

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Let us be witnesses of tenderness in our families »

In October, we offer for your work a text from Raymond St-Gelais, which was published in the magazine *La Vie Montante*, September-October 2013. This document suggests that together we have a look at our family and fraternal values as well as our interpersonal relationships. By going through this document, we can see if its 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

OCTOBER 2015 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

The Family ...

The family is often weakened, in a culture where individualism is placed at the centre of the satisfaction of our desires. This can have for effect of weakening the development and stability between persons. However, the family remains the natural centre of human life, the scene of emotional ties, where we learn to love, to strengthen the ties, to recognize one another, to live together with the differences. The family remains the fundamental cell of society, made up of joy, sorrow, suffering, as in all life.

Reflection:

Following the reading, do you agree or not with what is presented. Explain your reasons.

(About 10 minutes)

Continue the reading.

But realistically, the family remains the building site, with its highs and lows. If there are intense moments of meeting, of celebrations where we applaud the successes, there is also the lack of understanding, the moments of solitude, the failures, the break-ups, the bereavements. This is also part of life. We experience our limits, and we recognize that we are vulnerable.

Sharing:

Let us take about fifteen minutes to mention some of our memories that can be linked to the points presented in the preceding paragraph, and then continue reading with the following text.

A love leading to forgiveness

There is a call to strengthen the ties, to enter into dialogue, to treat the wounds, to develop a greater gratuitousness in love, a love that goes all the way to forgiveness. Therefore, we have a need for attentive hearts, sensitive to the joy and the pain, to the suffering that lives in the family. Is there not a particular calling for the concern, the kindness of the elders? Is there not a privileged mission for grandparents with whom small children have emotional ties sometimes quite strong? It is that they feel loved for who they are with their strengths and their limits. A climate of confidence is created. By their kind looks, the elders contribute to favouring comprehension and dialogue, to strengthen the ties between the generations.

Reflection and answers to share:

1. What is this particular calling for the concern and the kindness of elders? Give some examples.
2. What is this privileged mission for grandparents with whom small children have emotional ties, often quite strong? When is it realized? Mention some of the occasions.

Elders ... witnesses of tenderness

This is how elders can become witnesses of tenderness in the midst of their family, to be the heart that knows how to see where love is necessary, an attentive heart to identify the vulnerable and lonely persons, who are fearful and who long for love. Sometimes all that is needed is a concerned look that lets see all the consideration that is shown to these persons who are dear to us, a look of kindness that softens and humanizes relationships. Being a witness of tenderness, is looking at others with eyes of the heart.

What a marvellous mission is entrusted to the elders with the members of their family! In order to fully realize it, it is essential to draw from the source. And the source of love, is the heart itself of God our Father. Open the Gospel. Jesus has been a witness to the tenderness of his Father by unconditional welcome, kindness, compassion toward person suffering, in difficulty. Like him, let us have our heart transformed by the Spirit of love of God and let flow from our hearts the tenderness of God the Father!

Reflection and biblical research:

In following the suggestion presented in the preceding paragraph, open the Gospel and find a passage on the tenderness of Jesus. (About 15 minutes)

Deeping of the Word of God:

Let us take the necessary time to listen to today's Gospel reading, then with the help of the following questions, answer the questions:

1. What is the teaching in this Gospel: what is happening?
2. Who is implicated? How?
3. What do I notice about these personages?
4. Where is the action taking place?
5. What is being said? Asked for? Offered? Refused? Contradicted? Discussed?
6. What is Jesus' attitude? His behavior? What is his reaction?

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule

Article 17

In their family, they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ.

By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his Church. They should joyfully, accompany their children on their journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.

General Constitutions

Article 24

1. Secular Franciscans should consider their own family to be the first place in which to live their Christian commitment and Franciscan vocation. They should make space within it for prayer, for the Word of God, and for Christian catechesis. They should concern themselves with respect for all life in every situation from conception until death.

Married couples find in the Rule of the SFO an effective aid in their own journey of Christian life, aware that, in the sacrament of matrimony, their love shares in the love that Christ has for his Church. The way spouses love each other and affirm the value of fidelity is a profound witness for their own family, the Church, and the world.

2. In the fraternity:
 - the spirituality of the family and of marriage and the Christian attitude towards family problems should be a theme for dialogue and for the sharing of experiences;
 - they should share the important moments of the family life of their Franciscan brothers and sisters and they should give fraternal attention to those — single, widows, single parents, separated, divorced — who are living difficult situations;
 - they should create conditions suitable for dialogue between generations;
 - the formation of groups of married couples and of family groups should be fostered.
3. The brothers and sisters should collaborate with the efforts undertaken in the Church and in society to affirm both the value of fidelity and respect for life and to provide answers to the social problems of the family.

Reflection and sharing:

In reading Article 24.2 of the General Constitutions presented above, can we say that our fraternities meet these standards? If yes, how? If no, why not?

Life – Objective:

In the month of October, let us try to see in our elders, the tenderness and their life experience as a gift from God in our monthly meetings.

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

We suggest that you have a look at what CIOFS has given itself as a priority in the field of the family.

Family

Family was a significant topic during the General Chapter. A round table was dedicated to this topic presenting the testimony of Secular Franciscans from around the world in the service of those in the peripheries of society.

Capitulars were very appreciative of this opportunity to know these experiences. During the interventions, the life of communion within the Trinity was presented as a model of love and communication for families.

The General Chapter strongly recommends the promotion and strengthening of the family life of Secular Franciscans through the following proposals:

1. To include the significance of sexuality and the sacrament of marriage in all OFS and YouFra formation programs.
2. To make OFS Fraternities places of caring and support for members living in particular difficulties or challenging family situations.
3. To encourage OFS Fraternities to organize family gatherings and in general “*share the important moments of the family life*” (Const. 24) giving opportunities to also share with YouFra and their families.
4. To promote praying and constructive dialogue in family. Whenever it is convenient and necessary “*the formation of groups of married couples and of family groups should be fostered*” (Const. 24, 2).