

## LIVING FRATERNITY

**Theme : « Saint Louis and His Public Commitment as a Christian »**

In the beginning of 2015, we are presenting a third theme on Saint Louis of France. Usually, at the start of a new year, we make some resolutions. Therefore, we are proposing a look at the public commitment of our patron saint, Louis, and afterwards to look at together what are our commitments as Secular Franciscans today.

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, 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*

### JANUARY 2015 MONTHLY MEETING

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

**Reading:** (choose a person who reads calmly)

**Justice toward all his subjects – poor or rich ...**

“How great was his justice! One could touch it with one’s finger. He would sit almost continuously on the floor or on a rug to listen to judicial matters, especially those that had to do with the poor or orphans. He would make sure they had justice.” (*Pope Boniface VIII*)

“If it pleased Our Lord that you received the anointing with which the French Kings are consecrated as such, be mindful to have the qualities that belong to Kings, that is, that you never separate yourself from justice (...) Sustain more voluntarily the poor against the rich until the truth is known and when you know it, do Justice.” (*St. Louis to his son Philip*)

**HISTORICAL VISION: “ST. LOUIS CONFORMS TO THE MODEL OF THE CHRISTIAN KING”**

St. Louis endeavored to complete as best as possible all the responsibilities of a Christian King. He considered himself responsible, not only for the material well-being, but also for the spiritual well-being of his people. He repressed the abuses of the Royal Administration and the demands

of nobility, seeking to enforce and make justice accessible to all and equal for all. He particularly showed great concern for the poor. (GC 22).

St. Louis was “peacemaker” within the French Kingdom. Acting various times as mediator in conflicts among foreign sovereigns, he was the messenger of peace outside his reign as well. (Rule 19, GC 23).

In order to improve the customs of his citizens, he strongly sanctioned blasphemy; he prohibited gambling and prostitution in the center of the city.

### **Pause**

Take some time for sharing with 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 VISION: “DARE TO MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT”**

St. Louis is a model for contemporary politicians. (GC 20.2) Because of his example, many Secular Franciscans have become involved in politics, like Thomas More, Garcia Moreno, Giorgio La Pira, Frank Nosek, Konrad Adenaver, Alcides de Gasperi, etc.

Christians sometimes show a resistance to becoming involved in politics, and Christian politicians venture little into defending Church positions. What do our Rule and Constitutions say about this?

### **Pause:**

After reading the preceding paragraph, let us find the answer to the question presented in the last sentence. (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.*

### **Following Christ**

Throughout his public life, Jesus was committed, exposed himself even risking not being understood by the people or his own disciples. What Gospel passages make us think about the “commitment of Jesus”?

### **Spiritual Life**

We Christians have received from God the mission of participating in the coming of His Kingdom of Justice and Peace. Does this mission mobilize us? What are our real commitments, in this regard, today? Shall we reread together Rule 15 (GC 12.2; GC 22.23)?

Which of our commitments (in associations, professionally, in politics, interest groups) have transformed us up to the present?

How do our diverse commitments (associations, professional, political, etc.) nourish our spiritual life and, vice-versa, how does our spiritual life push us to make a commitment?

### **Being in the world**

What is mobilizing us to make a commitment on a timely basis or particularly in our contemporary society? Where would we like to invest our energy primarily and why?

Do we really know the conditions of those who live marginalized in society...at the periphery? What is our capacity for outrage and resistance in the face of the unacceptable? (GC 19.2)

What criteria do we use when we vote in elections? Moreover, how do we scrutinize those men and women on the ballots?

### **Formation**

An involved Christian is invited to know the Social Doctrine of the Church in depth and to form himself/herself in order to take positions in complex debates (bioethical, etc.) Is this our situation? Through which means are we driving our thinking: Reading (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, etc.)? Participating in conferences or sessions? On the CIOFS website <http://www.ciofs.org> portal?

### **Questioning**

On Friday, June 7, 2013, Pope Francis exhorted Christians to make a commitment to politics. “Involvement in politics is an obligation for a Christian. We Christians cannot “play the role of Pilate”, washing our hands of it; we cannot. We must be involved in politics because politics is one of the highest forms of charity for it seeks the common good”. He added, following St. Thomas Aquinas: “Christian lay people must work in politics [...] politics has become too dirty: but I ask myself: Why has it become dirty? Why aren’t Christians involved in politics with an evangelical spirit?”<sup>1</sup> How does this make me react?

### **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 Thomas de Celano, Chapter XXVIII, verse 76, François, Écrits, Vies, Témoignages Éditions du VIII Centenaire, Paris, 2010)*

### **The spirit of charity and the sentiment of compassion toward the poor**

... during the time of great cold, he would ask the rich people of this era to lend him a coat of some furs. As they did this devotedly and quite voluntarily so that the very blessed father did not

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130607\\_scuole-gesuiti.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130607_scuole-gesuiti.html)

ask saying: « I receive this from you on the condition that you should not in any way except to get it back. »When he first encountered a pauper, exultant and joyous, he would put the garment on him that he had received.

## **Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions**

### **Article 15**

Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith

### **.General Constitutions: Article 22**

1. Secular Franciscans should "be in the forefront ... in the field of public life." They should collaborate as much as possible for the passage of just laws and ordinances.
2. The fraternities should engage themselves through courageous initiatives, consistent with their Franciscan vocation and with the directives of the Church, in the field of human development and justice. They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference. They should offer their fraternal service to the victims of injustice.
3. The renunciation of the use of violence, characteristic of the followers of Francis, does not mean the renunciation of action. However, the brothers and sisters should take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love.

### **Life - Objective:**

During the month of January, let us share during our fraternal meetings, our public commitments 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**

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40).