

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: “Let us love, not with words but with deeds”

In the month of November, we are uniting our pilgrims’ journey along the path Pope Francis has set out for the lay faithful and the world; to love and cater to the poor not only “*with words but with deeds.*” On November 19, 2017, the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Church celebrates the **First World Day of the Poor.**

Recall: Our monthly fraternity meeting is *to foster an encounter with Christ.*

A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and good preparation promotes a communal experience. At the meeting, having a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the Rule of Life and our General Constitutions, will provide clarity and depth to our edification and experience.

Good preparation – Good meeting

NOVEMBER 2017 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Introduction

At the start of our meeting, let us read these words from the message of Pope Francis on June 13, 2017, on the memorial of St. Anthony of Padua.

Words from Pope Francis:

“Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth” (*1 Jn 3:18*). These words of the Apostle John voice an imperative that no Christian may disregard. The seriousness with which the “beloved disciple” hands down Jesus’ command to our own day is made even clearer by the contrast between the *empty words* so frequently on our lips and the *concrete deeds* against which we are called to measure ourselves. Love has no alibi. Whenever we set out to love as Jesus loved, we have to take the Lord as our example; especially when it comes to loving the poor. The Son of God’s way of loving is well-known, and John spells it out clearly. It stands on two pillars: God loved us first (*1 Jn 4:10.19*), and he loved us by giving completely of himself, even to laying down his life (*1 Jn 3:16*).

Such love cannot go unanswered. Even though offered unconditionally, asking nothing in return, it so sets hearts on fire that all who experience it are led to love back, despite their limitations and sins. Yet this can only happen if we welcome God’s grace, his merciful charity, as fully as possible into our hearts, so that our will and even our emotions are drawn to love both God and neighbour. In this way, the mercy that wells up – as it were – from the heart of the Trinity can shape our lives and bring forth compassion and works of mercy for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in need.

Reflection and Sharing:

After reading of the words presented, take a moment of silence and reflect on the passage. Share your thoughts on these words using the following questions. How do these words impact:

1. Our way of thinking?
2. Our way of being?
3. Our sensitivity and relationship to those who are poor and marginalized?
4. Our responsibility as disciples of Jesus?
5. Possible initiatives to act on the words individually and/or as a fraternity?

Please allow enough time to share your thoughts (about 15 minutes).

The Way of St. Francis

Francis took as example the Acts of the Apostles that show the Church's early zeal in answering the cry of the poor. "The earliest community realized that being a disciple of Jesus meant demonstrating fraternity and solidarity, in obedience to the Master's proclamation that the poor are blessed and heirs to the Kingdom of heaven. (*Acts 2:45*).

An example is given by the life of St. Francis of Assisi, the pope said, whose "testimony shows the transformative power of charity and the Christian way of life." Acts of generosity and kindness must not be limited to occasional volunteer work, Francis insisted, but must also strive to find the true origins of injustice and lead to a true encounter with the poor.

Reflection and Sharing:

After reading of the text above, *The Way of Francis*, take a moment to reflect on the passage. Share your thoughts on these words and how they impact us.

In the Footsteps of Francis

(*Excerpt from Admonition 7, verses 1 and 4*) **Good Works should follow knowledge**

The Apostle says: "The letter kills, but the spirit gives life." And those have been vivified by the Divine Letter, who do not attribute every letter, which they know and desire to know, to the body, but in word and example render them to the Most High Lord God, of whom every good belongs.

(*Excerpt from the Second Letter to the Faithful, verses 5-7, Écrits de Claire et François, Éditions du Cerf, 2003*) **These verses present us with the deeds of Jesus for all of us.**

He who was rich above all, wished to be in the world, with the very blessed Virgin, his mother, chose poverty. And close to this passion, he celebrated the Passover with his disciples and taking the bread, he gave thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying: This is my body which is given

for you. And likewise the chalice, after supper, saying : This chalice which is poured out for you is the covenant in my blood.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule - Article 11

Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.

Thus, in the spirit of "the Beatitudes," and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

General Constitutions

Article 15

1. The Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and, in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, effects interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth.
2. The Secular Franciscans, who must provide for their own families and serve society by means of their work and material goods, have a particular manner of living evangelical poverty. To understand and achieve it requires a strong personal commitment and the stimulation of the Fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life and attentiveness to the instructions of the Church and the demands of society.
3. The Secular Franciscan should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person.

Life-Objective:

During the month of November, take the time to cultivate a greater sense of stewardship of the many gifts God has given to us for ourselves and to those who can benefit from the sharing of our gifts. Let us live the spirit of the beatitudes in loving others, and through radical acts of kindness and charity, make visible the loving presence of Christ in our world.

Closing reflections:

Read the Gospel of the day or the one according to Matthew 25, 31-46

Christ records, remembers and rewards

Share your thoughts on this gospel, using the following questions:

1. To whom does it speak? What does it teach us?
1. How does it reach us personally?
2. Is it one of hope? One other message? Why and how?

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

Remember to pray for the brothers and sisters within your Fraternity and for vocations.

End of the meeting: (a prayer or song chosen by the fraternity)

At home

A few excerpt from Lumen Gentium, Article 7 to continue our reflection.

In the human nature united to Himself the Son of God, by overcoming death through His own death and resurrection, redeemed man and re-molded him into a new creation. By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body.

All the members ought to be moulded in the likeness of Him, until Christ be formed in them. For this reason we, who have been made to conform with Him, who have died with Him and risen with Him, are taken into the mysteries of His life, until we will reign together with Him. On earth, still as pilgrims in a strange land, tracing in trial and in oppression the paths he trod, we are made one with his sufferings like the body is one with the Head, suffering with Him, that with Him we may be glorified.

That we might be increasingly renewed share with us His Spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the Head and in the members gives life to, unifies and moves through the whole body. This He does in such a way the His work could be compared by the holy Fathers with the function which the principle of life, that is, the soul, fulfills in the human body.

Note: The team thanks Jewel Jasmins for her contribution to this month's text.