

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Saint Louis, social justice and evangelization »

In February, we continue the presentation of a fourth theme on Saint Louis of France. This one is a follow-up to the January them during which we considered the public commitment of Saint Louis, and our commitments as Secular Franciscans.

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.

Note: Is our meeting place favorable, welcoming? 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

FEBRUARY 2015 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

Openness toward all his subjects...

“Often, in summer, after Holy Mass, he would go to sit in the woods near Vincennes. He would lean against an oak tree and would have us sit around him. And all those who had a problem would come to speak with him without being impeded by an attendant or anyone else.” (Jean de Joinville, *Life of St. Louis*)

“If our Lord wants you to be anointed with the oil with which the kings of France are consecrated, make sure that you possess the qualities that are proper for kings, that is, those of never separating yourself from justice.” (*Teachings of St. Louis to his son Philip*)

HISTORICAL VISION: “SAINT LOUIS, A NEW SOLOMON”

Although the expression “social doctrine of the Church” appears first at the end of the 19th century, the concept of social justice is already well established in the 13th century and it develops in three camps: in economics, manifesting itself above all in the struggle against usury; in politics, where it is present in peace efforts; in religion, where it is nourishment for evangelization which was considered at that time a duty when dealing with heretics and followers of non-Christian religions.

St. Louis wished to follow the steps of Solomon – the model of the wise and just king -- as evidenced by his willingness to personally administer justice and arbitration be it among the feudal lords or between them and the people. His generous financial aid that he made available for the foundation of hospitals (from fifteen to twenty) and for other diverse initiatives demonstrates his concern that the **poor** receive the minimum subsistence to which they have a right.

Influenced by Franciscan spirituality, St. Louis strove, consistently with his status as king, to practice detachment from material goods. In private, for example, he would wear very simple clothes and at table he would always pour water in his glass before they poured the wine, and, when it was possible, he would fast. His canonization will make of him the model of Christian king.

Pause:

After the reading of the previous text use the following question to share your answers : What do I retain of it? (About 10-15 minutes). Have the reading continued by another person.

PASTORAL ASPECT: “THE HUMAN PERSON AT THE CENTRE, IN ALL HIS DIMENSIONS”

St. Louis embodies the image of justice. He even inaugurates a direct form of justice, taking the liberty to change, on appeal, court decisions of the feudal lords. Thus, he gives an example of a higher authority concerned about reminding everyone of his rights and duties.

The notion of justice, be it on the spiritual plane or on the temporal plane, is directly inspired by the Gospel and it has developed in the context of Christianity as evidenced by St. Thomas Aquinas in his writings on the “just wage.”

The present economic crisis gives us the occasion to reflect on the use of material goods: what do we do with our money and our talents? How do we use them to serve society and the common good? How much free time do we dedicate to family life, time with our members, personal and spiritual time? Are we running the risk of becoming “almost slaves to materialism?”

Then, what is a just society? It is a society that recognizes the talents of a person and makes sure that each person can use them through his work and efforts. A society committed to strive against poverty, be it material or spiritual. A society which is vigilant so that no human being, either in our country or elsewhere, should be reduced to the ranks of becoming simply a means of production. (CC.GG. 18-23)

The concern about justice that was in St. Louis’ heart should spur us to put our material and spiritual riches at the service of all.

Pause:

Read the preceding text and find the answers to the questions presented in the third paragraph. (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.

This is done with the help of the following texts in which the questions are found.

Being present in the world

1. Do we perceive flagrant injustices in our surroundings?

2. Christ admonishes us, saying to us: “*Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do unto me.*” (Mt. 25, 40) What are the means at our disposal to fight against injustices?

Transmission

How do we help our children and our young people to become attentive to social justice, which is inherent in Christianity?

Spiritual life

For the advent of this kingdom of justice and love that God wants, we are invited to intercede with prayer and to concretely take responsibility to transform the situation.

Are we always able to combine prayer and responsibility?

Mission

For St. Louis, evangelization was an essential component in the pursuit of justice because every person must be able to have access to the Word of God.

Can this way of conceiving **evangelization** enlighten the contemporary call to the New **Evangelization**?

Formation

There is a statement in the social doctrine of the Church, called the "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," which sums up the experience and Christian reflection on social issues.

Is this concern of the Church also my concern?

Reflection:

Now, let us listen, in silence, to the reading of the Gospel according to Luke 14, 12-24 ... then take a moment for sharing.

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the Letter to the Faithful, (2LFid), verses 48 and 49, François, Écrits, Vies, Témoignages Éditions du VIII Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

And all those who shall do these things and persevere until the end, the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and will make his home and resting place with them. And they will be the sons of the celestial Father whose works they do.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Article 13

As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the first-born of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.

A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

General Constitutions:

Article 18.2

They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.

Article 18.3

They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to "create worthy conditions of life" for all and to work for the freedom of all people.

Life - Objective:

During the month of February, our fraternal meetings, let us share our knowledge on what should be «social justice» for us as Secular Franciscans ...

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 VATICAN II

The fundamental equality of all men and women, and social justice

“Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition.

True, all men are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honored. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right to choose a husband freely, to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men.

Therefore, although rightful differences exist between men, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.

Human institutions, both private and public, must labor to minister to the dignity and purpose of man. At the same time let them put up a stubborn fight against any kind of slavery, whether social or political, and safeguard the basic rights of man under every political system. Indeed human institutions themselves must be accommodated by degrees to the highest of all realities, spiritual ones, even though meanwhile, a long enough time will be required before they arrive at the desired goal.” (*Constitution on the Church in the Modern World “Gaudium et spes»§29*)