

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Perfect Joy according to Saint Francis of Assisi ...

For this month of November, we are proposing a reflection on a text taken from the writings of Francis of Assisi. We have chosen this text as a link to the texts presented in October.

Good reflection and good sharing.

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

NOVEMBER 2019 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening prayer or song (according to the Ritual or a song chosen by the fraternity)

Introduction

Now, let us take the time to attentively read the text from Saint Francis of Assisi on perfect joy and afterwards together share our thoughts and/or experiences with the help of the questions presented at the end of the text.

How Saint Francis, walking one day with Brother Leo, explained to him what things are perfect joy.

One day in winter, as Saint Francis was going with Brother Leo from Perugia to Saint Mary of the Angels, and was suffering greatly from the cold, he called to Brother Leo, who was walking on before him, and said to him: « Brother Leo, if it were to please God that the Friars Minor should give, in all lands, a great example of holiness and edification, write down, and note carefully, that this would not be perfect joy. »

A little further on, Saint Francis called to him a second time: « O Brother Leo, if the Friars Minor were to make the lame to walk, if they should make straight the crooked, chase away demons, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and what is even far greater work, if they should raise the dead after four days, write that this would not be perfect joy. »

After proceeding a few steps farther, he cried out again with a loud voice: « O Brother Leo, thou little lamb of God if the Friars Minor could speak with the tongues of angels, if they could explain the course of the stars; if they knew the virtues of all plants, if all the treasures of the earth were revealed to them; if they were acquainted with the various qualities of all birds,

of all fish, of all animals, of men, of trees, of stones, of roots, and of waters – write that this would not be perfect joy. »

Shortly after, he cried out again: «O Brother Leo, if the Friars Minor had the gift of preaching so as to convert all infidels to the faith of Christ, write that this would not be perfect joy. »

Now when this manner of discourse had lasted for the space of two miles, Brother Leo wondered much within himself; and questioning the saint he said: « Father, I pray thee teach me wherein is perfect joy. » Saint Francis answered: « If when we shall arrive at Saint Mary of the Angels, all drenched with rain and trembling with cold, all covered with mud and exhausted from hunger; if, when we knock at the convent gate, the porter should come angrily and ask us who we are; if, after we have told him, " We are two of the brethren", he should answer angrily, " What ye say is not the truth; ye are but two impostors going about to deceive the world, and take away the alms of the poor; be gone I say"; if then he refuse to open to us, and leave us outside, exposed to the snow and rain, suffering from cold and hunger till nightfall – then, if we accept such injustice, such cruelty, and such contempt with patience, without being ruffled and without murmuring, believing with humility and charity that the porter really knows us, and that it is God who makes him to speak thus against us, write down, O Brother Leo, that this is perfect joy.

And if we knock again, and the porter come out in anger to drive us away with oaths and blows, as if we were vile impostors, saying, "Be gone, miserable robbers! To the hospital, for here you shall neither eat nor sleep!" – and if we accept all this with patience, with joy, and with charity, O Brother Leo, write that this indeed is perfect joy.

And if, urged by cold and hunger, we knock again, calling to the porter and entreating him with many tears to open to us and give us shelter, for the love of God, and if he come out more angry than before, exclaiming, "These are but importunate rascals, I will deal with them as they deserve"; and taking a knotted stick, he seize us by the hood, throwing us on the ground, rolling us in the snow, and shall beat and wound us with the knots in the stick – if we bear all these injuries with patience and joy, thinking of the sufferings of our blessed Lord, which we would share out of love for him, write, O Brother Leo, that here, finally, is perfect joy.

And now, brother, listen to the conclusion. Above all the graces and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ grants to his friends, is the grace of overcoming oneself, and accepting willingly, out of love for Christ, all suffering, injury, discomfort and contempt; for in all other gifts of God we cannot glory, seeing they proceed not from ourselves but from God, according to the words of the Apostle, " What hast thou that thou hast not received from God? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou had not received it?" But in the cross of tribulation and affliction we may glory, because, as the Apostle says again, "I will not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen

To the praise and glory of Jesus Christ and his poor servant Francis. Amen.

Reflection and Sharing:

After the reading of the preceding text, take time to share your thoughts.

1. What do you retain from this text from Saint Francis on perfect joy?
2. So you think that it is possible to live perfect joy in our existences and in our everyday world today?
3. How can it be lived in our daily lives?
4. If it is possible, share an experience or experiences that have you experienced the joy, as Francis describes it.
5. Are our regional and local fraternities filled with this joy? If yes, how? If not, what can we do so that they are filled with it?

Reflection and Sharing:

Recall of the Rule and the General Constitutions

In 2018, we celebrated 40 years of our way of life, we now suggest doing a review together of the articles within it. Let us continue by looking at article 10 from **Chapter II, the Way of Life and the Apostolic Activity** and the General Constitutions article that pertains to it.

Rule

Article 10 United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions.

General Constitutions

Article 10 – CG - Article 12.1 Getting inspiration from the example and the writings of Francis and, above all with the grace of the Holy Spirit, each day the brothers and sisters faithfully live the great gift which Christ has given: the revelation of the Father. They should bear witness to this faith before all:

- In their family life;
- In their work;
- In their joys and sufferings;
- In their associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father;
- In their presence and participation in the life of society;
- In their fraternal relationships with all creatures.

Article 10 – GC – Article 12.2 With Jesus, obedient even to death, they should seek to know and do the will of the Father. They should give thanks to God for the gift of freedom and for the revelation of the law of love. In order to carry out the will of the Father, they should accept the help which is offered to them through the mediation of the Church by those who are constituted as authority in her and by their confreres. They should take on the risk of courageous choices in their life in society with decisiveness and serenity.

Reflection and Sharing:

Read each article of the Rule, followed by the article in the General Constitutions corresponding to it. Afterwards, share your thoughts on the content of these articles. Take the necessary time for this exercise.

Biblical Reflection:

Read the Gospel of Sunday following your meeting in order to be prepared to hear the celebrant's homily.

Share your thoughts on this gospel, using 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?

Life-Objective

In this month of November, during our fraternal meetings, share your joys according to the example from our patron saint Francis of Assisi...

Events and information from the Church and the Order

Recall the local and regional meetings and activities.

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

Suggestion: *There are numerous blessed that we never speak about...*

At home

It is strongly recommended that our meetings be prepared individually by going through the content of *Living Fraternity* proposed each month. Take notes of your thoughts and discoveries, when possible, during your reading of these texts. These preparatory notes will enrich our fraternal meeting as well as making it richer and more interesting at the same time.

During this month of November

Remember those of our brothers and sisters who have left us and who are now interceding to the Father on our behalf and the world.

Show sympathy to our brothers and sisters who have lost or will be losing a loved one.