

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Saint Louis: The Good News is announced to the Poor »

In December, we are presenting a second text on Saint Louis of France. We are in the Jubilee year and therefore we want you to see another aspect of this patron of our Secular Franciscan Family. The texts come from the International Council and are authorized by the Diocese of Versailles, France.

Recall: At the monthly meeting, the fraternity should have in place at the disposal of the members 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 on hand their own copy of the Rule.

Note: Is our meeting place favorable, welcoming, and 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

DECEMBER 2014 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

A compassionate heart

"If I sometimes spend a lot of money, I would rather it be on alms for the love of God than for my frivolities or mundane things." (*Saint Louis to his friend Joinville*)

"Dear son, I will teach you to have a compassionate heart for the poor and for all those whom you shall consider to be suffering in heart or body, and with your might willingly relieve them with moral support or alms." (*Saint Louis to his son Philip*)

HISTORICAL ENLIGHTENMENT: "Saint Louis and his love for the poor"

In the Royal Palace of Paris, one room is reserved for the most destitute; every day, food is served to whoever comes along. On feast days, there are more than two hundred, of all ages and both sexes, not so agreeable to look at, with their torn garments, so dirty and smelly that the refectory stinks, and the palace guards are offended. Who cares! Very often, the king comes in person to attend the meal of "*the gentlemen-poor*." He walks around the tables, shows concerns about one's wound that he points out to his doctor, listens to the grievance of another, orders a servant to help yet another to eat. On Wednesdays and Fridays, all year round, he invites thirteen day of the poorest, and he personally serves them food. Every,

he calls three out of the most repulsive looking, to come and eat at a table just next to him. Even the lepers, whom everyone fears are contagious, do not repel him.

In Royaumont Abbey, which he founded, he often visits the infirmary when the sick are there, especially the lepers. In the most deprived of men, there is Jesus. Louis has known this since childhood, and will never forget it.

After Louis's death, the Church opened the canonization process and conducted a lengthy investigation. Sixty seven miracles of healing were selected. Most of the miracles happened in Saint-Denis around his tomb. A crowd of people, the ill, crippled and beggars gathers around the tomb, touching it and lying on it.

The vast majority of the miraculously cured people are poor or of modest income, who must work with their hands or who are driven to poverty or even to begging. Sometimes it is noted that the healing helped them to escape poverty.

Pause

Take some time for sharing on the content using the following question: Do you see a resemblance with the founder of our Franciscan Family? If you do, what is it? (About 10-15 minutes). Have the reading continued by another person.

PASTORAL ENLIGHTENMENT: "The Good News is announced to the Poor"

Louis' faith is not abstract, loving Christ means following Him, it means loving all men. The faith influences his behavior and regulates all his actions, hence his generosity. He lives daily in great frugality, dressing modestly when the exercise of his function does not force him to wear the official dress of his rank. He gladly receives Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure to dine with him, both of them giants in science and wisdom, great theologians and mendicant brothers, Franciscan and Dominican. With the same simplicity and ease, he receives the poor every day, at his table. Louis wants to conform his life to Christ, poor and crucified.

One day he is asked what saint he admires more than any other and he answers: "*Saint Francis of Assisi, the joyful and gentle saint, because he loved poverty above all.*"

Let us read again our General Constitutions (GC) Art. 15.3: "Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person."

And GC Art. 19.2: "In the spirit of minority, they should opt for relationships which give preference to the poor and to those on the fringe of society, whether these be individuals or categories of persons or an entire people; they should collaborate in overcoming the exclusions of others and those forms of poverty that are the fruit of inefficiency and injustice."

Pause

After reading the preceding paragraphs, how can we apply the content of the two articles mentioned? (About 10 minutes) then continue the reading with another person.

FROM SAINT LOUIS TO TODAY

A group discussion of 10-12 minutes follows which can be animated by the director of formation to be done by reading of the following text in which you will find questions for sharing.

Being on mission

Jesus upon seeing the crowds, was moved with compassion toward them because they were bewildered and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9: 36). So many people these days are bewildered and dejected and they wait for the Church, we wait.

How can we in fraternity reach them? How do we share with them the experience of faith, of the love of God, of the encounter with Jesus?

Conversion and sharing

We see so much poverty and loneliness in the world today. So many people ask us to be a sign of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. With so many expectations, we run the risk of getting scared and falling back in an attitude of fear and defense.

How should we order our lives to support these brothers? What initiatives do we dare to take to touch the suffering flesh of Christ among the people (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 24)?

How do we live out concretely the General Constitutions Article 12.2: “They should take the risk of making courageous choices calmly and firmly”?

Reflection:

Now, let us listen, in silence, the reading of today’s Gospel ... then take a moment for sharing.

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from 2nd Letter to the Faithful, verses 30-31, Claire et François, Écrits, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2003)

Let us have charity and humility; and let us make alms, because alms wash away the stains of sin from the soul. In effect, men lose everything that they abandon in this century; they however bring with them the rewards of the charity and the alms that they have made and from which they will receive from the Lord the reward and just remuneration.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Article 11

Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God’s children.

General Constitutions: Look for the articles 15.3 and 19.2 in the text entitled: **The Good News is announced to the Poor.**

Life - Objective:

During the month of December, let us prepare ourselves to live the true meaning of the coming of Jesus, the Good News for all of us....

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

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

At home

To continue our reflection, reads the following passage:

LIVING ACCORDING TO THE 2ND VATICAN COUNCIL

The goods of the earth and their division among all men

God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner. Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others. On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. [...] Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him," and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves. (*Gaudium et spes. The Church in the modern world.* § 69.1)

The Living Fraternity Editing Team wishes every one of you and your families and friends a very Happy Christmas as well as a Happy and Holy New Year 2015.

That the peace, joy and love that we carry in ourselves become contagious and witnesses to where we live and pass on the beauty of our faith and hope..