

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: «The Fraternity ... a welcoming place »

In the month of September, during our fraternal meetings, we are proposing a reflection on the life in fraternity, especially on what a fraternity should be as a privileged place of gathering and sharing. We have added some questions to help with reflection and sharing.

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, members should have in hand their own copy of the Rule.

Good preparation – Good meeting

SEPTEMBER 2017 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Introduction

The holidays are ended or nearly ... it is the return to a more regular rhythm of life. Students of all ages are finding their way back to school, to university. But, we also are returning to our activities, to our monthly meetings. Therefore, together, we proposed doing a review of what makes our fraternity welcoming and enriching. A first step would be the following one: the biblical reflection.

Biblical Reflection:

Read the Gospel of the day (or of the preceding or following Sunday). Share your thoughts on this gospel, using one or two of the following questions:

1. To whom does it speak? What does it teach us?
2. How does it reach us personally?
3. Is it a message of hope? Another kind of message? How and why?

Review of Article 22

After having done the sharing of the Gospel, together review what Article 22 of our Rule tells us on the subject of fraternity life.

Article 22

The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.

Sharing:

After the reading, take time to answer the following question:

- Does our local fraternity meet the terms mentioned in the article?

When the sharing is finished, let us look at what the Spiritual Conference participants had suggested concerning our meetings.

- a) Start the meeting with a greeting, greet each member on their arrival, present the new arrivals.
- b) The person who animates the meeting should make sure that all the members may speak and that one person does not do all or most of the talking.
- c) The sharing or talking is done in a calm manner so that the members who wish to express themselves feel quite at ease to do so and that others be open and attentive.
- d) The members not only come to pray but to have an opportunity to share and be encouraged in their secular life. The intent of the meeting should be to facilitate an encounter with God.

Reflection:

Read the preceding text in silence and afterwards express whether you agree with the terms. (about 15 minutes)

Important reminder:

Now, read what Article 47.1 of the General Constitutions tells us.

Each local fraternity, the primary cell of the one SFO, is entrusted to the pastoral care of the religious Franciscan Order that canonically established it.

This article reminds us that our local fraternities are important and that we must take care of them in order that they be lively, welcoming and enriching for all our members.

Review of Article 24

To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity. This communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.

Sharing:

After the reading, the time to answer the following question:

- Does our local fraternity meet the terms set out in the article?

When the sharing ends, take notice of what the Spiritual Conference participants had expressed concerning fraternal life.

Developing fraternal life

- a) Be of service together in the community to create links between the fraternity and the parish or civil community.
- b) Organize a picnic – visit other fraternities – participate in retreats – visit other fraternities between meetings.
- c) Prepare a meal together during Christmas or Easter, or in summer, inviting the members of nearby fraternities as well as the priest or assistant friars.
- d) Develop a team that informs itself about the members who are sometimes absent from the meeting and share news of them with members present during the meeting.

Living presence in the world

- a) Some fraternity members are involved in other apostolates and the fraternity encourages and supports them. Some members are elderly and unable to participate. One of our apostolates should be caring for members in nursing homes unable to get to the meeting by bringing them news of the fraternity.
- b) When carrying out apostolates, the fraternity builds itself. Joining with other entities in completing apostolic works or other service also works. Go toward others and discover what their needs are.
- c) Help groups that work in our parishes or our districts.
- d) Be active members in our parishes, be part of the councils or committees whose mandates are similar to our Franciscan spirituality and where one can be of service with the talents that we have received and developed.

Reflection:

Silently read over the preceding text and afterwards speak of our members' implications.
(about 15 minutes)

Sharing and Reflection:

Having considered together these two articles of our Rule, we suggest the following approach :
on of answering the questions hereafter:

1. Life in fraternity begins by

2. In the fraternity I learn to ...

3. The artisans of peace are ... (or do ...)

4. Each of us carries within one's self

5. Life in fraternity will only succeed if we

Take the time to carefully reflect and share on each approach. The Living Fraternity team would appreciate receiving any comment on the subject of this las sharing.

In the footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the Life of Julien de Spire, Chapter V, verse 27, François d'Assise, Écrits, Vies, témoignages, Éditions du VIIIe Centenaire, Paris 2010)

At this time, the brothers had asked the blessed Francis to teach them to pray. He simply gave them the following outline by saying: « *When you pray, say : " Our Father " and " We adore you, O Lord Jesus Christ, in all the churches of the world, and we bless you, for by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world."* » This the brothers humbly executed, taking a simple word as if it committed their obedience: they bowed even before the churches that they could see in the distance, kneeling towards the earth, adoring according to the instructions they had received..

Life-Objective:

During the month of September, apply one to live life in fraternity according to the answers to the questions and approaches presented.

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

Take time to look over the approaches (1-5) in the reflection, write your answers in order to share them at the next fraternity meeting. It will be interesting to see if the fraternity has made some progress in its fraternal life.

We take this occasion to wish, to each and every one of the members of our fraternities, a year of peace, joy and love, as well as health and serenity.

Good Journey!