

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Grateful for the past – living the present with passion »

In May, we are proposing a look at the documents that Pope Francis has proposed to the religious in this Year of consecrated life. If however, we are not « consecrated » members, we are members « committed » to living the Gospel and to being active in the Church and in the world as Secular Franciscans. While going through these documents, we can see how their content can be applied to our secular vocation.

Recall: At the monthly meeting, we would suggest a deepening of the Gospel, our Way of life, by **taking a good moment of time to share the texts of the Word of God for the day or for the Sunday to come.** Thus the fraternity will make good use of the Bible at its disposal.

Good preparation --- Good meeting

MAY 2015 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

Look at the past with gratefulness

The first aim is to **look to the past with gratitude...** Each charismatic family to reflect on its origins and history, in order to thank God who grants the Church a variety of gifts which embellish her and equip her for every good work. Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging.

Sharing:

With the help of the following question, let us take a few minutes to share knowledge of our secular history:

Under which Rule or life project did you become members of the Secular Franciscan Order?
What are your memories of that day? (About 15 minutes)

Continue the reading with another person.

The inspirational spark

More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to **grasp the high ideals, and the vision and values which inspired them,** beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In

this way we come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted.

Sharing: In the preceding paragraph, do you notice anything particular in the life of our patron, Saint Francis. What? Together lets talk. (About 10-15 minutes)

Continue the reading with another person.

The Gospel ... Source for Founders and Foundresses

For the various founders and foundresses, **the Gospel was the absolute rule**, whereas every other rule was meant merely to be an expression of the Gospel and a means of living the Gospel to the full. For them, the ideal was Christ; they sought to be interiorly united to him and thus to be able to say with Saint Paul: “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). Their vows were intended as a concrete expression of this passionate love. The question we have to ask ourselves during this Year is how open are we to being challenged by the Gospel... It is not enough to read it... nor is it enough to meditate on it ... Jesus asks us to practice it, to put his words into effect in our lives.

Reflection:

When was the last time I read the writings of Saint Francis? (About 15 minutes)

Is it not time to go back to it, if I have put it completely out of mind? If that is the case, then why?

Continue the reading with another person.

This Year calls us **to live the present with passion**. Grateful remembrance of the past leads us, as we listen attentively to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today, to implement ever more fully the essential aspects of our consecrated life.

Are our ministries, our works and our presence consonant with what the Spirit asked of our founders and foundresses? Are they suitable for carrying out today, in society and the Church, those same ministries and works?

Reflection:

Let us take a few moments to answer the question presented at the end of the preceding paragraph. (About 20 minutes)

Deeping of the Word of God:

Let us take the necessary time to listen to the reading, then with the help of the following questions, afterwards, share a moment to answer the questions:

1. What do I notice that is happening?
2. Who are the principal personages? Secondary ones?
3. What do I notice about these personages?
4. What do I notice about the milieu where the action is happening?

5. What is being said? Asked for? Offered? Refused? Contradicted? Discussed?
6. What is Jesus' attitude? His behavior? What is his reaction?

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from Celano 1, Chapter II, verse 93, François, d'Assise, Écrits, Vies témoignages, Édition du VIIe Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

Rising from his prayer in a spirit of humility and contrite soul, protecting himself with seal of the holy cross, He took the book from the altar and opened it with reverence and fear. It came, as he opened the book, that it presented firstly to him the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ – and the passage only announced that he would suffer tribulation. But so that in nothing suspicious may arise or by hazard, he opened the book a second and a third time, and he found the same or similar passage. The man full of God's Spirit understood that he would have to cross many tribulations, much anguish and many struggles to enter the Kingdom of God.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule

Article 4

The Rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people.

Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.

General Constitutions

Article 8.2

They seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the SFO:

- in a continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation;
- open to the challenges that come from society and from the Church's life situation, " going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel ";
- in the personal and communal dimensions of this journey.

Article 9.2

The secular Franciscan, committed to following the example and the teachings of Christ, must personally and assiduously study the Gospel and Sacred Scripture. The fraternity and its leaders should foster love for the word of the Gospel and help the brothers and sisters to know and understand it as it is proclaimed by the Church with the assistance of the Spirit.

Life – Objective:

In the month of May, the month of Mary, let us stop in fraternity to answer the following questions:

1. How did Mary live the Word of God?
2. What can I do to better imitate her in my daily life?
3. Let us consider how we can improve our relationship with our Mother?

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)

Suggestion: Sing an hymn to Mary – *Magnificat*, or any other of your choice ...

At home

To continue our reflection, reads the following passage:

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL – The Apostolate of the Laity

In regard to the apostolate for evangelizing and sanctifying men, the laity must be specially formed to engage in conversation with others, believers, or non-believers, in order to manifest Christ's message to all men.

Since in our times, different forms of materialism are spread far and wide even among Catholic, the laity should not only learn doctrine more diligently, especially those main points which are the subjects of controversy, but should also exhibit the witness of an evangelical life in contrast to all forms of materialism.