

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Thankfulness ...

For this month of October – in this Autumn season where we cannot resume our fraternity meetings – as ongoing formation let us pause for a few moments of silence to enter more deeply into the presence of God. Then afterwards, we can deepen these words that often found in the psalms : “*Give Thanks to the Lord for He is good.*” *Doug Hagen brought* our attention to these words, both to be deepened and shared.

Good reflection and sharing

Recall: Our monthly meeting should favour an encounter with Christ. 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.

OCTOBER 2020 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting:

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

Introduction

The text in Matthew’s Gospel for the 28th Sunday of Ordinary time makes it clear that indeed, the king has sent his servants to summon us. By Baptism, we are initiated and made members of the Church. But now the burden is on us to listen to the King’s servant, to respond to the call and come to the feast. Now is the time to join the celebration. We must remember also that the invitation is pure graciousness on the part of God. Who knows how that invitation will appear? It could be in the form of a person with a terminal illness, inviting us to a new level of compassion and acceptance. It could be in the form of a displaced person or a person lost in homelessness, joblessness, abuse, violence or weighed down by Covid-19.

Reflection and Sharing:

After reading the preceding text, share your thoughts using the following questions:

1. How do I hear God’s invitation to the wedding feast? How will I respond?
2. Whom have I called? How do I invite others through my faith response?
3. How can we, as a Fraternity, echo the teaching of Jesus in this parable?

Take time to share that will allow the members to express themselves.

Continue the Reading:

The whole history of the relationships between God and His people is a love story. God confides to His people: “I love you with an everlasting love: (Jeremiah 31:3) And what does he ask of his people in return? “You shall love your God with your whole heart,” (Matthew 22:37)

God invites us to His banquet in many ways and not only through the voice of His Church and her priests. He invites us through that sister/brother who inspire us by good example through that unusual occurrence that sets us thinking, through that trial or that great joy which brings us to lift our eyes towards Him.

At times, this invitation can be inconvenient. Like those who were invited, we may find it easy to accept Christ in principle, and like them, find it less easy to accept the particulars – Christ’s call to serve on Council, to teach Sunday School, or to invite a co-worker to Church. The place where the rubber hits the road can be pretty gritty. We may be tempted to reserve our discipleship for the parts of life that don’t require us to change – that don’t force us out of our comfort zones.

Reflection and Sharing:

After reading the preceding text, share your thoughts using the following questions:

1. How should we clothe (prepare) ourselves to accept God’s invitation?
2. Do you know someone who seems to be “eternally thankful”? What makes this person unique? Can we learn from him/her.

Take time to share that will allow the members to express themselves

Biblical Reflection:

Read Matthew 22, 1-14 or 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?

Share the various ways we may express thanksgiving to God for his many blessings.

Reflection on the link with the Rule and the General Constitutions

We have a life project, a form of life, - our Rule. We suggest that you read Article 5 from **Chapter II, the Way of Life and Apostolic Activity**, Article 9.1 of the General Constitutions.

Article 5 of our Rule reminds us that “Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church and in liturgical activity.....” How can we not express constant thanksgiving?

Rule

Article 5

Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church and in liturgical activity. The faith of Saint Francis, who often said, « I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except his most holy body and blood,» should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life.

General Constitutions

Article 9.1

The spirituality of the secular Franciscan is a plan of life centered on the person and on the following of Christ, rather than a detailed program to be put into practice.

Sharing – suggestion

Describe some ways by which we express thanksgiving, i.e., song, obedience

Life – Objective:

It is important to give thanks. How often do we do this – to God – to family – the community – to Church?

Let us ask Mary to help us realize that everything is God’s gift. It takes humility to say: “thank you”. The heart of Mary, more than any other, is a humble heart, capable of accepting God’s gifts. Do we?

Sometime during this month of harvest and thanksgiving, take a walk and observe the colors. Pick up a leaf and let it remind you of love and beauty and vulnerability

Events and information from the Church and the Order

As all the gatherings or meetings are still restricted or postponed, let us reserve more time to pray even more for the Church, the Franciscan Family, the sick, the persons alone and the

families. We also pray for the doctors, nursing personnel and all the people who remain in service. May God give them health and strength. May their devotion inspire thankfulness in us and may we not hesitate in expressing it to them.

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

Suggestion for a closing prayer on thanksgiving.

Thank you, God, for all we have been given especially for the gift of eternal life in you made possible through the sacrifice of your son.

Thank you for the beauty of the earth and by the people you have sent into our lives.

Thank you for the work of your Spirit present within us.

Thank you for being with us even when we are not aware of your presence – in the darker moments when we feel a loss of a sense of hope. We know that as surely as night gives way to dawn each day, your steadfast love and presence is within us and will see us through these difficult days.

Thank you for your great love and care. Thank you for your abundant mercy and grace which sustains us and brings us back to you when we have fallen short of the person you have called us to be. As our OFS Rule, Article 7 says, our human frailty necessitates daily conversion.

Fill us with your peace and your joy, O God. Fill us with the compassion of your son, Jesus.

May we show our thankfulness to you by bringing this peace, joy and compassion into the lives of all we meet.

We give you all honour, all glory and all praise, O God, to, you who alone are good. Amen

Thank you to Marion Clorey for this beautiful prayer.

At home

``We suggest the following.

1. Firstly, be personally of the numerous gifts received during our lifetime and for which we must be grateful.
2. Afterward, write up a list of the material and spiritual benefits received throughout our life as well as the innumerable divine blessings by which we have been gratified and for which we should give thanks.
3. And, if we can and wish it, to share with a member of our local fraternity, what we have found.

May this time of pandemic serve to bring us closer to the members of our families and of our fraternities. Let us pray. May prayer, contemplation of nature and moments of solitude make us more aware of the benefits that we receive. May our Acts of thankfulness be multiplied in our daily activities. .