

CELSO PEDRO DA SILVA

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Means for a Presbyteral Spirituality

PRESENTATION

During the CNBB's General Assembly in 2004, the bishops worked out the "Letter to the Presbyters". It stimulates, among other forms of organization, the Presbyteral Fraternities (Nº27). There are several types of fraternity, each one characterized by its own spirituality. The Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity gathers secular priests according Charles de Foucauld's intuitions.

The core of this fraternity is one's personal friendship with Jesus in listening to His Word. Its members are called to surrender to God's will, abandoning themselves in their Beloved's Hands. They try to imitate Jesus in His simple life in Nazareth. They preach more through their testimony than through their words. "They shout the Gospel through their own life", as Brothers Charles says.

The Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity proposes a way of sanctity to the presbyters. It gathers some priests once a month for a day of prayer and life revision under to the Light of the Word. The Eucharistic Celebration and the silent worship before the Holy Sacrament nourish the brother's spirituality.

In a word which is marked by so much loneliness and so much isolation, it is important for the priests to meet in order to share their joy and sadness, their anguish and hope. May they experience a new quality of human relationship, based on trust and solidarity.

The fraternity helps in keeping firm the ideal of priestly life: the pastoral charity. With the brothers that have assumed the same obligation, the fraternity priests help one another to be good shepherds that give their own lives for their sheep.

This book about the Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity conveys this group's great spiritual lines. May it inspire the creation of new fraternities and thus help presbyters in the way of sanctity and one's obligation towards the humblest.

†EUGÈNE RIXEN

Bishop of Goiás

Introduction

The Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity edits regularly a formative and informative Bulletin to be used by diocesan presbyters and all those who sintonize with the spirituality of Father Foucauld, Brother Charles de Jesus. Two editions of nº 109, were made and quickly exhausted. Due to the interest, the fraternity members thought that it would be useful to make a publication in a “book” form and place it commercially at the disposal of whoever was interested.

It consists of a presentation of the fraternity. The text was work out from the Brazilian experience and presentations made by fraternities from the United States, Canada, France and Spain. There are certainly things that did not need to be written and things that should appear and don't. The text, thus, continues to be provisional, that is, incomplete, because the life of the fraternities is far more than a written text.

It is not advertising. It is a presentation of how secular priests try to perform their duties according to Brother Charles de Jesus' spirit.

We look with Brother Charles at wherever he looks, to Christ and to own brothers and sisters. The proposal involves much simplicity. Little structure, the wish to be together, mutual support, free and unpretentious presence, to be with Jesus in the lowest place. The transforming call of the Gospel is carried out through one's own life. We do not wish to be sleeping sentinels. We watch attentively in favour of the world before Our lord in the Holy Sacrament

Côn. Celso Pedro da Silva

1

The Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity

The Priests Fraternity originated from the search of a group of secular priests in the line of Charles de Foucauld's intuitions. Several families had already been born from these intuitions, in particular Jesus' Little Brothers. But the properly religious aspect was not convenient to priests who wanted to remain diocesan. Thus was born in 1951 The Jesus Caritas Priests Union, which in 1976 was named Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity.

The irradiation of Brother Charles' human and evangelical personality and his spiritual and evangelizing adventure are in the source of the fraternity and continue nowadays as inspires of an evangelical form facing life and the presbyteral function. Charles de Foucauld's intuitions have turned out to be simple and fruitful for our days. They have lost nothing of their present time interest. The fraternity continues to awaken interest among priests around the world. It has four thousand members today.

The characteristic aspects of Charles de Foucauld's charism are found in one's love towards Jesus, who is listened to in the Gospels, adored in the Eucharist; in the universal fraternity; in the wish to be near the disinherited fraternity; in the concern about those who are the farthest; in working with poor means; in the wish to be a priest in close union with the people, the presbytery and the bishop. Thus, centres of The "Jesus+Caritas" Priests Fraternity are:

- a) One's conscience of the gratuitousness of God's love that leads to a thankful answer in the love towards God for His sake.
- b) One's personal friendship with Jesus in listening to His Word: "Let us always go back to the Gospel"; in the unfinished and always reinitiated intention of the following - imitation, as to follow Him is to imitate Him in everything. It is instinctive, necessary: "When one loves, one imitates..."; in the Eucharistic worship: "The sacred Eucharist is Jesus, all Jesus"; in one's brother, specially the most abandoned: "To see Jesus in any human being".
- c) Our reconciliation with ourselves; in the sincere and calm acceptance of ourselves with our values and limitations: "Father, I surrender to Thee; in a brotherly life: "Make me be called brother instead of priest..."; in a contemplative look of all reality: "Let us receive all suffering as a gift from Beloved's Hand".
- d) A proper style in the way of evangelizing; in the imitation of Jesus of Nazareth's simple life. One shouts the Gospel through one's life in friendship and kindness; in a dynamism focused on the most abandoned: "And I have to do it for the forgotten ones, for the most abandoned"; in the poverty of poor means: "You have taken the lowest place, and no one will ever be able to take it from you".

In short: “All our life, however mute it may be, life in Nazareth, life of the desert, as public life ought to be a preaching of the Gospel through our example; all our existence, all our being should cry the Gospel over the roofs...”.

In order to accomplish what we look for, we use the fraternity “means”:

- a) Fraternity Day – A monthly gathering in small stable fraternities of five or six priests, who are fond of one another like brothers, assume one another mutually, express themselves freely and question one another fraternally, to perform the apprenticeship of prayer, to celebrate in the Eucharist what makes people’s lives today.
- b) Desert Day – each month.
- c) National retreat, once a year.
- d) Month of Nazareth, at least once in a lifetime.
- e) Time for daily personal prayer before the Holy Sacrament.
- f) A common directory, with respect for legitimate differences.

The fraternity functions are assumed without any loss to the diocesan functions. There is a minimum of structure that involves national and international coordinations, as well as a common treasury in several books. The connection among the fraternities is carried out through national and international bulletins.

2

Living in fraternity

“Because of Christ and the Gospel” is the motto of the fraternities. This means that our pledge is with Christ and with all the people in this world, in a spirit of universal fraternity. Our pledge consists of trying to be one another’s brother.

To form fraternities and live in fraternity means to lay bridges and shorten distances. It means to search with renewed zeal a new quality in human relationship. Jesus’ Word in Marcos sounds in our ears; “Among you it will not be thus”(Mc 10,43), because you will place signs of the kingdom in humanity’s time, you will show the world what a society without domination is. With hope, we begin what we wish it to happen. For this, we try to live in fraternity with the priests, the nearest of our fellow me, with whom we share the same daily weight. Our ministry is one of reconciliation. On the cross, Christ kills enmity in His own Self and overthrows the separating wall that causes people to be apart from one another (cf. Ef 2, 14-22). Living in fraternity we testify love’s possibilities in visible form. Certainly, every human problem is concentrated on the difficulty of relationship. Fraternity means to move in the opposite sense, establishing a new type of relationship.

The purpose of a fraternity goes beyond mere sociability or theological and pastoral discussions. In fraternity, the brothers try to sintonize with Jesus. Who came to fulfill His

Father's Will. Each fraternity is organized according to its member's necessities, but two points must be taken into consideration: Firstly, the group should take time so that everyone feels at ease and the defense mechanisms that block relationship be overcome. The second point is the group's stability. Without the members stability is difficult to reach a reasonable level of trust. The fraternity "doesn't work" if in each meeting the group is different. The stability of five to six members is needed.

3

Fraternity Day

It is on the Fraternity Day that "the grace of the meeting" occurs. The brothers feel solidary with the one another, and because of it they participate in the fraternity day. It is no longer just one more gathering. It is a string moment and a moment that is a source. There are brothers who travel a long way not to miss the fraternity day.

In practice, the gathering happens once a month. A lower frequency can weaken the quality of the group's reflexion. A greater frequency becomes pastorally impracticable. Normally the brothers gather at the beginning early in the morning and stay together until nightfall. Others prefer to begin on the day before, considering night and dawn a more opportune time for prayer. There are groups that begin with a time for solitude, others with talking or a meal in common. An interesting schedule of fraternity day for those who live near one another is to begin at 3 p.m.; 3:30 worship; 3:40 revision; 6 p.m. vespers and mass; 7 p.m. a snack; 7:30 study and communication; 9 p.m. departure. Whatever the time arrangement, the basic schedule always consists of worship, life revision, meditation of the Gospel.

What is expected is that the group be conscious of the importance of being together. Usually this day is reserved months before, and is given high priority. Each member tries to get to the meeting having prepared himself beforehand for the life revision by means of a desert day. This preparation shows the seriousness with which the brothers consider this time of grace. The fraternity meets Jesus in silence, in the World, in the Eucharistic Mystery and in each brother's life and ministry. The day's structure aims at creating a climate during which all this may happen.

One of the tasks of the one who is responsible for the fraternity is to remind the brothers two days before about the pledge the meeting. Yet what is important indeed is for each brother to have this day reserved.

4

Desert Day

The term “desert” comes from brother Charles’ spirituality and is a classic theme in the history of Christian spirituality. The desert day means “day of solitude”. The fraternity member tries to spend a day, of the least six hours, each month, completely apart from everything, alone with Our Lord, preferably without any reading matter or any other spiritual support. It is very useful to start the night before and spend the following day in solitude. Those who are faithful to the practice of the desert day discover the very great benefit that it brings to their Christian and ministerial life. The prayer of the day consists of surrendering our time to God, recognizing Him as the Absolute of our life. The desert is an intense letting go before the essential, together with a strong sense of God’s presence and worship. It is an experience of emptying of ourselves and that only God is a life’s Absolute. Suspending our activities, we experience our own poverty and total dependence on the Lord. We experience our fragility our situation as creatures. The desert is frequently a place of temptation. Some brothers are overcome by melancholy, inner desolation, aridity. It is then that we feel the acute necessity of the Holy Spirit to persevere with courage despite our weakness, and remain faithful. Humanly speaking, the greatest temptation may be to search us immediate results of the desert day.

The desert is not firstly A physical place. Nevertheless, the simpler and without distractions the environment is the more favourable the conditions for a profitable day. This is important, as it is important to start the day with an open and generous spirit. Some look for a place in the countryside, others go to a desert beach or take long walks. Others simply stay in an empty room, where they spend the day. Our life revision is prepared in prayer on desert day, reflecting and interpreting in faith the present understanding of our spiritual life.

5

Month of Nazareth

The month of Nazareth offers the brothers a wider and deeper experience of fraternity life. It is an opportunity for them to put into practice the fraternity values and means. The month is intended to be occasion for one to experience in an intense and communitarian form what the fraternity proposes to be. Hence the environment of simplicity, of silence and contemplative prayer, of meditation of the Gospel, of co-responsibility on the life revision carried out with time and attention, of the study on brother Charles’ life and the fraternity directory, of manual work in the spirit of Nazareth. In Brazil we have our annual retreat at the beginning of January. Those who do the month of Nazareth participate in his retreat and continue until the end of the month, normally in the same place. The month remains an ideal

for all the fraternity members. Knowing that the fraternity and the region profit when one of its members participates in the month, a common effort is needed to support the participating priest and give him the opportunity to be absent from his place of work. To participate in the month is indispensable for someone to be a full member of the priestly fraternity. One's personal organization is also needed. To foresee along the year the possible costs and a substitute, if it be a case. To participate in the month is a good and healthy way of spending one's holidays.

Brother Charles' intuitions and the means proposed by the fraternity need to be experimented with time and with the brothers who share the same ideals. The month of Nazareth makes the fraternity acquire universal dimensions and not to be mere theory. We are connected to a family and we need to "eat a kilogram of salt together" to say that we know how to get on with one another. A long relationship brings brothers closer and universalizes the charism. During this time of prayer and companionship we find ourselves on the same way and become encouragement and support to one another. I know I am not alone in this adventure. There are others with the same convictions following the same way.

6

Meditation of the Gospel

The Gospel plays a very important role in the fraternity. Brother Charles approached God's Word with simplicity and hope. The fraternity members devote approximately fifteen minutes a day to meditative reading of the Holy Scriptures. This contact with Jesus in His Word leads naturally to contemplation and worship. To pray with the Gospel is part of each one's life of prayer and the common sharing of The Gospel is an integral part of the fraternity's day. The meditative reading is not an exegetic exercise of intellectual understanding, although this may be necessary sometimes. To meditate the Word is first to place oneself attentively to listen to what the Lord says, "for the Lord does not do anything without revealing His secret to his servants, the prophets" (Am 3,7).

The fraternity is a great help for one to live the Gospel, not to treat it as our property, take it seriously in its message of love, simplicity and poverty, because we are walking with brothers who devote themselves in faith to live the radicality of the revealed Word. Even when we fail, the fraternity helps us to see failure under the light of a redeeming God's love. We talk about the Gospel for its privileged position in the life of the Church, without, however, excluding the whole of the Holy Writ, because "it is they who testify about me" (Jo 5,39).

To meditate on the Holy Scriptures in fraternity depends on each group. Some read a chosen passage together. Then they separate and remain in silent meditation for a while. They return and share the fruit of the Word in an oral reflexion. The sharing in fraternity is an act of contemplation of the Word that illuminates our lives and speaks to the inner of each one of us. Whatever may be the means we find to let the Word speak to us, we are always paying attention to Brother Charles' exhortation: "Let's us go back to the Gospel; if we don't live the Gospel, Jesus doesn't live in us".

7

Eucharistic Worship

The Eucharist, Jesus' living presence, was Brother Charles' life centre. We are presbyters and preside over the Eucharistic prayer of God's people. As we deal with the mysteries of faith, we can make a personal experience of Jesus' paschal mystery, transforming it into the rhythm and pulsation of our lives and our ministry. This experience is primordially done in the celebration of mass, the prayer of Christ's resurrected body and in the ministerial service performed for God's people. The fraternity invites us to remain in this mysterious presence in silent and contemplative worship. To Brother Charles, the central mystery of Eucharist was clear and deep: Jesus giving His life for His people. This unique offer becomes present in a symbolic but effective form in the simplicity of our silent presence before Jesus. The hour spent in an attentive prayer before the Eucharist Presence prepares and prolongs the liturgy of the mass with God's people. René Voillaume describes this reality as follows: "To live on the Eucharist means to surrender on behalf of the people and to become, for them, in love and in Eucharist contemplation, worthy food". In the same line of Brother Charles, convictions, the fraternity members consider the time devoted to worship is an integrating the working day. Worship is part of the daily programme. To it, the time which is left, if there is such time, is not destined. One hour before the Holy Sacrament, every day, is included in the daily schedule of the fraternity members. The experience of God in Brother Charles' life was so striking that he understood he would not be able to live unless it were for God. To be near God would be a logic and coherent attitude if it were not above all an attitude of love and friendship. Jesus is very real for Brother Charles. He fell towards his Beloved Lord Jesus a loving friendship that leads him to wish to be near Him, in His presence. Our presence before the Holy Sacrament wishes to be this presence of love and friendship. The presence is not perceptible, it is sometimes arduous, but it is one's brave perseverance that something new begins to happen in our life. We have to try.

8

Life revision

One's life revision fills a central place in the fraternity. In a disciplined and deliberate form, it helps us to discern the synergy of way our will with God's will, our decisions with God's design for the world. The founding theological principle of life revision is well expressed in *Gaudium et Spes II*: "God's people, led by the faith with which they believe to be conducted by the Lord's Spirit, which permeates the universe, make an effort to discern in the happenings, demands and hopes in which they participate, together with men of today, the true signs of God's presence or will are. Because faith illuminates everything with a new light, and makes us know the divine design about man's integral vocation, and thus guides the spirit towards fully human solutions". Life's revision bases itself on two fundamental truths: (1) God acts in history and in a marking way upon determined events of our lives; (2) The Holy Spirit lets Himself be

known in human relationships, because “God is the love with which we love our brother”, as St. Augustin says.

Brother Charles’ intuition about the saving quality of Jesus’ life in Nazareth sheds a new light upon the value of life’s simplest gestures. Nazareth is the ordinary and the hidden of all that makes our day-to-day life. It is there that we meet Jesus. In each event, even confusing and full of contradictions, God calls us to discover Him, to walk with Him, many times without our knowing where we are going to.

Life’s revision is not accomplished upon generalities nor does it intend to be a psychological analysis of a situation. It is not about a detailed examination of conscience but an oral exam of Christ’s work inside us. It is in reality a common effort of discernment about a concrete event, a decision to be made, a new opportunity which is being opened for someone. Revision in fraternity is, in an ultimate analysis, a contemplative act of the Holy Ghost’s action in us.

Because of the deeply contemplative dimension of life revision, we should prepare it well in prayer. It must be prepared on desert day and at the time of worship that precedes the revision. To expose to the fraternity, without due preparation, events of one’s own existence diminishes drastically the possibilities of a fruitful revision. The latter runs the risk of becoming a mere exposition of facts, without connection and without substratum and runs the graver risk of generating misunderstandings because of judgments without basis. We remain on the surface without reading life in its inner side.

Each fraternity has its own way of proceeding to a revision. In general, each one, without any special order, briefly presents what he prepared on desert day or during some other time of prayer. The others offer their support and dispose themselves to help their brother with elucidations, questionings and even provocations. The revision presupposes that whoever makes it wishes to be questioned in order to get rid of illusions and false securities. It is important for the brother in revision to say what he needs and what he expects from the group at that moment. Time should be distributed so that everyone has the opportunity to expose his situation, but it may happen that a brother needs more time and even all the time. It is natural that at the start there may be a certain anxiety. We may be afraid of not being accepted as we are. We may think that we have nothing to offer to our brothers. We may be afraid of offending somebody. All of this will be gradually overcome. With attention and reverence to each one, we help ourselves to live the freedom to which our Lord has set us free.

The revision nourishes the wish for openness and transparency and leads the brothers to understand more deeply and choose more freely one’s love for God and one’s following of Jesus with growing generosity. Joining a fraternity we are saying that we need other, we are not self-sufficient. We do not want to prevent our brothers from trusting us and helping us. Our faith in Christ’s presence and in His spirit among us help us to share with our brothers our own feelings and intuitions, however surpassed they may seem to be. If there is trust, the revision is accomplished.

9

Poverty

In the fraternity we do not make vows, not even the poverty one, but we accept the challenges of the Gospel. As we live in an impoverished country and in a nation of deep social contrasts, we are not rich, but we don't live in daily insecurity either. In a country where it is possible for one to pass through the stone age to high technology on the same day, we recognize that material poverty is subordinate to the legitimate obligation of our prebysterical ministry. The performing our ministry in direct contact with our people's life leads us to distinguish between poverty as virtue and poverty as social disgrace. We are convinced that the starting point to experience poverty as virtue dwells within inner freedom, freedom of the heart, which makes us generous servants in a world of contradictions. Consequently, Brother Charles' charism leads us to an effective commitment towards the impoverished, the less loved, the forgotten and the excluded. The awareness of the world of poverty in the international fraternity keeps each brother's sensibility alive and is a constant challenge for all.

The fraternity helps us not to choose places, to accept what nobody wants, to be available when we are needed. Our poverty of secular priests is not circumscribed to a geographical place. Poverty, in an ultimate analysis, is within us, in our limitations, and the living in poverty as virtue does not depend on where we live, but on the bridges we are able to throw from our place. We ourselves are poorly equipped to carry out Jesus' mission on the Earth and the means we have are poor due to our choice.

The fraternity also helps a brother to discern about the use of money. It is not a matter of asking permission for spending money, but of questioning or at least asking oneself about the validity of certain costs. In this spiritual dimension, Brother Charles' life remains a source of intranquility and discomfort, a true stimulus towards freedom.

10

Leisure

Rodeos are in fashion. There are towns that stand out due to rodeo events with a great deal of public and celebrities. Ours brothers in USA used this expression for a practice that could be interesting also among us. They called "rodeo" a healthy time of leisure. What name would it have among us?

Here is a psalm verse many times repeated to stimulate community life "How good and agreeable the conviviality among brother is". In order to make the fraternity be a contemporary experience of companionship and sharing, it is healthy to organize an atmosphere of leisure, so that the priests may spend some time with their colleagues of any part of the country in activities like football, volley, swimming, ping-pong, walks, letters, chatting. But each day is marked by an hour before the Holy Sacrament, with the celebration

of the Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist. It is a matter of simple holidays, according to Brother Charles' spirit, and the fraternity life is an example for someone who is interested in participating in a group.

This time of leisure is salutary to the very fraternity in the revitalization of its members and in its advertising. It is an opportunity to invite other priests, who will get into contact with the fraternity in an agreeable way. Then we will take them to the desert! If we work with poor means in a society of competition and power, we can also organize a time of healthy leisure in a permissive society that affects all of us. The organization of leisure is part of the pastoral work. Jesus took his disciples to quiet places for them to rest.

The time devoted to prayer appear as an integral part of our day. Prayer does not have holidays. It harmonizes with our activities, whatever they may be this practice is included in the spirit of Nazareth, which considers the saving value of all the acts of human life, above all the simplest and commonest. They are theological places.

11

Brother Charles' place in the Fraternity

Many priests look for a fraternity for presbiteral companionship, for mutual support, for spirituality. Brother Charles is only discovered later. Secular priests characterize their spirituality as not belonging to any "school". If there is a school, it will be the one of the disciple, discovered in the Word and in the Holy Sacrament and lived among the people.

For this reason it is understandable that a priest be cautious when introduced to a recent figure as Charles de Foucauld and the movement that resulted from his charism.

Nevertheless, those who belong to the fraternity are aware of how much Brother Charles has helped them to deepen their diocesan spirituality. In fact, the ministerial life of a secular priest has a profound contemplative dimension, it is marked by the Gospel's simplicity, it is free as the desert Bedouin is, it occupies the last place, which is the place of the last, it is limited by territorial dimensions because it is universal, it is inserted within the paschal mystery always renewed in the Eucharist.

Brother Charles started as a monk, but took orders as a secular priest. He wished for a community of brothers and lived always alone. His convent was the world, his community MuslimTuareg. The secular priests have something of monks. In general they live alone, without being lonely. Their community is the people. Sometimes few people in proportion to the number of inhabitants of the place, and not always the most expressive. The others remain

at a distance. In some places we face strong opponents. There is something of desert and silence in our life.

We are ministers of the Querigma. We announce God's Word opportunely and inopportunely through recent means of communication and, in the horizon, Brother Charles shouts the Gospel through his own life. His silent and meaningful presence is a constant challenge to our "ordained" ministry. Together with bishops and deacons we belong to the "clergy".

We are public men and exert leadership. We are respected and sometimes people kiss our hands. In the horizon, Brother Charles discovers the range of the hidden life of Nazareth. He identifies himself with Christ in the failure of all his projects and falls down to earth like the seed. And then he gives a lot of fruit! The builders of "koinonia" meet their universal brother that lives hidden in the loneliness the last place.

We preside the prayer of God's people and occupy a place of distinction near Our Lord's table. With us is Brother Charles, who show us the value of "being present". We are together, but above all we are in the Presence of our Beloved and Lord Jesus. Even If we preside, our presence is brotherly and free.

Brother Charles remains a prophet for the fraternities He inspires us with his charism and provokes us in his total surrender to God's Will. His intuitions, reflected in fraternity, show us the concrete life of the Gospel and free us from desires that dishonor and sadden a priest's life.

Father de Foucauld was a man of his time. Attractive and enigmatic, with a style of his own, the result of deep convictions of faith.

In the Fraternity Father de Foucauld occupies the place of an older brother, but a brother of heroic virtues. His life awakens one enthusiasm and his way of being presence of the Church in an adverse world is stimulating for our pastoral action. As we discover his figure, our love grows towards this person, who is so simple, so common and so special. He does not invite us to look at him or imitate him. He invites us to look at where he looks. His look is fixed on His Beloved Lord Jesus. In this Jesus he sees all the people and all the realities of life. That is why he is a universal brother.

12

Prophetism

Our brothers who participate in the assembly in Cairo introduce their message to all the members of the priestly fraternity mentioning the well-known phrase of Brother Charles, written to the Trappist abbot Dom Martin, in his letter of February 7, 1902: "We have no right to be sleeping watchmen, dumb dogs, and indifferent shepherds".

The 1976, n.18 Directory, mentioning the people among whom we live and with whom we relate, reminds us that sometimes “taking a clear and public stand and even effecting indispensable ruptures are necessary”. And then it mentions Brother Charles’ thought “Do not be sleeping sentinels, mute dogs”. It is, then, a thought which is already known and assumed in the priestly fraternity. It is a part of our aims not to be sleeping watchmen, dumb dogs, and indifferent shepherds or, positively, in the fraternity each one of us tries to be an awake sentinel, a noisy dog, a pledged shepherd.

A sentinel has the function of watching, guarding, and thus should be alert all the time. In our case this means 24 hours of donation. Being devoured by the Gospel, there is no ministerial pause. We are noisy dogs, barking to alert, reacting to some unwelcome presence, sometimes biting. However, we do not react because of the violence of instinct. We are intelligent and rational. What we do not want is to be quiet when we need to speak. Personal interests, career interests will not stop us from giving alarm when justice is compromised, when mercy is abandoned.

An indifferent shepherd does not care about his sheep’s luck. A pledged shepherd is all the time involved in concrete actions in favour of concrete people and the whole of society. His vision is wide, enlarging, involving. His actions are constructive and creative. His mind is constantly conceiving and his heart brings out projects of life. He marks his presence, is there, responds. He lives for his sheep. An indifferent shepherd takes care of himself and his own prestige, and does not hesitate to sacrifice his sheep to save his place in the sun.

In his letter to Dom Martin, Brother Charles reveals his thought about the human being’s dignity and his way of saying what he thinks. It seems that Dom Martin, in a letter, had advised him to avoid slaves’ rebellions and escapes and to comfort the enslaved with the hope of the future freedom in heaven. Brother Charles answer in a very respectful way, by saying: “Thank you for your answer, so clear and complete, about slavery. Far from preaching to them about rebellion and escape, I tell them: patience and hope. God allows your suffering for your repentance and celestial glory. Pray to God and sanctify yourselves. To those who look for God’s kingdom, the rest is given to them in addition. Man’s slavery and earthly land pass quickly as life does. Think about Satan’s slavery and the celestial land”.

Such words sound very badly to our Latin-American ears, at least so they sounded up to now. But it is in his continuation that Brother Charles reveals himself: “However, having said that, and having comforted them as well as possible, it seems to me that our obligation is not finished. It is necessary to say, or for someone to exist, whose duty is to say: *non licet, vae vobis, hypocritae*, who brand on seals and everywhere ‘liberty, equality, fraternity, human rights’, and strengthen the slave’s chains; you condemn to the galleys those who falsify your bank documents, and allow children to be stolen from their parents and sold publicly; you punish someone for the theft of a chicken and allow that of a man (in fact, in these regions, children who are born free are violently and suddenly wrenched from their parents)... We should not get involved in the temporal government, no one is more convinced about this than I, but is necessary for us to ‘love justice and hate iniquity’, and when the temporal government commits a grave injustice against those of whom, in a certain way, we are in charge (I am the only priest of the Mayor’s Office in a range of 300 km), we must say it, because we represent,

on earth, justice and truth, and have no right to be sleeping sentinels, dumb dogs, indifferent shepherds. I ask myself, in a word (being in accordance, as we are, about the conduct to be followed with the slaves) if it is not necessary to raise our voice, directly or indirectly, to make known in France this injustice and this authorized theft of slavery in our regions to say, or make it be said: this is ended, *non licet*. I have told the Apostolic Mayor about it. It may be enough. Far from me the wish to speak to write, but I do not want to betray my children, not to do necessary for Jesus, Alive in their members; it is Jesus that is in this painful situation. 'What you do to one of these small ones, you do to me'. I do not want to be a bad shepherd, a dumb dog. I am afraid of scarifying Jesus for my rest and my great taste for tranquility my natural laziness and shyness".

13

Starting

It depends on your making it happen!

If you want to start a group of the Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity, get some friends together for a moment of prayer and start working gradually on the intuitions and values of the fraternity. Get in touch with the national responsible or with some fraternity priest.

The annual retreat and the month of Nazareth are considered strong times. The experience of the fraternity priests says that the month of Nazareth is an excellent school of introduction to Brother Charles of Jesus' spirit and charism.

The great expansion of the Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity in all the continents shows the necessity and the utility of brotherly groups of prayer and sharing. Brother Charles' spirituality is lived by women, men laymen and religious people in ecumenical fraternities, extraterritorial ones, parochial ones, in the country, in cities. The priestly fraternity is designed specifically, though not exclusively, for secular priests.

Gather some friends together for an hour of silent prayer before the Holy Sacrament. Conclude it with an informal chatting. Latter introduce a time of meditation on the Gospel. Afterwards it will be the time to begin reading something about Father de Foucauld. On the day you meet, you start introducing a time of desert and gradually, in this desert, preparing a small life revision. Later on you will make a whole day of desert and then it will be possible to begin a true life revision.

The contact with the little brothers and little sisters or the lay people's Fraternities is always beneficial. Whoever takes the initiative of starting a fraternity is willing to make visits, strengthen bonds and remind people about commitments, specially the one of fraternity day.

14

Listening

Truth liberates

I want to be a free priest, someone who is not afraid of losing everything to obtain the only necessary one. I want to believe in your Word, Lord, follow You and discover a little more the true freedom and the joy of being saved.

God's Will.

I do not want to build my life upon the desire of owing, dominating, or imposing, but upon the desire of making of all my life a life that is according to God's Will, to Which I want to surrender myself with all my heart, all my strength, all my spirit. Each day, a little more, I want to be united to You, Lord, the only true God. When I get up and lay down, when I walk and when I work, when I suffer and when I struggle, when I feel threatened, when I am tested, may You Peace that goes beyond all, guard my heart and my thoughts in You, Lord Jesus. Amen.

To go farther

Like a brother priest, with a friend's look, I feel happy to welcome whoever wants to share with me.

15

Jesus' Little Sisters

Following Brother Charles of Jesus' inspiration, little sister Madalena de Jesus started the fraternity of Jesus' Little sisters on September 8, 1939. Little sister Madalena said: "Before being religious, be human and Christian".

The little sisters are present in the five continents. They are nowadays 1.334 little sisters, spread in 68 countries. In 1952 come the first ones to arrive in the Latin continent, to live with the Tapirapé Indians of the Mato Grosso, in Brazil, and in other countries.

They are women devoted to God and to their brothers and sisters, in a contemplative life, among the impoverished, for them to walk together towards God, in a way of equality, fraternity and justice. It is a contemplative life immersed in this world that God loves.

The apostolate or the pastoral work of the little sisters consists in making God's Word happen, walking each day with their brothers and sisters, sharing daily their lives, stories, clamours and their struggle for a truly worthy and human life.

The house where they live is called “fraternity”. In small groups of three or four, the community is built, by means of mutual welcome, of weaknesses and limits, richness and gifts. It is worthwhile getting in touch with them. You discover a world full of new possibilities.

The following are some addresses for contact:

- Rua A1 N50 Casa 4 – Betânia – 30590-280 – Belo Horizonte, MG
Tel.: (31) 3374-9993 e e-mail: dolocas@yahoo.com.br
- Rua Almir Silva Luz, 235 – 46670-000 – Jussiapé, BA
- Caixa Postal 01 – 78652-000 – Confresa, MT
- Rua 2 Qd.2 Lt. 16 N 10 – Estrela Dalva – 74475-294 – Goiânia, GO

16

CHRONOLOGY

Mains events of

Brother Charles de Foucauld's life

Youth

1858 – September 15. In Strasburg, viscount Charles Eugène de Foucauld is born.

1864 – March: his mother dies. Charles is 5 years old. September: his father dies. Charles and his younger sister, Marie, are brought up by their paternal grandfather.

1870/71 – After the Franco-Germanic war, their grandfather registers them as French. Charles is 12 years old.

1872/75 – From 14 to 17 years old, he studies in Nancy and Paris, with the Jesuits.

Army

1876 – When he is 18 years old, he is admitted at St-Cyr military Academy.

1878 – He becomes sublieutenant at Saumur's military Academy, at 20 years of age.

1880 – His regiment, the 4th of the Hussars, is sent to the Setif, in Algeria, giving him the first taste of Africa. Charles is only 22 years old.

1881 – March. He is dismissed with loss of office due to "indiscipline and flagrant bad conduct". He withdraws to Evian and lives there "with the vague restlessness that comes from a bad conscience that, although almost asleep, is not entirely dead".

1881 – May. Bon Mama's rebellion in the south of Oran. Having been reconducted to do Army at his own request, he takes part in the campaign for eight months. The Arabs make a deep impression in him. When the insurrection is over, he asks permission to make an excursion to the south and study Arabic. Not obtaining the permission, he leaves service and goes to Argel to prepare his trip to Morocco.

1883 – After 15 months of meticulous preparation, during which he learns Arabic and Hebrew, Foucauld, at 25 years old, makes a cognition trip to Morocco, disguised as a poor rabbi.

1885 – Lives near Bordeaux. In May he receives a gold medal from the French Geographical Society.

1885 – In September he is 27 years old and until January of 1886 he undertakes an exploration in the south of Algiers and south of Tunisia. This route takes him to Tيارت (region of Oran), Gabes (Tunisia) via Laghouat, Ghardaia and Mzab, El Golea, Ouargla, Touggourt, Souf, Nefta, Tozeur, Gafsa.

1886 – 27 years old. In February he goes to live in Paris, Rue de Miromesnil 50, to prepare his work “Reconnaissance au Maroc”, which is published in 1888.

No bed in the flat. Charles de Foucauld sleeps on a carpet, wrapped in a burnous. His soul yearns to find God. He goes to several churches and one day he prays: “God, if You exist, make me know You”.

1888 – End of October. Charles has just turned 30 years old. At St. Augustin’s church, he goes to confession and receives holy communion from the hands of Father Huvelin, to whom he had been sent by Mme. de Bondy. “As soon as I believed that there was a God, I understood that I could not do anything else than to live for Him. My religious vocation dates from the same moment as my faith: God is so great. There is so much difference between God and all that is not Him”.

1888 – November to February 1889. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He visits the sacred places and stops twice in Nazareth.

1889 – Four closed retreats: with the Bénédictins de Solesmes, in the Trappist monastery at Soligny, still with the Trappist in Notre-Dame-des-Neiges in Ardèche and with the Jesuits at Villa Manrèse, in Clamart.

1890 – 31 years old. January. He joins the Trappist monastery of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges. He assumes the name of Brother Marie-Albéric. “Pray for me, I will pray for you, for your family”, he writes to his sister, Marie. “One does not forget oneself when one gets closer to God”.

1890 – 31 years old. June. He goes to the Trappist monastery of Akbès, in Syria.

1891 – 32 years old. July. After having renounced the Geographical Society, Brother Marie-Albéric gives up, as well, his post as a reserve officer. “This act has given me pleasure; on January 15 I felt behind all my possessions, but these miserable hindrances remained, my position, my small fortune, and it gave me pleasure to throw them out of my window”.

1892 – 33 years of age. February. Brother Albéric takes the vows and receives the tonsure. He begins to think whether he could accomplish in the Trappist order his ideal of poverty, objections and penitence. “If they ask me to study, I will explain that I have a fine taste to be buried up to my neck in corn and in weeds and an extreme repugnance towards everything that may lead me far from this last place to which I have come in objection and in which I want to dive ever more, following our Lord’s example – but, in the end, I will obey”.

1893 – 35 years of age. September/October. In his correspondence he manifests for the first time the idea of a new congregation of monks living exclusively on the work of their hands and living truly Our Lord of Nazareth's life.

1896 – 37 years of age. June. He drafts his first plan for a religious congregation.

1896 – 38 years of age. October. After having spent a month in the Trappist monastery of Staoueli, Brother Marie-Albéric is sent to Rome, where he has to study for three years. After three months, the Rev. General Priest dispenses him from the vows and gives freedom to follow his vocation according to his own lights.

Nazareth

1897 – 38 years old. February 14. He embarks in Brindisi to the Holy Land.

1897 – May. He becomes an employee of the Claressian Sisters in Nazareth.

1898 – He takes two days to go to Jerusalem on foot.

1900 – 41 years old. He wants to buy the hill of the Blessednesses and live there as an eremite priest. His plan does not work.

1900 – August. He returns to France with the decision of preparing himself for the priesthood.

Béni-Abbès

1901 – 42 years old. June 9. He takes orders at the seminar of Viviers.

1901 – September 5. Incardinado at the Diocese of Viviers, he is liberated to live alone or with others at the Diocese of Sahara. He is going to live in the south region of Oran, near the Morocco border, with the aim of preparing the evangelization of Morocco.

1901 – 43 years old. October 29. Father de Foucauld celebrates mass for the first time at Béni-Abbès and buys a piece of land to build a fraternity.

1902 – January 9. He rescues his first slave, whom he will call "Joseph du Sacré-Coeur". In this year he exchanges a lot of correspondence with Dom Guérin, Apostolic Mayor of Sahara, about slavery.

1902 – May 7. Battle of Tit, won by Lieutenant Cotteneat, against Tuareg tribes.

1902 – August 14. Solemn baptism of Abdel-Jesus (Jesus servant) a negro 3 year-old boy, rescued in July.

1902 – September 14. Acquisition and Libertation of two slaves, one of them Paul Embarek, aged 15, who will later be a witness of the Priest's death in Tamanrasset.

1903 – 44 years old. Father de Foucauld dreams about going to Morocco and establishing a fraternity there. He wishes to have companions, from whom he would ask three things: 1) to be ready to have his head cut off; 2) to be ready to die of hunger; and 3) to obey him, despite his indignity.

1903 – June. Given the impossibility of getting into Morocco, he reveals to father Huvelin, Dom Guérin and Commandant Laperrine his plan of Evangelizing the Tuareg region.

1904/05 – January. While accompanying military columns that move along the desert, he gets in touch with populations of the south and centre of Sahara. He goes to Béni-Abbès, In-Salah, Aoulef, El Golea, Ghardaia. During the way he studies Tamachek, the Tuareg language, and begins to translate the Gospel into this same language.

1905 – 46 years old. April. He finishes his meditations about the Holy Gospels.

1905 – May. Authorized by Father Huvelin and by Dom Guérin, he takes part in a trip to Hoggar.

1905 – June. In Ouzzel, on the way to Tamanrasset, he knows Moussa agg Amastan, amenokal of the Ahaggar tribe.

Tamanrasset

1905 – 46 years old. August. He arrives at Tamanrasset. He begins to live in a "zeriba", a hut made of junk, still used nowadays by the inhabitants of Hoggar. Later he builds a house made of bricks and beaten clay. He decides to live during each year 6 months in Tamanrasset, 3 months in Béni-Abbès and 3 months travelling.

1906 – 48 years old. September to November. He returns to Béni-Abbès. He receives General Lyautey's visit.

1906 – December. At Maison Carrée, central house of the White Fathers, Dom Guérin gives him a companion, Father Michel. He allows him to expose the Holy Sacrament for at least three hours, whenever there are two worshippers.

1906 – December 25. Christmas in Béni-Abbès.

1907 – January. The two monks leave towards Hoggar. Father Michel stays at In-Salah, not continuing his trip for health reasons. Later, Father de Foucauld joins the Arnaud-Cortier's mission. He remains in Tamanrasset during the month of April and follows to Tanezrouft and East Adrar.

1907 – 48/49 years old. July up to Christmas 1908. His second stay in Tamanrasset, during which he gets back to his regular style of monastic life. He spends eleven hours of work per day in the Tamachek lexical edition and its grammar.

1908 – January 31. He obtains authorization to celebrate mass without an acolyte.

1908 – 50 years old. November. He finishes the translation of 6 thousand lines of Tuareg poetry.

1908 – December to March 1909. At his family's request, his first travel to France. Dom Bonnet, Bishop of Viviers, and Dom Livinhac, General-Superior of the White Priests, approve the statutes of the "Union of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart"-the "pious union for the evangelization of the colonies".

1909 – March 18. He stops at El Abiodh Sidi Cheikh, where the first fraternity will be founded in 1933.

1909 – June up to January of 1911. Third stay at Tamanrasset.

1910 – 51 years old. May. News of Dom Guérin's death, at 37 years of age. His comment on the occasion: "It was a great loss for me; but one cannot be selfish. It is fair for the justs to receive their reward.

1911 – May to April of 1913. Fourth stay at Tamanrasset. He continues the lexicon.

1911 – 53 years old. December 13. At Asekrem, he writes about his last wish: "I want to be buried at the place where I die and to stay there until the resurrection. I forbid my body to be transported to another place, taking me away from where the Good Lord wanted me to end my pilgrimage".

1912 – Conquest of Morocco by Gouraud, Lyautey, Mangin.

1913 – 54/55 years old. April/November. Father de Foucauld takes Ouksem agg Ouragh, chief of the Dag Ghali tribe, to France.

1914 – 56 years old. September. At hearing the news of the declaration of war in Europe, he writes to Mme. De Bondy, after many struggles of conscience: "You will understand: I suffer for being so far away from our soldiers and from the border: but it is my clear duty to stay here to help the population to remain calm".

1915 – March. Insurrection of Arab tribes in the south of Tripolitania.

1915 – April/May. The priest talks to Captain Duclos, new Commander of the Tidikelt Saharan Company, stationed at In Salah, about the situation in Hoggar and the movements of the Moroccan and Senussi invaders.

1916 – 57 years old. April. The French fort in Djanet falls, taken by Lybian attackers. "After this victory, the Senussi have free way to get as far as here". \captain de la Roche had built, in Tamanrasset, a 16 metre-long fort to protect the Tuareg population in case of an attack. Father Charles went there in June.

1916 – November 28. He finishes copying Tuareg poems.

1916 – 58 years, 2 months and 18 days of age. December 1st. Murdered.

CHARLES DE FOUCAULD'S SPIRITUAL FAMILY

Today	11 religious Congregations	8 Associations of Spiritual Life
• Jesus Caritas' Community	Little Sister of the Gospel	Laymen Institute AEPS
• Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart	Little Brothers of the Cross	Little Brothers of the Gospel
• Jesus' Little Sisters	Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity	Little Sisters of Nazareth
• Charles de Foucauld's Solidaty	Charles de Foucauld's Fraternity	Charles de Foucauld's Secular Fraternity
• Jesus' Little Brothers	Little Brothers of the Incarnation	Charles de Foucauld's Groups
• Little Sisters of the Incarnation	Little Sisters of the Heart of Jesus	Jesus' Community



Jesus caritas Fraternity

"If the grain of wheat that falls on the earth does not die, it will remain alone; but if it dies, it will bear a lot of fruit"! (Jo 12,24)

SUMMARY

Presentation

Introduction

1. Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity
2. Living in Fraternity
3. Fraternity Day
4. Desert Day
5. Month of Nazareth
6. Meditation of the Gospel
7. Eucharistic Worship
8. Life Revision
9. Poverty
10. Leisure
11. Brother Charles' place in the Fraternity
12. Prophetism
13. Starting
14. Listening
15. Jesus' Little Sisters
16. Chronology

Charles de Foucauld's Spiritual Family

