

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Go, more lively, more enthusiastic »

In March, we present a first excerpt from Pope Francis' exhortation - *The Joy of the Gospel*. We have chosen excerpts from the first chapter - *The Church's missionary transformation*.

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 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.

MARCH 2014 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (Article 24 taken from the exhortation - The Joy of the Gospel)

Taking the first step, being involved and supportive, bearing fruit and rejoicing

The Church, which "goes forth", is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 John* 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.

Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: "You will be blessed if you do this" (*John* 13:17).

Sharing:

After this reading, share your answers to the following questions:

- 1 - What do I wish to particularly emphasize in the text that we have just read?
- 2 - How am I called out by "being involved"?

Continue with the following reading once the sharing is finished.

An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the "smell of the sheep" and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.

Reflection:

Take a moment of reflection on the following question and be ready to share about 15 minutes on the question

-What do I retain from the reading that can improve my life?

Afterwards continue with the reading of the next extract:

An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time. Faithful to the Lord's gift, it also bears fruit.

An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful. It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds. The sower, when he sees weeds sprouting among the grain does not grumble or overreact. He or she finds a way to let the word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear. The disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line, even to accepting martyrdom, in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, yet the goal is not to make enemies but to see God's word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed.

Finally an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.

Reflection:

After the reading, take a moment to reflect on the following question (about 15 minutes)

- Do I have challenges to face based on the fact that I have a part to play as a baptised member of this Church?

Continue with Article 29 of the exhortation. Try to find a link with our secular fraternities.

Other Church institutions, basic communities and small communities, movements, and forms of association are a source of enrichment for the Church, raised up by the Spirit for evangelizing different areas and sectors. Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them

not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.

Reflection:

Let us listen to the reading of today's Gospel.

Take a moment to answer the following question:

- What reaches me in this text? How and why? How can I integrate it into my daily life?

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the First Rule, Chapter VII, verse 10, François d'Assise, Écrits, Vies témoignages, Éditions du VIIIe Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

That all the brothers apply themselves to toil in good activities, for it is written: Always do something good so that the devil finds you occupied. ... This is why the servants of God must always devote themselves to prayer or some good activity.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions OFS Rule, Article 14

Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone " who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself, " let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.

General Constitutions, Articles 19.1, 20.1 and 20.2

Article 19.1

Secular Franciscans should always act as a leaven in the environment in which they live through the witness of their fraternal love and clear Christian motivations.

Article 20.1

Secular Franciscans, committed by their vocation to build the Kingdom of God in temporal situations and activities, live their membership both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality.

Article 20.2

As the primary and fundamental contribution to building a more just and fraternal world, they should commit themselves both to the generous fulfillment of the duties proper to their occupation and to the professional training that pertains to it. With the same spirit of service, they should assume their social and civil responsibilities.

Life - Objective:

During the month of March, make a donation to a charitable or missionary organization...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

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

At home

Read what the Vatican II document - The Church in today's world - Article 93 - that follows - proposes to us.

93. A world to build and to lead to its end

Remembering the word of the Lord: « By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another » (John 13, 35), Christians cannot form a more keen wish than the one to be of service to the men of their time, with an always greater and more efficient generosity. Also, docile to the Gospel and benefitting from its strength, united to those who love and practice justice, they have to accomplish on this earth an immense task, that we will have to account for to the One who will judge all men on the last day. It is not those who say « Lord, Lord » who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the Father's will and who courageously, act. Because the will of the Father is that in all men we recognize Christ our brother and that we love one another for good, in actions and in words, giving witness in this manner to the truth. It is also that we share with others the mystery of the love of the celestial Father. It is in this manner that the men scattered on all the earth will be provoked to a firm hope, gift of the Spirit, to be finally admitted into the supreme hope and joy, in the homeland that shines in the glory of the Lord.