

LIVING FRATERNITY

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

In September 2013, 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.

God absent or present? That is the question that intrigues us and that make us think about our role as lay persons in the world today. Effectively, what is this role ...

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

SEPTEMBER 2013 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening Prayer and Song

(According to the Ritual or chosen by the fraternity)

Reading: (choose a person who can read calmly)

God absent or present? The spectre of secularism.

The rise of secularism frightens. The Church, the Christian culture are no longer the central points of reference for our society. (By secularism we understand that the State does not exercise any religious power and the Churches do not exercise any political power). The separation of Church and State helps to situate the sectors of competence.

Therefore, here is a definition of the term *secularism* taken from the booklet *La laïcité de Micheline Milot* from the collection *25 questions* of Novalis in 2008.

« Origin of the term secularism »

« The word has a double etymological genesis that sends us to two different perspectives, to two types of opposition. One comes from the Latin ecclesiastic vocabulary *laicus*, that signifies « one who has not received the religious orders ». One differentiate therefore, the cleric from the laity within the Christian community. ... Another more ancient origin comes from the Greek, the *laos*, that means the « people ». The Greek etymology is certainly the most determining in the definition of secularism that takes form in the second half of the Twentieth century. In effect, from its appearance in the dictionaries, secularism has evoked a political reality that in accordance with the State no longer draws

its legitimacy from a religious denomination, but from the sovereignty of the people. The Dictionary of *Littre* proposes for the first time, in 1877, a definition of secularism as a « State neutral among the religions, tolerant for all their cults. » The neutrality supposes therefore essentially that the State treats in an equal manner all the religions and that it does not favour or hamper any religion and any cult. »

It is the impression of an evacuation of the sense of God or rather a re-centralisation of the things of God in their sphere.

There remains a background of Judeo-Christian difficult to evacuate (names of villages, of cities, of streets, of public places, of civic holidays, of juridical practices, etc.). The possible danger: the privatisation of the religious experience, the withdrawal of standards. *How can we have a dialogue on our Christian option with the secularist current* (hard or accommodating)?

Examples of secularist rituals in search of meaning.

- (1) The civil baptism, the enthroning of an infant into a non-believing family.
- (2) The civil marriage or free union looking for rituals.
- (3) Concerning illness and last wishes: the delegation in the case of the loss of autonomy, the therapeutic harassment, the non-reanimation, the debate on euthanasia, the increase in natural helpers. Prepare to die or to entertain?
- (4) The civil funerals (places: church, concert hall, theatre)
- (5) The funeral rites outside the churches (without the Eucharist, Liturgy of the Word, eulogy.) The commercial recuperation of death by the funeral parlors.

Recollection

After the reading of the previous text, choose some examples among the secularist rituals mentioned. Share their meaning for you today. (about 20 minutes)

Continue the reading of the following text on the **disappearance of the cross on the walls**. We are witnessing the misunderstanding of the sign of the cross and of the blessing, the misunderstanding of the attitudes, of the liturgical gestures and of the religious language.

On the need of the sense and the expression of the sacred outside the beaten paths and the temples.

Society does not exclude the sense of God, it displaces it elsewhere. The search for the spiritual takes less the confessional or institutional way that we have known.

The Kingdom of God is built along the way.

The Spirit acts continuously. *The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit.* (John 3, 8)

Question

Take a few moments to reflect on it before sharing your ideas of the following question:

How do understand this excerpt from the gospel according to Saint John?

What to do?

Open up ourselves to the signs of the times, broaden our conscience, propose our values without judgment, recognize the Word of God at work in the words of others, favour the experience of the meeting, welcome the novelty worked by God. *Watch for the new thing I am going to do. It is happening already -- you can see it now! (Isaiah 43, 19)*

Question - After listening to the reading of the actions proposed in the preceding paragraph, and after taking a few moments to think about it, take the time to share your reflections on the subject.

The new grounds for the Gospel

In our world today, the Good News is at work. It is not only of ink and paper, but in the manner of living it. It was at first an oral Good News, transmitted by witnesses in precise situations: the prophets, Jesus, the first disciples, the primitive community, the missionaries. It translated itself into their life. It is the same today.

The Good News at the centre

We must discover the Word at the centre of our life. *How to hear it resonate in the present, as a promise that calls to each one?* The next Synod of the new evangelisation is searching for a way to reach the hearts of all (by the words, the images, the experiences, the cultural context).

Before evangelizing, we must let ourselves be evangelized. This supposes work on ourselves, listening to the other and working on the Word to become or re-become Christians. We are the heirs, with the task of transmitting our renewed heritage.

How can we transmit our heritage of faith?

How can we transmit it outside of the world of religious practice, of the sacraments, of the prayerful devotion?

Recollection

After reading the preceding paragraphs, take a moment to answer the two questions presented. (about 20 minutes)

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the 1st Rule, Chapter XVII - of preachers, verses 3, 5-6, Excerpt from François d'Assise, Écrits, Vies, témoignages, Éditions du VIIIe Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

(3) However, that all my brothers preach by their actions. (5) Therefore, I entreat, in the charity that is God, all my brothers, preachers, speakers, workers, clerics as well lay, to apply themselves to humility in everything, (6) to not glorify themselves, to not rejoice in themselves, to not exalt themselves inwardly of the good words and, and to absolutely of any good deed that God does or says and operates in them somehow and by them, according to what the Lord says :

However do not rejoice yourselves in this, that the spirits be subjected to you.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

OFS Rule, Article 6, par. 1

They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.

General Constitutions, Articles 17.1, 17.2, 17.4

1. Called to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made "witnesses and instruments of her mission", secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate is personal witness¹ in the environment in which they live and service for building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.
2. The preparation of the brothers and sisters for spreading the Gospel message "in the ordinary circumstances of the world" and for collaborating in the catechesis within the ecclesial communities should be promoted in the fraternities.
4. Participation in the service of sanctification, which the Church exercises through the liturgy, prayer, and works of penance and charity, is put into practice by the brothers and sisters above all in their own family, then in the fraternity and finally through their active presence in the local Church and in society.

Life - Objective:

During the month of September 2013, we invite you to share, in fraternity, on the article 17 of the General Constitutions to see if the life in fraternity corresponds to it ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Recall of National Spiritual Conference to be held in October.

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

At home

In order to continue our reflection, let us go and look in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the articles 871-872, 897-900, 940 and 2442 which concern us as lay members of the Church. We can also find in the documents from Vatican II, under the title *Dogmatic Constitution*, the document **Lumen Gentium**, article 42, - The dignity of the laity, members of the People of God.