

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: "Our older brothers and sisters, their life and journey are the history of our Order" ...

For this month of April 2021, we offer for reflection the theme of the year prepared by the CIOFS Family Commission . The theme proposes a look at our older members and their history and their journey in the Secular Franciscan Order. It is for our fraternities and responsible leaders an occasion to look and see our members who have lived a long journey in the Order..

Good reflection to everyone

APRIL 2021 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting if it happens)

The members can offer suggestions for a song by choosing it according to the theme and the month of the year. After the chosen song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

Biblical Reflection

Read the Gospel of Sunday (preceding or following) .

Share your thoughts on this gospel, : 1. How does it reach us personally? How can it be applied in our lives? What do we retain of it ...

Introduction to the following

Dear brothers and sisters, we are proposing for the year 2021 sharing our reflections on the manner in which we accompany our older brothers and sisters in our fraternities. Understanding our history through their lives and journeys allows us to be in continuity with God's plan for our fraternity, which continues in us. History always teaches us. It helps us to get to know each other. It brings us face to face with the figure of many brothers and sisters who have preceded us who have embodied, in the best possible way, the ideal of our Secular Franciscan vocation.

We suggest approaching this reflection using the help of three tools: SEE, JUDGE, ACT

1. SEE

Let's begin by learning about Herman's experience, who at a very young age, began his journey in a fraternity where there were many older sisters. He tells us ...

At the beginning of my life in the OFS, we reactivated the fraternity of St. Elisabeth of Hungary. It had been inactive for ten years. From the beginning 17 years ago, those 60 and older were in the majority. I heard my friends and people close to me say more than once: "You hang out with the old people!" I have always felt comfortable with them. They helped me walk all these years in this marvelous way of life. What a beautiful testimony!

We invite you now to read what an older sister expressed when we asked the following question:

What do you need from your fraternity?

Maria del Carmen Vespa, is an older sister, 83 years old. one of the first " Poor Ladies " in Bahia Blanca and was a pioneer of what later became an OFS fraternity, answered:

"My fraternity in Bahia Blanca, never left me orphaned in my needs. It always gives me what is necessary: support, understanding, complete availability. Despite the difference in ages and difficulties arising from health reasons – I am totally proud of my fraternity ... that continues to develop in the study of the Rule and its analysis ... and especially to emphasize the life of our founding saints, Clare and Francis, taking into account their virtues, their humility, love for the poor and sick brother ... their prayer."

2. JUDGE

The Word of God tells us:

***Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"
"I don't know, " he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Genesis 4:9***

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amos Lætitia* of Holy Father Francis tells us:

"Saint John Paul II asked us to be attentive to the role of the elderly in our families, because there are cultures which, "especially in the wake of disordered industrial and urban development, have both in the past and in the present set the elderly aside in unacceptable ways." The elderly help us to appreciate "the continuity of the generations," by their "charism of bridging the gap." Very often it is grandparents who ensure that the most important values are passed down to their grandchildren, and "many people can testify that they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents." Their words, their affection or simply their presence help children to realize that history did not begin with them, that they are now part of an age old pilgrimage and that they need to respect all that came before them. Those who would break all ties with the past will surely find it difficult to build stable relationships and to realize that reality is bigger than they are. "Attention to the elderly makes the difference in a society. Does a society show concern for the elderly? Does it make room for the elderly? Such a society will move forward if it respects the wisdom of the elderly."

In the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* also, Pope Francis invites us to reflect:

18. Some parts of our human family, it appears, can be readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence. Ultimately, "persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor and disabled, 'not yet useful' – like the unborn, or 'no longer needed' – like the elderly. We have grown indifferent to all kinds of wastefulness, starting with the waste of food, which is deplorable in the extreme".

19. A decline in the birthrate, which leads to the aging of the population, together with the relegation of the elderly to a sad and lonely existence, is a subtle way of stating that it is all about Sus, that our individual concerns are the only thing that matters. In this way, "what is thrown away are not only food and dispensable objects, but often human beings themselves".[14] We have seen what happened with the elderly in certain places in our world as a result of the coronavirus. They did not have to die that way. Yet something similar had long been occurring during heat waves and in other situations: older people found themselves cruelly abandoned. We fail to realize that, by isolating the elderly and leaving them in the care of others without the closeness and concern of family members, we disfigure and impoverish the family itself. We also end up depriving young people of a necessary connection to their roots and a wisdom that the young cannot achieve on their own.

On several occasions the current Pope has called us to reflect on this "throw-away culture." In this era, where changes are experienced in a dizzying way in the blink of an eye, the care and, especially the accompaniment of our elderly adults, makes us consider that we should stop and appreciate that through the love that we have for each other, we will be making the Gospel of Jesus a reality.

3. ACT

1. How are we living our relationships with the older adults of our fraternity and our society?
2. Are our older brothers/sisters neglected, set aside? How?
3. As Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters how can we accompany them during this stage of their lives?
4. Do we think about them when we plan as a fraternity? In our apostolates? In formation?

Sharing: Note your thoughts on the previous questions. Afterwards, communicate with the retired and active members of the fraternity by telephone or email. .

CELEBRATE:

Let us spend some time together in a space for prayer, giving thanks for the life shared.

PSALM 71:

Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds.
Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.

Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you have done great things.

Who is like you, God?

Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again;
from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up.

You will increase my honor and comfort me once more.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, you were born of the Virgin Mary, daughter of St. Joachim and Saint Ann.

Look down lovingly upon older people around the world.

Protect them! They are a source of enrichment for families, for the Church and for all of society.

Hold them! That when they grow old while home-bound, they may remain for their families strong pillars of the evangelical faith, custodians of noble ideals, living treasures of strong religious traditions.

Make them teachers of wisdom and courage that they may transmit the fruits of their mature human and spiritual experience to future generations.

Lord Jesus, help families and society to value the presence and role of grandparents.

May they never be ignored or excluded, but let them find respect and love.

Help them to live serenely and to feel welcomed during all the years of life that you grant them.

Mary, Mother of all the living, always take care of all our older brothers and sisters.

Accompany them during their earthly pilgrimage and through your prayers may all the families meet one day in our heavenly homeland, where you wait for all humanity so that we may receive the great embrace of a life without end. Amen

Reflection: on Article 13 of our Rule,

As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the first-born of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

Life-Objective:

In this month of April 2021, as we are still in this pandemic period, let us continue maintaining the links between our members through all possible means.

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

At home:

We ask the members of regional and local councils to find in their fraternities these older members who are ready to share their history and journey in the OFS. When you have contacted some of these members, willing to share their history, send an a summary to Marion Clorey, at mgclorey@gmail.com or to Debbie Tessier at deborahessier@gmail.com, members responsible for Communications and the National Bulletin. Thus, they can transfer them into our national bulletin.

We will thus get to better know our older members. Thank you for your attention and collaboration. .