

## LIVING FRATERNITY

**Theme: « Francis of Assisi or rebellion by example »**

For the month of April, we are proposing a reflection on the following text.  
This text is presented in Servant-ofs in NEWS, March 15<sup>th</sup> 2018.

**Recall:** *Our monthly meeting should favor a meeting with Christ. A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and good preparation promotes a communal experience.*

At the meeting, having a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the Rule and the General Constitutions, will provide clarity and depth for our edification and experience.

*Good preparation – Good reflection*

### APRIL 2018 MONTHLY MEETING

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For this gathering, here is the text in which we have inserted some questions to arouse our reflection and fraternal sharing.

A new work on the patron saint of Pope Francis by Fr. Enzo Fortunato (Francesco Il Ribelle © Librimondadori.It)

« The story of Francis of Assisi continues to fascinate even more today, almost 8 centuries after his death », affirms Msgr Becciu, substitute to the Secretariat of State. From the life of the saint of Assisi, « guided (...) by the Gospel lived radically » has ensued « a revolution in the Church and in society whose effects are still felt today ». Francis did not rebel « by opposing a law or an established authority » but he reformed « to give a new order, a better way, to transform a situation, a society, by example ».

**Reflection:** In the fraternal meeting, together, gather your thoughts on the following questions.

- 1. What do you think about the title of this work?**
- 2. On which path does this title send you?**
- 3. According to you, how can it possibly be justified?**

When the sharing of thoughts is ended on the questions presented above, continue reading.

On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the election of Pope Francis, the book *Francesco il Ribelle* (“Francis the Rebel”) by Fr. Enzo Fortunato, Director of the Press Room of the Sacred Convent of Assisi, was presented yesterday in Rome, at the Luigi Sturzo Institute. The book, a new biography of the Saint of Assisi, is introduced by a preface by the Vatican Secretary of

State, His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin. H.E. Msgr. Angelo Becciu, Substitute of the Secretariat of State, intervened during the course of the presentation:

The book, a new biography of the Saint of Assisi, by the Director of the Press Room of the Sacred Convent of Assisi, is prefaced by Vatican Secretary of State, His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

In this book of his Fr. Fortunato also wanted to offer a glimpse of the topicality of thought and action of Pope Francis who is linked to the *Poverello* of Assisi in a very special way. His frequent reference to Saint Francis, his remembering of the poor, the weak and the sick in every circumstance of his ministry, in every situation, event, journey, his building of bridges to all men of good will, believers and not, for a constructive dialogue to build peace, show that his life and his teaching are inspired by the teachings of the *Poverello*.

Here is the translation by Msgr. Angelo Becciu.

### **Reflection and Sharing:**

- 1. Can we truly compare our Pope Francis to Francis of Assisi?**
- 2. Why?**
- 3. How do these two men live the Gospel? Give some examples.**

When the members have finished sharing their thoughts, continue the reading.

### **Text of the Intervention by Msgr. Angelo Becciu**

I gladly consented to present the book *Francesco il Ribelle*, edited by Fr. Enzo Fortunato, for two reasons: firstly, because you cannot remain indifferent to the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi. Despite having read other biographies, one is always intrigued to know new details about his life. Indeed, the history of Francis of Assisi continues to fascinate even today, almost eight centuries after his death (1226), because it is a captivating story not only for those who are more advanced in years and who are in a position to better understand human experience, but also and above all, for many young people who see in Francis an example of the inner freedom to which they aspire, and also a model to refer to in order to live their own religious experience.

Secondly, because with today's presentation we wanted to pay tribute to Pope Francis on the anniversary of his election to the papal throne. Indeed, in this book of his Fr. Fortunato also wanted to offer a glimpse of the topicality of thought and action of Pope Francis who is linked to the *Poverello* of Assisi in a very special way. He has continually given us his testimony, with his words and deeds, from the first moment of His election, when to general surprise he assumed the name of Francis. The Holy Father has often cited Saint Francis of Assisi: in his speeches, homilies, Messages, documents, interviews, meetings, audiences and in the Sunday Angelus. His frequent reference to Saint Francis, his remembering of the poor, the weak and the sick in every circumstance of his ministry, in every situation, event, journey, his building of bridges to all men of good will, believers and not, for a constructive dialogue to build peace, show that his life and his teaching are inspired by the teachings of the *Poverello*.

## **Reflection and Sharing:**

- 1. According to you, what is inner freedom?**
- 2. How does Pope Francis demonstrate it? Give a few examples.**
- 3. Francis of Assisi, a model of inner freedom for youth as well as for elders.  
What do you think about this?**

When the members have concluded the sharing, continue with the reading.

## **Francis the Rebel**

As we enter the pages of the book, it seems to me that the reader's desire is to find evidence confirming what is announced by the title of the work: Francis the Rebel.

According to the common categories the rebel is one who eternally rages against everything and against everyone, very often wishing to destroy violently that which, and those who, oppose his plans. Alas! History is littered with such wicked examples.

The rebellion of Francis is of a different dimension. It has been so "sui generis" that, unlike other rebellions, it still remains and becomes a model of life for thousands of his followers, in every corner of the earth. The non-conformism of Francis cannot be explained if you do not look at the crucial moment of his life, when he denounces his past and challenges the right-minded of the time (life companions, civil authorities, ecclesiastics, his own family) and throws himself into the adventure that will lead him to live the Gospel "sine glossa". Francis experiences the beauty of the Gospel that, lived "without ifs and buts", transforms one's life and, by contagion, that of others. Eloquent is the page in which our Fr. Fortunato mentions the passage from the inner struggle that tormented the young Francis for a long time, his use of distractions of all kinds, and the peace of the soul he found in embracing the lepers. The Gospel word that had inspired him to make such a gesture was "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me". From then on his life was guided only by the Gospel, lived radically. This resulted in a revolution in the Church and in society itself, the effects of which are still felt. For Francis, the finger does not point more toward others but toward himself.

As Fr. Fortunato writes, he showed himself to be "a rebel against his time, which tended towards the victory of individualism and of the 'owning society', rebel not against the Church or even against the hierarchy" (pg. 10). Francis did not "wage war" (that is, rebel) against anyone, ever: he never rebelled by opposing a law or a constituted authority. Reform yes, for giving a new order, a better form, to transform a situation, a society, but by his example. Authority and veneration came to him precisely from his way of living. By this point the die had been cast: he had crossed the Rubicon that held him back in the past and went on to live a life filled only with God. With God, chosen as his only ideal and as his only wealth, it was logical to challenge the opulence of the rich, embracing poverty, overcoming discriminatory barriers, extending his love for all, distinguishing himself from the protesters of time, and bowing to the provisions of ecclesiastical authority, seen as an expression of God's will. A true restorer, his desire was to bring back to its original state the divine image and likeness in those whom he met and

considered his brothers, so as to revive broken spirits, restore values, and re-establish a better world around him.

Saint Francis still provokes us and teaches us to do like him: not to presuppose the beauty of the Gospel, but to live its pages radically.

### **Reflection and Sharing:**

- 1. What draws your attention in this text?**
- 2. How does Saint Francis provoke us today?**
- 3. « Sine glossa ». What does this mean? Define ...**
- 4. Francis having lived the Gospel in a radical manner, « sine glossa », in what and how does his example incite us to live our daily life, in our family as well in our fraternity?**

When the sharing is completed, end the reading.

I would like to conclude with the words that Cardinal Parolin writes in the Preface to the book: “Assisi is a special sanctuary, because normally in shrines we go to ask for a grace, a miracle. In Assisi no, in Assisi we go to meet Francis ... a man who lived the Gospel. I would say that one goes there to meet the Gospel itself, *sine glossa*”.

Thank you, Fr. Fortunato, for giving us the opportunity to turn again to Assisi to draw the ever fresh water of the great saint.

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### **Rediscovering the articles of the Rule**

In fraternity, with the Rule in hand, take the time to look at it, to leaf through it slowly.

1. Have we (I) become familiar with it? If yes, why? If no, why?
2. Which article, can I or can we deepen its meaning together during this month?

### **Life-Objective:**

During this month, take particular attention to completely reading once, twice, three time the Rule ....

### **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 National Elective Chapter in which has for theme the celebration of the 40 years of our Rule of life.

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

### **At home**

Take a copy of the Rule of life and read it again while remembering the moment of your commitment to follow in the steps of Francis of Assisi who took Jesus as his model and the Gospel as his programme of life.