

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « What is happening to our common home! »

In the month of May 2016, during our fraternal meetings, we are proposing a look at three aspects of our common home presented in **the** encyclical letter from Pope Francis «Laudato Si». In the first chapter, our reflection will be on three aspects –the climate, the question of water and the loss of biodiversity.

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

MAY 2016 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (chose a person who read calmly)

Climate as a common good (*Excerpts from Article 23 of the encyclical*)

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system.

In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon.

The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system.

Sharing:

Share your answers to the following questions:

1. What does the Pope mean by « The climate is a common good»?
2. What proof is there that climatic changes are happening and that they are caused by human activity?

3. What will their effects be?

Take the necessary time to **fully share** then continue the reading

Climate change (*Article 25 of the encyclical*)

Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades.

Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystem services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited.

For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever.

Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering, which is even now taking place throughout our world. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.

Reflection: The reflection is inspired by the following question:

Have you observed any changes in the climate in your area? Where?
(About 15 minutes) Afterwards, continue the reading.

The question of water (*Article 30 of the encyclical*)

Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market.

Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because *they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.* This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor.

But water continues to be wasted, not only in the developed world but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. This shows that the problem of water is partly an

educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behaviour within a context of great inequality

Sharing:

After reading the preceding paragraph, share your answers on the following questions:

As the Pope affirms that «access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right», many poor people do not have access to it.

1. Why?
2. What can be done?

Take about 20 minutes for this sharing, then continue the reading.

The loss of biodiversity (*Excerpts from Articles 33 and 34*)

It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.

But the good functioning of ecosystems also requires fungi, algae, worms, insects, reptiles and an innumerable variety of microorganisms. Some less numerous species, although generally unseen, nonetheless play a critical role in maintaining the equilibrium of a particular place.

Often a vicious circle results, as human intervention to resolve a problem further aggravates the situation. For example, many birds and insects which disappear due to synthetic agrottoxins are helpful for agriculture: their disappearance will have to be compensated for by yet other techniques which may well prove harmful. We must be grateful for the praiseworthy efforts being made by scientists and engineers dedicated to finding solutions to man-made problems.

Reflection:

Dig deeper using the following questions:

1. Why does the Pope think that biodiversity is important?
2. What are the threats to biodiversity?

Take some moments to really reflect on these questions

Biblical Research:

Note: If you prefer sharing on the Gospel of the day, or on Sunday's Gospel, take the time necessary to read and internalize it, then if you wish, share your reflections using one or two of the following questions:

1. What does this gospel teach us?
2. To whom does it speak?
3. How does it reach us personally?
4. Is it as message of hope? Other kind of message? Why and how is it?

In the Footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the Canticle of Brother Sun)

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule 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

Articles 22.1 and 22.2

- 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.
- 22.2** 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.

Life – Objective:

In the month of May, in this time of renewal, let us make our monthly fraternal meeting more open to changes that are happening in our areas of life ...

May is the month of Mary. What can we together at our fraternal meeting to honour her?

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

End of the meeting (prayer or hymn chosen by the fraternity)

At home

In order to continue our study, we encourage you to read the following articles from the second chapter of the encyclical letter, numbers 23 to 26, 27 to 31. There, you will find more details on the three aspects presented in this document.