

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Do we know how to recognize the signs? »

In October 2016, during our fraternal meetings, it is proposed that we take a look at certain excerpts from the sixth chapter of the encyclical letter from Pope Francis «Laudato Si». We'll zero in on education and spiritual ecology.

Recall: At the monthly meeting, members should have at their disposal a Bible, at least one copy of the General Constitutions, a copy 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

OCTOBER 2016 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

Educating for the Covenant between Humanity and the Environment

(Excerpt from Article 211 of the Encyclical)

... Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment. A person who could afford to spend and consume more but regularly uses less heating and wears warmer clothes, shows the kind of convictions and attitudes which help to protect the environment.

... Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity.

Sharing:

What, according to Pope Francis consider as being the role of environmental education in the increasing awareness of conscience and the evolution of habits?

Share your answers to this question during about 15 minutes.

The Ecological Conversion (*Excerpt from Article 220 of the Encyclical*)

This conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (*Mt 6:3-4*).

It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world's problems and in offering ourselves to God "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable" (*Rom 12:1*).

Sharing:

What are the attitudes that favour a spirit of « generous protection full of tenderness »?

Take the necessary time to formulate your answer to this question.

The Sacraments ... (*Excerpts from Articles 235 and 236 of the Encyclical*)

The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise. The hand that blesses is an instrument of God's love and a reflection of the closeness of Jesus Christ, who came to accompany us on the journey of life. ...

For Christians, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation. "Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Holy Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation".

It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures. The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours.

In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love: "Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world".¹⁶⁶ The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist,

“creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself”.¹⁶⁷ Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.

Reflection:

Take a few moments to reflect on the following question.

Pope Francis believes that the natural world is an integral part of our sacramental and spiritual life. – Have you ever had this type of experience? Explain?

In the Footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from Admonitions, Article 1, verses 16-19, Critical Latin Edition by Fr. Kajetan Esser, ofm)

Behold, every day He humbles Himself, just as when “from royal thrones”. He came into the womb of the Virgin; every day He comes to us Himself humbly appearing; everyday He descends from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest. · And just as to the holy Apostles in true flesh, so even now He shows Himself to us in the Sacred Bread.

Biblical Reflection:

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?

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule 8

As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.

Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ.

General Constitutions

Article 12.3

The brothers and sisters should love meeting God as His children and they should let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. They should seek to discover the presence of the Father in their own heart, in nature, and in the history of humanity in which His plan of salvation is fulfilled. The contemplation of this mystery will dispose them to collaborate in this loving plan.

Article 14.2

The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church. Christ unites us to himself and to one another as a single body in it. Therefore, the Eucharist should be the center of the life of the fraternity. The brothers and sisters should participate in the Eucharist as frequently as possible, being mindful of the respect and love shown by Francis, who, in the Eucharist, lived all the mysteries of the life of Christ.

Life – Objective:

During the month of October, let us encourage our members to imitate our holy patron, Francis of Assisi, patron of ecology and great lover of Christ ...

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

In order to continue the reflection, we suggest reading articles 241 and 242 of the Encyclical.

Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power. Completely transfigured, she now lives with Jesus, and all creatures sing of her fairness. She is the Woman, “clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (*Rev* 12:1). Carried up into heaven, she is the Mother and Queen of all creation. In her glorified body, together with the Risen Christ, part of creation has reached the fullness of its beauty. She treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart (cf. *Lk* 2:19,51), and now understands the meaning of all things. Hence, we can ask her to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom.

At her side in the Holy Family of Nazareth, stands the figure of Saint Joseph. Through his work and generous presence, he cared for and defended Mary and Jesus, delivering them from the violence of the unjust by bringing them to Egypt. The Gospel presents Joseph as a just man, hard-working and strong. But he also shows great tenderness, which is not a mark of the weak but of those who are genuinely strong, fully aware of reality and ready to love and serve in humility. That is why he was proclaimed custodian of the universal Church. He too can teach us how to show care; he can inspire us to work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us.