening, of blessing, of support of hope** (*Les pieds dans le bénitier*). And this, **in the ministry of the fraternity**. The fraternal answer can heal old wounds, accompany the routs and the unnamed quests, restore communion among persons, comfort hearts and initiate the sense of God and to accede to the Church.

The (Franciscan) fraternity, an answer for our time

In the Franciscan tradition, the **gift of brothers** and sisters is central to knowing God. And above all to discover our evangelical vocation, our place in the Church, our links with the world. *And after the Lord had given me brothers (and sisters), no one had to show me what I had to do, but the Most-High himself revealed that I must live according to the Holy Gospel.* (Test 14).

In the Testament of Francis, the gift of the fraternity comes from the discovery of the evangelical life. Receiving each other to be called and sent, to be evangelized and to evangelize. Before going on the mission of evangelisation, let ourselves be evangelized.

The fraternal virtues of simplicity of life, of poverty, of humility and obedience can confuse the wisdom of this world, the woes of this century and all that is in this world. (SalV 10-12).

Here are the verses taken from the text of the Salutation of the Virtues.

- (10) Pure holy simplicity confound all the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the body.
- (11) Holy poverty confound the greed and avarice and the worries of the century.
- (12) Holy humility confound the vanity and all mankind in the world as well as all that is in the world.

Sharing

Silently read these verses and reflect on them ... then take a moment to share your thoughts..

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the 2nd Rule, Article 9 - The preachers, verses 2-3, Claire et François d'Assise, Écrits, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2003)

And that, not one of the brothers is to have the audacity to preach to the people if he has not been examined and approved by the Minister general of this fraternity and that this minister has not conceded to him the office of preaching. Also, I warn and exhort these same brothers: in the preaching that they do, that their words be well thought out and be chaste for the use and the edification of the people.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

OFS Rule, Article 4

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made the Christ their inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people.

Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.

General Constitutions, Articles 8.2, 9.2

Article 8.2

They seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the OFS:

- in a continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation;
- open to the challenges that come from society and from the Church's life situation, "going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel";
- in the personal and communal dimensions of this journey.

Article 9.2

The secular Franciscan, committed to following the example and the teachings of Christ, must personally and assiduously study the Gospel and Sacred Scripture. The fraternity and its leaders should foster love for the word of the Gospel and help the brothers and sisters to know and understand it as it is proclaimed by the Church with the assistance of the Spirit.

Life - Objective:

During the month of October 2013, we invite to thank the Lord for all his blessings, especially on the Feast of Thanksgiving ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of all fraternities that the National Spiritual Conference is being held from October 24th to the 27th and solicit their prayers for fruitful results at this conference.

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

At home

To continue our reflection, go and see in the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church the articles 80 and 172 as well as in the Catechism, the numbers 425-429, 849-851 and 898-907. They concern our role as lay messengers in the Church.

Included here is a reference to article 4 of our Rule. In Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate for Lay persons, article 30. Here is an excerpt of this article.

The various groups and associations of lay persons who devote themselves to the apostolate or to all other spiritual ends must carefully and assiduously favour, according to their objectives and their own modes, this formation to the apostolate. These organisations constitute moreover often the ordinary way to this formation for the apostolate. It is here in effect that we find the doctrinal, spiritual and practical formation. Their members in small groups with their companions or their friends, examine the methods and the results of their apostolic action and search together in the Gospel how to judge their daily lives.