

**GENERAL GUIDELINES  
FOR THE REALIZATION  
OF THE MONTH OF NAZARETH**  
*(Version from February 28, 2017)*

Priestly Fraternity

“Jesus Caritas”



## **Introduction**

The First Pan American Assembly of our Priestly Fraternity held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in February 2015, proposed to the International Team "to convene a team of four people to carry out a specific study on the identity, purpose, content and manner of carrying out the Month of Nazareth that allows writing a document with Common Orientations, respecting the cultural particularities of each country. This document would be presented for approval at the next General Assembly"<sup>1</sup>.

The International Team accepted this proposal and at its meeting in October 2016, it resolved to request Manuel Pozo (Spain), Jean Michel Bortheirie (France) and Fernando Tapia (Chile), to set up this commission and draft a document on the Month of Nazareth.

The brothers accepted this assignment, worked from their places of origin, studying articles of the IESUS CARITAS bulletins about the Month of Nazareth, collecting experiences and materials already prepared for previous months of Nazareth from different countries and finally met in Almería, Spain, February 20 to 24, 2017 to formulate these General Guidelines.

The main inspiring framework of this document is the text approved in the International Assembly held by our Fraternity, in Algeria, in 1982, entitled "The Month of Nazareth". It has been incorporated in the latest editions of the Directory, in chapter IV "Our roads". We transcribe it below.

This document has as main recipients the Regional Managers and their Teams, as well as the Coordinators of the Months of Nazareth and their Teams. It contains a First Part with Orientations of general type and a Second Part with schemes for the topics of reflection, questions for personal or group work and schemes for the

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<sup>1</sup> I Pan American Assembly, document "*Building our future together. Proposals for growth for our Fraternities* ", February 2016.

meditations of the week of retreat, with some exercises for personal prayer.

### ***The Month of Nazareth***

*"Among the paths traveled by the fraternity, experience has shown the importance of the month of Nazareth. It is a long time (around 4 weeks) during which the priests make a profound experience of searching for God and living in fraternity, in the spirit of Nazareth. This spiritual search is carried out through the assiduous frequenting of the Word of God, the Eucharistic adoration, the days of the desert ... It is, at the same time, a contemplative re-reading of the life and ministry of the participants, in particular, through life reviews in fraternity. The month is a sharing of fraternal life to all levels: prayer, reflection, manual works, leisure, etc ... We deepen together the great intuitions in which fraternity originates, in confrontation with the calls of the world and of the concrete Church in which the priests live. The month is lived, often, by brothers in moments of a major change of ministry or as a final preparation in their commitment to fraternity (consecration). Certain brothers feel the need to make the month again after years in fraternity.*

*In the same vein, certain months have been opened in recent years to priests who are not members of the fraternity, to deacons, seminarians, religious and lay people.*

*Each region organizes the month according to its possibilities and in an open spirit"<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup>Text approved at the International Assembly held in Algeria in 1982, incorporated in chap. IV, 5th of the Directory, "Our Ways".

# **FIRST PART**

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**



## **The month of Nazareth**

The Directory says "that priests come to the Fraternity for different reasons: the experience of community life, the openness between brothers, the possibility of being admitted to a dialogue and of being accepted, of living the experience of Jesus loved by Himself, the search for new ways in the Church today"<sup>3</sup>.

In this journey together, they feel at a certain moment the desire to deepen their spirituality, to meet God, to discover their will or to reorient their ministry. Many times, this desire arises when there are important changes in the ministerial life because new pastoral responsibilities are assumed, mission experiences are initiated or concluded "ad gentes" or, simply, it is desired to make a temporary or definitive commitment in the Fraternity.

Therefore, the Month of Nazareth (hereafter MN) is a moment of greater spiritual intensity in the life and ministry of a priest who has been walking with us for a while. Previous experiences of worship, desert day, annual retreat, etc. they help and prepare the priest to participate in the MN. This does not exclude that some priest in search, finds out about the existence of a Month of Nazareth and feels the desire to participate, although not yet belong to the Fraternity.

The essence of the month is the search for God, accompanied by other brothers, using the means of spiritual growth themselves, although not exclusive, of our Fraternity and trying to live the novelty of the Gospel and its values: service, fraternity, simplicity, friendship, closeness, joy, austerity, work, as Jesus lived in Nazareth. All in order to renew the missionary impulse that characterized Br. Carlos

In short, the priestly fraternity "Iesus Caritas" offers priests a long time of encounter and coexistence where prayer, work in common and rest are based on the theology and spirituality that is

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<sup>3</sup> Directorio, Cap I, párrafo 1

born of the life of Jesus in Nazareth, from the experience of the blessed Carlos de Foucauld, to help them live their vocation and task of secular diocesan priests.

### **General Objective**

To deepen theoretically and practically in the spirituality of Brother Charles de Foucauld to achieve a personal and pastoral conversion that will make more fruitful the evangelizing mission of the brothers, integrated and supported by the Priestly Fraternity "Jesus Caritas".

#### **Criteria for its realization**

- We will look for a simple place, but with enough space for a group of priests to live together for a month.
- The activities of the MN should not be sophisticated or strange to the daily life of the priest, but possible activities to be carried out beyond the end of the month, in such a way that they are incorporated as habits of growth in the normal spiritual life of the participants.
- The themes of reflection must be based on the Word of God and on the texts of both Brother Carlos and the Directory of our Fraternity.
- The pedagogy of the month must be active and participatory: learning by doing, sharing, reflecting and celebrating.
- Both the preparation and the realization and the projections of the MN must be assumed by the whole Fraternity of a certain Region, in terms of motivation to the brothers who have not done so, financing and replacements in the parishes to facilitate the participation of the priests.
- Regarding the date, each region will choose the one that seems most appropriate to facilitate the participation of priests: summer, spring or autumn.

#### **Coordinator profile**

The Coordinator of the MN is a priest of our Fraternity with certain years of pastoral experience, who meets these conditions:



- Having made the MN and made the commitment to belong to the Fraternity.
- To know in depth the spirituality of Br. Carlos and to be convinced of the importance and relevance of his charism for diocesan priests.
- Active membership in a local fraternity
- Ability to personally accompany some brothers who require it during the realization of the MN.
- Ability to work in teams and delegate functions.

### **Stages in the realization**

We distinguish three stages in the realization of the Month, all equally important

#### **1. Peperation Stage**

The Regional Team and particularly the Regional Responsible, has within its functions the organization of the MN every certain number of years or when there is a sufficient number of interested parties. Appoint a team that will take charge of the completion of all the stages of the month, composed of a Coordinator that fits the profile described above (which may be the same Regional Manager), a bursar and, if possible, a third brother that collaborates with some of the topics of reflection.

At the initiative of the Regional Manager or the Regional Assembly a date is proposed for the completion of the Month, at least one year in advance, especially when it has an international character, and the Organizing and Animating Team of the Month is named. When the realization of the experience is confirmed, the Bishop of the place is notified and invited to pay a visit to the brothers when he deems it appropriate. Also, each brother communicates his participation to his own Bishop.

The first task of this team is to find a suitable place for the completion of the month, calculate its cost, sources of funding and set the fee that each participant would have to pay. Eventually, you can ask the participants to give an advance for the expenses prior to the completion of the Month. Deliver this information to all the

brothers of the Region and other Regions that speak the same language, to enrich the experience of the Month with internationality. Immediately, he will enter the phase of the invitation / motivation both personally and through the social networks of the diocese and of the same Priestly Fraternity. The Regional Manager will personally invite those brothers who have been in the Fraternity for some time and have not made the Month.

You will finally make a list of participants and send them a motivating letter, with details of the arrival and end of the month, possibilities of replacement in the parishes, ways to access the house where the month will take place and any other useful information. It is convenient to accompany this Charter with a small guideline to prepare the story of the history of your faith that each participant will make in the First Week of the Month.

Simultaneously, the team will prepare the topics, determine the speakers, visit the house, see possible forms of manual work and make contact with the parishes or communities in which the brothers will celebrate Mass on Sundays. It will also make arrangements to visit interesting nearby places in leisure and rest plan.

Finally, it is useful for the development of the MN that the Organizing Team prepare an adhoc library that is made available to the participants during the development of the Month.

## **2. Celebration Stage**

The text approved in the Assembly of Algeria indicates that the Month of Nazareth lasts around four weeks and the experiences carried out so far show the convenience of organizing this time formulating a specific objective for each of them. The term "week" does not necessarily indicate seven days, but a period of time with a variable number of days.

## **3. Start of the month and welcome participants**

It is very important that the Coordinating Team arrive a day before to finalize details, verify that everything is well arranged (rooms, bedding, toiletries, food, sacristy items, washing machine, projector, etc.) and wait for the brothers so that they feel welcomed and can settle in their rooms.

The whole first day is, then, a day of welcome and installation that culminates with a moment of prayer to invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit or with the celebration of the Eucharist, preferably before dinner. It is also important that at this moment there be a brief personal presentation (name, diocese, pastoral charge, motivation and expectations) and practical indications of the functioning of the house.

After dinner is given Theme 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE MONTH OF NAZARET, which includes the formation of small fraternities if the group of participants is greater than eight and the distribution of services for the functioning of the Month: in charge of liturgy, domestic hygiene, of manual works, dishwashing, preparation of breakfast and dinner, etc. In many places' food can be prepared by a person outside the group.

### **First Week: Forging Fraternity**

This First Week has as Specific Objective to initiate the integration of the group and the mutual knowledge, to make grateful memory for what God has done in each one and to create an environment of fraternal communion.

It will be done through the exchange of personal faith stories of the participants. They can use the document sent to them in advance. Each one will have an hour for his exhibition. This exchange can last two or three days, depending on the number of participants. The week culminates with the story of Brother Carlos' faith and the theme of the "Prayer of Abandonment" that synthetizes his spirituality admirably.

Thursday or Friday is the Desert Day, giving the day before an explanation and motivation to do it.

Depending on the day on which the MN started, on Saturday you can give theme 4 or theme 6, "The meditation of the Gospel".

On Sunday, if possible, the Eucharist will be celebrated in a nearby community or parish to make contact with the people of the area.

Also that day you can organize a walk or visit to some place of interest.

### **Second week: Disciples of Jesus, in the footsteps of Brother Carlos**

The Second Week's Specific Objective is to deepen the themes of our spirituality: the prayer of abandonment, the desert day, the meditation of the Gospel, the Eucharist and Adoration, the fraternal life, the revision of life, starting from the spiritual experience of Br. Carlos.

Normally the dynamics of these days include an exhibition of the topic, personal or group work from some questions, plenary and complementation, if appropriate. In the Second Part of this document are the schemes that the exhibitors can use to deliver the topics.

Also, this week includes a desert day and the Eucharistic celebration in nearby Communities or Parishes.

The Saturday of this second week contains two activities, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. In the morning it is advisable to do a Life Review exercise in small fraternities and in the afternoon, it would be convenient to make a partial evaluation of the Month to correct in time aspects that are not working well or add any element that improves the performance of the Month.

### **Third week: “Jesús, unique model”**

The Third Week is a silent retreat starting on Monday and ending on Saturday morning with the Eucharist. It includes the day of desert, in which there are no meditations. Non-domestic manual work is suspended

Its Specific Objective is to contemplate the main mysteries of the life and mission of Jesus in order to let us configure more deeply with Him, our Unique Model and collaborate more effectively in the construction of his Kingdom.

### **The recommended contents for this retreat are:**

1. God, the Absolute, loved us first;

1. "Love me as you are" (sin and forgiveness)
2. The Incarnation of the Son of God among the poor: the last place
3. The Visitation: bring Christ to others in silence, like Mary.
4. Jesus in Nazareth: a lifestyle
5. Jesus Savior: the paschal mystery
6. Evangelizers with Spirit;
7. Gratitude and offering.

The retreat companion will give two daily meditations, one in the morning and another in the afternoon, from the Gospel and from texts by Brother Carlos. It is also convenient to make a community celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation during the retreat and have a night of Eucharistic adoration.

On Saturday afternoon you can take a walk or excursion.

On Sunday, as in the previous weeks.

The retreat can be accompanied by the Coordinator of the month, if he is qualified for it, or by an external companion who knows the spirituality of Br. Carlos, understands the dynamics of the Month of Nazareth and assumes the contents of the retreat mentioned in this document. For these reasons, a member of the spiritual family of Charles de Foucauld is to be preferred.

### **Fourth Week: Shouting the Gospel with Life**

This week has the Specific Objective to reflect on the pastoral projection of our spirituality to make a significant contribution to the evangelizing mission of our dioceses, in our time and culture.

Given this objective, in the methodology of the development of the themes, an important place can be given to personal testimonies, pastoral experiences and dialogue on the best way to carry out evangelization in the political, social and cultural context of the country. . It is also the opportune time to receive visitors who can

enrich with their testimony or reflection the different topics of the week.

The possible contents of this week are:

1. Our way of evangelizing.
2. The option for geographic and / or existential peripheries; apostolate of kindness.
3. Universal brotherhood: ecumenical and interreligious dialogue,
4. The poor means to announce Jesus Christ.

During this last week a second life review exercise is recommended.

The penultimate day is convenient to collect the fruits of the Month (subjective, spiritual aspect), celebrate them in the Eucharist and make an evaluation of the different components of the Month (objective aspect). In this final Eucharist you can make the Commitments of belonging to the Fraternity or say those who are determined to do them, but who will formulate and sign them before the whole Fraternity, in your next Regional Assembly.

In some countries, at the end of the month the participants have prepared a Message to the fraternities of that continent. It was done in Africa, with very good reception from the brothers.

The month ends with the breakfast of the last day.

### **Continuity of the Month of Nazareth in everyday life**

On a personal level, each brother will be better able to do his daily worship time, the Gospel meditation and the monthly desert day.

At the level of Local Fraternity, he will be better equipped for fraternal life and, particularly, for the Life Review.

At the country level an experience in France, called "Second Souffle" (second impulse), could be made for priests who did the MN several years ago. It has more or less the same characteristics of the

MN, but lasts only fifteen days. Gives more space to the personal testimonies and to a glance of the present time of the Church in order to the mission.

It is also important to do a "Chronicle of the Month of Nazareth" to share the experience of the participants with all the Fraternities of the Region or of the country and, thus, to motivate the participation in the next Month of Nazareth of those brothers who have not. fact. You can upload to the Fraternity's website and deliver to the Bulletin.

In the same sense, it is motivating that the participants of the Month give their personal testimony in the next Assembly of the Region or of the country, accompanied with a video or a power point.

### **Daily Itinerary**

The Organizing Team prepares a schedule for the daily work according to the traditions of the Fraternity, the climate of the place, the culture of the country, etc.

Here we present the activities that can not be missed on any day of the month. Sundays and desert days have their own organization.

**The Eucharist**, participatory, inculturated and in tune with the theme of the day.

**Community Eucharistic Adoration**, not less than an hour.

**The hours of the Liturgy** (at least one hour in common and the rest with one self)

**A Reflection theme** A theme of reflection each day with three parts: exhibition (no more than 45 minutes), personal work or in small fraternities, plenary, if appropriate. Except the day before the day of desert in which two subjects would be given because it is necessary to give an explanation about the desert, in the afternoon or in the evening.

TIME FOR manual work and the corresponding trips, if they are done away from home (in total two or three hours).

Time for domestic chores (cleaning, preparation of meals)

Times of free disposal.

In any case, it is advisable to respect the silence in the morning until breakfast time, during the siesta and in the evening after dinner, unless the group has agreed to carry out a specific activity.





## TALK 4

### THE PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

**Methodological note:** it is advisable to pray this prayer from the first day of the month until the last.

#### **Outline**

##### **1. Introduction**

Charles de Foucauld was a man of deep prayer and the Abandonment Prayer, composed by him, is the summit of a long spiritual journey. Express your spiritual maturity: let God be God in your life. It is, therefore, one of the keys to enter into their spirituality and our spirituality as a Priestly Fraternity "IESUS CARITAS".

One of our tasks is to learn to pray, to enter into its rhythm, and its structure so that it becomes an authentic expression of our love for God and our willingness to receive the life that He gives us.

This prayer does not mention Christ at any time. When Charles de Foucauld writes it, it is the prayer that Christ makes by placing himself in the Father's hands (Lc 23, 46). When we pray it, we unite ourselves to Christ, we enter into his inner world, helped by the Spirit, and we give ourselves as He does.

## 2. Some Key Words

### - **Jesus Calls God, Father**

His experience of the kindness, mercy and patience of God in our lives. Sometimes the suspicion that God does not love us nest in us. Negative experiences in relationship with others and our own sin, make us distrustful. However, the recognition of the loving and liberating presence of God in our lives makes us regain confidence.

We have to constantly ask God for the grace to feel deeply loved by Him. This makes us live out off center of our own selves. Not feeling loved makes us super active so that people can praise us, consider us, take care of us.

He knows better than we do what is best for us, as well as the more ungrateful and rebellious, blind and crippled we are, the more interested he is, and the more he seeks us to share his gifts. He is always the Good Shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep.

### -**"I abandoned myself to you"**

It is the response of love to God's love: *"He who loves me will be faithful to my word, and my Father will love him; we will go to him and live in him"* (Jn 14, 23). Express the desire to correspond to the love of the Father, **always seeking and doing his will**. This is to be and become a **child of God**, like Christ: **we are** children of God through baptism, but we must **become** children of God every day, abandoning ourselves to the will of the Father, until we are able to say with truth: "I always do what the Father likes" (Jn 8:29), like Jesus.

We would like to give ourselves without reserve to God and to others, but we have to recognize that there are areas of our being that we do not surrender yet, areas that we do not confidently abandon at the hands of God.

From there the supplication of Brother Charles:

*"My God, give me that continuous feeling of your Presence, of your Presence in me and around me! And, at the same time, that fearful love that is felt in the presence of someone who loves himself passionately and who makes us stand in front of the beloved without being able to take his eyes away, with the desire and willingness to do everything that pleases him, everything that is beneficial to him, and the fear of doing, saying or thinking something that disgusts or hurts him. In you, with you and for you, Amen". (Retreat of Nazareth, 1887).*

How to clearly see what I cannot, what I do not know, what I do not want to deliver?

What events and people of my yesterday can I not leave behind?

- **"Do whatever you want of me"**

"I am willing to do everything, I accept everything as long as your will is done in me and in all your creatures, I desire nothing more, my God."

This total availability to God is a gift of his that we should ask for. It demands a heart purified of disorderly attachments that allows us to recover the freedom of the children of God. Freedom is the mark of the disciple of Jesus since it is the only way to be constantly docile to the love of God, docile to his Spirit that is "wind that blows where it wants, you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (Jn 3,8)

We must listen to the will of God, to discern it in the events, desires and demands that are the signs that He gives us. Freedom is a task, a goal to be achieved by each person and by all humanity and it is human to conquer it. This is what gives energy, value and taste to our life.

- **"I place my Soul in your hands"**

"I give it to you, my God, with all the love of my heart".

Feeling loved by the Father and available to his will, I place all my life, all that I am and all that I do in his hands. This total generosity is also a grace of God that we must implore. Only Christ and Mary were from the beginning pure gift, pure surrender, of self to God and to others, to the end of the Cross. We gradually become a gift, in bread delivered. Hence the importance of the Eucharist to identify us with Christ-gift, Bread broken for the life of the world, Blood shed for the salvation of all.

The whole life of Bro. Charles, from his conversion, was transformed into bread that is allowed to eat, until the total surrender on the day of his martyrdom:

*"The oblation of the divine sacrifice, prayer, penance, practice of the evangelical virtues, charity, a fraternal and universal charity that breaks every last bit of bread with every poor person, every guest, all unknown, and receives all human like a beloved brother " (June 23 of 1901)*

- **With infinite trust**

Trust brings us out of ourselves, decentralizes us, sets us on the path. It gives us the audacity of faith and resembles Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, the disciples and all the saints.

The whole struggle of the spiritual life is to come to trust in God and allow ourselves to be molded by Him, surpassing self-sufficiency. It is to have a childlike heart that allows itself to be supported and guided by the Father. We already know that "The kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children" Mk 10, 13-15.

As we journey through our history of salvation, we recognize that we are more loved by our Father God than we believed. This realization gives us back our confidence. If so far, the Lord has always been with me, why not be in the future?

**For our personal reflection:**

Is it hard for me to pray the Prayer of Abandonment? Why?

In which of these attitudes do I still have a lot of growth needed: trust; availability, surrender?

What can help me to grow in these attitudes?

**Biography of Boletín**

## TALK 5

### THE DAY OF DESERT

#### **The experience of Desert**

It is an experience of living with God alone. In it, we leave Him the initiative, leaving us in His hands. He will come whenever and however He likes. He will lead us where He believes best.

It is a deeply theological experience. Beyond our senses that must be silenced.

It is a free search, a "lost" time in search of the one we love. We are not going to the desert to get anything. Just love and let us love. Only to try to respond with love, the love of the Lord for us.

It is an experience in which we use the minimum of mediations: Only an intermediary: Jesus, the Lord; Only one teacher: The Spirit that dwells in us; Only one food: his Word and the Eucharist; and of everything else: nothing or almost nothing. The experience of the desert is enclosed in these words of St. John of the Cross: *"A single word the Father spoke, his Son, and it speaks always in eternal silence and in silence must be heard by man."*

#### ***The place***

Not every place is fit for a desert experience. It takes a "*desert setting*", if possible. Saint John of the Cross, a good expert, describes to us in the "Rise to Mount Carmel", III, 39: "*It should not be a pleasant and agreeable place for the senses, for fear that instead of gathering the spirit in God, stop in recreation, taste and savor of the senses* "

In spite of the place we must try to make it beautiful and sober. Beauty is necessary because it speaks to us and leads to God. So too is sobriety, because to find God we need to enter silence, and to enter into silence, and to detoxify ourselves from the noises, from emotional and sensitive shocks, the simplicity of a landscape that elevates us to the Creator is necessary.

It must be a different place from our daily and familiar environment. It is necessary, then, to put aside our habitual habits, our worries, our customs, our ways of living human relationships ... all that emotional fabric that our relationship with others entails.

It helps to a great extent the poverty of the accommodation and the meals, the abstention of all human contact and of all conversation, the remoteness of the daily human activities, the abstention of any class of readings. Therefore, starting the night before in order to start the day in total solitude of the heart.

### ***Reasons to enter in the desert***

1. We make the desert fundamentally, to strengthen and mature in the basic option of our Christian being: God as the One, the Absolute. In the desert the Absolute manifests itself in Christ Jesus, as a love that attracts itself in an intimate communion and with a perpetual covenant. "*I will attract him and guide him to the desert, where I will speak to his heart ... Then I will betroth you to me forever ...*".
2. Consequently, desert time is not in itself a time of self-analysis or special examination of conscience, but of a reunion with God.

3. Likewise, desert time is an opportunity to meet our true selves. Only by emptying ourselves of ourselves and accepting ourselves can we say: "Do not do my will, but yours."
4. The desert time, is also a work of love that derives from taking our charge pastorally, to the men with whom we live or who are entrusted to us. He does not go to the desert to flee but to present to God the anguish and supplications of humanity. It is an excellent time for intercessory prayer.
5. Silence and solitude, are the law of desert. God speaks in silence and his very words are often made of silence only. "*Why does it occur to so few people to take baths of silence?*" Paul Claudel asked.
6. Prayer is the main exercise of the desert. In the desert, more than praying, we come to be prayed. We come to live in depth what St. Paul expressed as experience: "*The Spirit prays in us, with inexpressible moans.*" You will drop the prayer outline to stay before God in simple prayer. Let yourself look for Him, let yourself be loved by Him, let yourself be touched by Him ... You remain silent, look, love, adore ...

### ***How to be in the desert***

A time of desert has its own pedagogy, pedagogy that we could summarize with the words of Saint John of the Cross as "*the active passivity*".

It is a time to let ourselves be done, to let ourselves be prayed for by the Spirit of the Lord. In a natural rhythm, slow ... without forcing anything. A time lived from the deep conscience; beyond the superficial levels in which we live ordinarily, even when it comes to our inner life. Every moment of the day is a work of art. Everything is sprouting from the bottom of our being. It does not matter if we are in Adoration, cooking or cutting a little wood. At every moment it is me, everything me. And let's not forget that we do not come looking for anything. Only to live and to live in love.



The great searches are carried in the depths of our being and will have an answer from God, as a gift to those who knows how to wait. They will certainly have an answer, but you will find them inside you, at any time, if you know how to wait.

### *Practical advice*

Those who enter the desert for the first time will undoubtedly experience their own interior noise. In Western civilization everything goes through your head. We are excessively full of knowledge, we are excessively rational. To facilitate serenity and the encounter with God we advise you:

1. Do not take books to the desert. The Bible is enough for you. And this one, read not out of curiosity, but as a tasty inner food.\
2. In the desert you must find your own rhythm. The clock is over. If you want to pray, pray; if you want to walk, walk; if you want to sleep, sleep ... you are free to do it. Once in the desert, it is the Spirit who must tell you what to do. Nobody else can guide, disturb or distract you.
3. Do not enter the desert excited. Before entering, calm down, appease your intelligence, open your heart, smile to the whole world, especially to yourself, and remain in peace.
4. May the food be austere and in an amount that does not stop you from making your way. Also, certain types of food help more than others. Slowly, chew well. In the experience of the great desert, including Jesus, fasting plays an important role. Do not forget. In a day of desert, perhaps this fast is the only positive element, a thing conquered, although everything else seems to you at times somewhat vague. This fast in the desert is the sign of God is the greatest.
5. Sometimes it is good to take notes about some things we discovered that would otherwise occupy our memory at a time when it should be available.
6. Take care of silence. The silence of the memory, of the imagination, of the affectivity, of the sensitivity is the climate that will favor the contemplative act, which demands

that it will easily put into calm all the interior noise, all the waves of perceptions, emotions and reactions sensitive.

### ***The Desert and Brother Charles de Foucauld***

In Charles de Foucauld there is an evolution, from the writing of the first Rules in 1896, in which he conceives the life of his brothers as "Hermits" by "the great recollection in which they must live, even when they are several together" , until their experience of Beni-Abbés and Tamanrasset, where they will seek solitude frequently, either in their hermitage, or at some point during their travels in the desert.

He writes his experience: *"It is necessary to go through the desert and stay in it to receive the grace of God, it is there where one empties and departs from everything that is not God, completely evicting that little house from our soul, in order to leave God alone all the space ... It is indispensable, it is a time of grace, it is a time through which every person who wishes to bear fruit must necessarily pass, because this silence, this recollection, this oblivion of all the created for God to establish in the person his kingdom, forming in it the inner spirit, the intimate life with God in faith, hope and love "* ( Letter, 05-19-1898).

Both for the times of desert, and for the times in which we are visited by the dark night, through different events and situations, the words that on Psalm 10, wrote Brother Charles of Jesus: *"The desert. ... it is full of infinite and sublime graces ... In it, God himself nourishes and dresses us: in him miraculously he overcomes all enemies, provided he knows how to pray and obey God's guidance; always God with us, in our midst, constantly speaking and guiding us ... in him God puts us in a state of purity and holiness, making us his chosen people, who walk and live in full light, in the knowledge of Him , in his love and in his obedience, under his direction "*.

DESIERTO Y REVISIÓN DE VIDA

"The Life Review is preferably prepared in the desert, always in prayer and if possible not to do it than improvise it. It supposes a climate of prayer, listening to the Word one another. There is no need to fear moments of silence. You have to have the courage to speak to the other, with delicacy, but with frankness, without fear of tensions and possible conflicts."  
FRATERNIDAD SACERDOTAL, *Directorio*, IV, 2.

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## TALK 6 THE MEDITACION OF THE GOSPEL

### Outline

1. It is a privileged means to know, love and follow Jesus of Nazareth. For him to be our faithful friend and our traveling companion.
2. We place ourselves in spirit and the letter of the Second Vatican Council that wanted to return to the Sacred Scripture the centrality that it had lost. The Church venerates the Word as the Body of the Lord (DV 21).
3. Charles de Foucauld was a man marked by the constant reading of the Word of God, captivated by Jesus and the Gospel. He often explains his options by saying that they are "because of Jesus and the Gospel." All his search was to know Jesus and to have his way of thinking and wanting:

*"Let's go back to the Gospel. If we do not live the Gospel, Jesus does not live in us. We have to immerse ourselves in the Spirit of Jesus by reading and rereading his words, meditating and meditating his deeds. May they be like a drop of water falling in the same place on a rock "(see n.161 and n.206 of the Anthology)*

4. Carlos Foucauld translates the Gospel to the Tamashek (language of the Tuareg), so that it would be available to all, since *"the Gospel is like a fountain that never dries up and everyone can drink according to their thirst"*. This was one of his great joys, since the Tuaregs had no books: *"I find it a great consolation that your first book is the Holy Gospels."*
5. Charles de Foucauld, reading the Gospel, asked himself: *"Lord, what do you want to tell me?"* In the silence he read and wrote what came to his heart. ***"This is what I have to say to you, Lord."*** And then there was a long adoration without saying anything, just looking at the one he loved so much and that Word gave him the tone of the day.
6. I was looking for the most complete identification possible with Jesus of Nazareth. He called it the "Unique Model" and wrote a text composed of pure quotes from the Gospel that

sought to offer a portrait of the person of Jesus to facilitate his faithful following.

*"All our life, however mute, the life of Nazareth, the life of the desert, as well as public life, should be a preaching of the Gospel by example; all our existence, our whole being, **must shout the Gospel on the rooftops**; all our person must breathe Jesus, all our acts, our whole life, must shout that we are Jesus, must present the image of the evangelical life."*

7. We are **ministers and witnesses of the Gospel**. Many people will only have our presence to discover Jesus. Disciples and missionaries to free the slaves. It is not enough to be a reader, we have to **enter into the mystery of Jesus** and to grow in simplicity, in poverty, in his great love that opens doors, takes us out of narrowness.
8. The gospel is the liberating force of the Risen Lord who speaks to the men and women of today and frees them. Living word and we make it live.
9. Charles de Foucauld to better know and imitate Jesus takes the Gospel and meditates in writing, following verse by verse. Use a scheme that can help us:
  - a. The Word that Christ pronounced.
  - b. How he lived it himself.
  - c. What do I have to do?

Another mean he used was to read the Gospel and would copy texts under some chapters or categories: charity, abandonment, renunciation, praise, cross. (See the "Unique Model").<sup>3</sup>

10. Lectio Divina is the patristic method that gradually approaches the text and that can also help us.
11. Recommendations: take fifteen minutes daily to read the Scripture and let her teach us to pray and to learn an evangelical lifestyle.

**For our personal and group reflection:**

How is our relationship with the Gospel? - How do we prepare to listen to the Word of Jesus? - How have we been growing in a greater love for the Word? - What have I read, studied in this area? What are the texts that patrol our hearts?

How do we convey a taste for the Gospel? - How do we teach others to like it? - When we are in difficulties, in crisis; do we return to the Gospel? - Do we find comfort in it, peace?

The Gospel also calls us to gather around the Word. Listen to it and feel challenged. Let it talk to us. How is the Gospel modeling our Communities?

Sharing the Gospel is not an intellectual exercise of understanding. It is not about doing exegesis but to welcome the Word addressed to us. What does Jesus tell me, how does his Word resonate in my life?, not only in what I think. In this way we can be uprooted, taken from where we are and become pilgrims. This way we can feel part of a group that is struggling in faith to understand and live the Gospel more and better each day.

## **Bibliography**

## TALK 7

### THE EUCHARIST AND ADORATION

#### **Outline**

#### **The Experience of Brother Charles**

1. For Br. Charles, the celebration and adoration of the Eucharist were always a privileged meeting place with his beloved Brother and Lord Jesus. He valued the Eucharist extraordinarily: "One Mass glorifies God more than the martyrdom of all men united to the praises of all the angels and saints". For him, the Eucharist is the food that allows us to be truly disciples of Jesus:

*"The Catholic religion feeds us in the way of the Cross, in the way of the imitation of Our Lord Jesus, with an admirable and divine food that is our daily bread and our 'life'. This food, this true 'daily bread', this 'life' is the sacred Eucharist, Jesus himself, God and man, giving himself, giving himself entirely to us".*

2. Before Jesus-Eucharist he would spend hours and hours of intimacy, of dialogue, of love, of friendship. Sometimes very "comforted", many others hard and dry:

*"Dryness and darkness. Everything is painful, holy communion, prayers, prayer, everything, everything, even telling Jesus that I love him ... I have to hold on to the life of faith. If only I felt that Jesus loves me! But he never tells me. "(Beginning of his life in Nazareth, June 6, 1887).*

3. His presence before Jesus-Eucharist will identify him and configure him more and more with him.

*"When you love, you do not want anything other than to be in the presence of the Well-Beloved, to do nothing but what He likes, to seek His consolation, His good, His will before ours." "To pray is to look for Jesus." "To pray is to think about Jesus loving him. The more you love, the better you pray. "*

4. At a time when the link between the Bread of the Word and the Bread of the Eucharist was barely perceived, Brother Carlos prescribes in his rule that the Gospel should always be placed next to the Holy Sacrament. In the guidelines that he gives for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, he foresees that there is room for the readings of the Word of God.
5. At a time when the link between the Bread of the Word and the Bread of the Eucharist was barely perceived, Brother Charles prescribes in his rule that the Gospel should always be placed next to the Holy Sacrament. In the guidelines that he gives for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, he foresees that there is room for the readings of the Word of God.
6. For Br. Charles the Eucharist is essentially Jesus who gives his life for the crowd and who calls us to enter into that surrender. It is necessary to go continuously from the Eucharist to human beings and human beings to the Eucharist, from adoration to brotherly love, from silence to the word... until our life reaches its inner unity.



## Adoration in our Spirituality

1. Adoration wants to be a deep encounter with the Risen Jesus, Good Shepherd, friend, brother, Lord, to whom we have given our lives. It is a key element of our spirituality. We try to do it every day, for one hour.
2. It is a simple time in which we let God be God and express our love. It is a way of expressing our belonging. Who I am. A time to let ourselves be invaded by the love of Jesus: "As the Father loved me ... I have also loved them ..." It is a way to unify our life so dispersed, to go to our depth, to "drink in our own well" "(G. Gutiérrez).
3. It is the heart of the Fraternity. Silent and contemplative adoration is the prolongation of the Eucharist. There we fan the inner fire and our missionary desires. It is a simple and deprived prayer.
4. Of the hour we pray, if for five minutes we are touched by the Lord with true love, it is a success. As members of the Fraternity, we are called to be permanent of prayer, and it is an important part of our ministry. We cannot oppose prayer and service.
5. Prayer is basically an experience of friendship, "I stand at the door and knock; if you open, I will come and dine with you "(Rev.3: 20). It is to give an exclusive time for God. It is the way to be a friend of Jesus that deserves to be loved by himself. We, often, operate in categories of obligation and compliance. Here it is about **gratuity** and **gratitude**. There is no relationship that survives without spending time to cultivate it.
6. Nobody finds it easy, there are no specialists, we are always starting. A firm decision is required. It is to separate us "**a stone's throw**" to be with Him. It is to familiarize us with his voice, recognize him in his gestures or when he becomes present.

## Some Conducts that facilitate our Prayer

Inspiring text: LC 10, 38-42; the encounter of Jesus with Marta and Maria.

To pray we have to learn some behaviors that are difficult for us and that is why it is hard for us to pray:

1. Learn to **stop**, to stop the activity. It is a difficult decision. We value the activity very much. We often put our identity and value in what we do. It is hard for us to stop because we fear ourselves. Worship is not an activity is intimacy.
2. Learn to **be freely**. We do not know what's going to happen and it's hard to waste our time. To wait for Jesus sometimes in the midst of great darkness, to open our depth without knowing the result. Offer ourselves without conditions as Jesus offers himself to the Father for his people.
3. Learn to **listen to another**, to decenter, to silence us. That **THE other** one is going to have new elements and will talk with new words and maybe it will change our plans or it will give more intensity to what is necessary to do.
4. Learn **to have the gaze of Jesus** on reality and on people, to be able to love them with their hearts ("Jesus-Caritas"). By praying for a long time we are becoming kind.
5. Learn to be free. Free with time. In the middle of emergencies, give us an hour, free to choose the important thing before the urgent, free to express our sorrows and joys.

There are also some dangers:

- a) Narcissism, focus on me and think that the Lord will make me perfect and better than others.
- b) To do out of fear, a prayer, an end. The goal is for God to reach me, touch me, and transform me. My goal is to expose myself to his gaze, to the transforming power of his Spirit.
- c) To get discouraged because nothing is "felt". The consolations of God come when He wants. During

the time of prayer one may have the feeling that nothing is happening. But, later, in contact with people, in the way of facing problems, in pastoral work, etc. one notices the effects of prayer.

**For personal or group reflection'**

1. How has my personal experience, over time, been related to Adoration? Way of doing it, facilitating elements, difficulties, etc.
2. What biblical texts enlighten me to do well my Eucharistic Adoration?
3. Does the experience of Adoration of Brother Charles somehow enlighten me, question me?

**Bibliography of Bulletin**

## **TALK 8**

### **FRATERNAL LIFE**

*Inspirational texts: Psalm 133; Acts 2, 42-47; 2nd Cor 4, 7; Matthew 18, 15-22; Romans 12, 9-13*

1. Many times we act like characters. We use masks. We have been trained to live as steppe wolves and with the task of being protagonists, heroes. This makes us pay a high price: anguish, loneliness, bitterness, hyperactivity, psychosomatic illnesses, depressions. It is a great challenge to learn to share with others. Give space to mercy. We have to extinguish the instinctive tendency to condemn, interpret, disqualify. We

have a hard time sharing life with simplicity, with the quota of greatness and limits that each one has. Be real men. It is a long way; we must die to our fears and be born to hope. It is the work of the Spirit, who unites us in a joyful encounter. After a little walking we realize that we cannot live alone, we need others, companions, advice, consolation and correction. We need to be loved and recognized, to be heard, to be seen with the eyes of a brother. The child is building his identity in the eyes of his mother.

2. The Gospel reveals to us that the new life that Jesus Christ brings us is the emergence of fraternity. He came to transform human relationships. The Gospel invites us to live with novelty, led by the Spirit, to create ever stronger and broader links that give us our own style. In baptism we receive the Spirit; then confirmation and the sacrament of order we receive it again. We are learning from each other, that the other is another, with their differences. The community is the form of the Church.
3. Living in fraternity is the school where we learn to purify our love of selfishness, of narrowness, of the tendency to use, of individualism. It is the great therapy for the current man and woman. We live in great anonymity and surrounded by lonely men and women. Nobody messes with anyone.

### **What does the Fraternity seek?**

4. Grow together in the following of Jesus Christ. We meet, like the disciples of Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35), to meet the Risen One in friendship, in the revision of life, in the sharing of the Word, in the breaking of bread, in prayer. The Risen One enlightens us and leads us with his Word, "beginning with Moses and passing through the prophets".
5. Learn to be transparent, to trust others, to let others know about my family, my life, my money, my relationship with men and women, my sorrows and my need to be supported.

6. Learn to leave our categories to meet others. Accept being bothered by another because it is different. To be a sign of what we would like to live with everyone as well as the announcement that this, in Jesus Christ, is possible. Despite our differences we are brothers, in us the same Spirit lives.
7. Learn to love and fight; to be different and not just because of that everyone goes on their own way. Open ourselves to differences, accept their existence, their right to be and act. Learn to receive from different.
8. Learn to **belong**, to be with one another. It is not enough to be, it is necessary to belong, to create links. To be "**universal brother**". We are not better than the others because we belong to the fraternity but we only recognize our fragility and we need to be helped.
9. Learn to carry the lives of others. It is our service. We are so complex. Learn that we are poor men who do the best we know.
10. Learn to live and share with equals, with siblings. Exit the categories of superior-inferior, dominator-dominated, protector-protected that are authoritarian features that we all have. We need a fraternal Church and not a manipulative and paternalistic Church. Sometimes we unconsciously look for dads, bosses, directors or we rebel against them, according to our life stories. We are all brothers; there is only one who is Father, Abba.
11. Realize the bonds that bind us to each other the priests, are bonds of charity, prayer and cooperation. We want to learn to be more fraternal with the bishop, with other priests, with people, especially the poorest. Never believe we are saved because we will be tempted until the last day, in money, prestige, sex, faith, etc.

### **What is a priestly fraternity?**

12. It is the meeting of 4 to 6 priests who meet monthly to share life and put our own in the hands of another as well as carry

the lives of others, be co-responsible. It is the place where we can feel recognized and accepted as we are.

13. It is a church life school where I discover, live and suffer the diversity that it has.

### **What is required?**

14. Decision to participate and join others. To ask for the Grace of fraternity in order to live the Gospel better and to remain united.
15. Decision to be true, to share what is really happening in our life.
16. Participate in the monthly meeting of a day that includes rest, food, silent prayer, review of life and sharing the Gospel.
17. Lower the defenses and let yourself be seen. We are very afraid to be judged and on the other hand we have to believe that they will have a kind look. Confidentiality with what has been heard.
18. Stability in attendance, regularity, since it takes time to create the links.
19. Accept the frustrations that all fraternal life has: that others do not go, that one wants to talk and there is no room or possibility to do so.
20. The universal Fraternity begins with those next to me - Fraternity in the presbytery - the diocesan's own. It is a gift from God and a task for us.

### **For personal and group reflection:**

What helps me live the fraternity in its different levels?

What makes it difficult to live it?

How can I overcome these difficulties?

## Talk 9

### THE REVISION OF LIFE

#### ***The Revision of Life in the Directory***

*"It is, above all, in the Life Review where the fraternity exercises its function as a rule of life. There is much talk of revision of life, but indicating different realities: different exchanges, studies of the Gospel, revision of apostolic life. For us, in fraternity, the Life Review is an act of common faith, in which we share the events, concerns, hopes and disappointments, a common reading of life to discover in it the calls of the Lord.*

*A Life Review like that requires some value, but we feel we need it.*

*The Life Review is, first of all, a contemplative look at the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And at the same time, it is the means of a permanent conversion that must also reach the best of each one, to always be available to the Lord's calls, precisely where they were not expected, where we had not seen or heard him until now. The Life Review helps us to discover the Lord always bigger, always different and even disconcerting for us.*

*There is a unit of process between the Life Review and the other means of the Fraternity. The Life Review is preferably prepared in the desert, always in prayer and, if possible, in writing. Better not to do it than improvise it. It supposes a climate of prayer, listening to the Word of God, attention to one another. There is no need to fear moments of silence. You have to have the courage to question each other, with delicacy, but with frankness, without fear of tensions and possible confrontations. False friendship is the death of the true revisions of life and, therefore, of fraternity.*

*Doing Life Review implies a commitment of each one for the realization of the calls received together. Each one should feel responsible and in solidarity with others.*



*An authentic Life Review can introduce us to the mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ acting in us. And, sometimes, it will lead us to the sacrament of reconciliation "(Chapter IV, 2).*

### ***Outline for the introduction***

1. Definition:
  - It is where the Fraternity exercises its function as a rule of life;
  - in the practice of an act of common faith, in which we share events, concerns, hopes and disappointments;
  - reading our lives together with a contemplative gaze to discover at every moment the Lord's calls;
  - as a means of permanent conversion.
2. The importance of the RL and the relation with the rest of the means of the Fraternity:
  - It is prepared preferably in the desert;
  - Always in prayer;
  - And if possible, in writing.
3. The RL calls for fundamental attitudes:
  - Prayer climate and inner silencing
  - The listening to the Word of God and brothers **interpelandonos**.
  - Disposition to attend and accompany each other.
4. The practice of the RL implies:
  - Mutual commitment to help us live the call received.
  - Feel responsible and supportive of others.
  - Awareness of being introduced through this process of spiritual life into the mystery of Christ.

- Recognize oneself in need of God's mercy and forgiveness (= reconciliation)

***Personal Dispositions for the RL and other methodological notes***

1. Objectives: It is not, first of all, to know what is the biggest problem that is presented to us, nor what is the best way to solve it, but to find Jesus presently present in our existence. In the RL, it becomes true, very shortly, that we dispose ourselves, the Abandonment Prayer: God wishes to seize us so that we may be instruments of salvation.
2. Preparation: "Doing Life Review implies a commitment from each one to carry out the calls received together". The three times of the revision of life can help a better discernment: see the reality; discerning the call of God from the Gospel; and point out revisable commitment paths in the following meetings.
3. Development: RL is a vital exercise and, as such, does not allow itself to be enclosed in a outline. However, the following steps can help: (a) Statement of the facts of life in which each one is invited to present in a concrete way without abstractions. (b) Choice of a specific event in which the interest and need of the brother presenting it must be evaluated. (c) Analysis of the chosen event that can be started by sharing how one feels about the chosen event and then analyzing the fact. It is not a question of a survey but of focusing the human experience as much as possible. (d) re-reading of faith, as the axis of the RL. This look confirms or criticizes the fundamental values discovered in the chosen situation and analyzes previously. Compare the experience lived by us with the practice of Jesus. (e) Discernment of the commitment to take that challenges and involves the whole group, not only the one who has exposed the fact. (f) The RL commits to a continuous concern for each other (presence, letter, telephone, ...) and extends to the prayer of one another.

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## TALK 10

### OUR WAY OF EVANGELIZING

#### **Outline**

#### **1. THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION**

Our way of evangelizing is marked in the first place by the mystery of the Incarnation, a mystery that fascinated Brother Charles and is at the root of his spirituality:

The incarnation is always given at a certain time and place and culture. We would like to take always into account the historical context, the characteristics of time and the culture in which we evangelize, because we are convinced that God prolongs his incarnation and Christ continues speaking to us from the signs of the times to invite us to build his Kingdom of Life.

Considering that Christ enters the world through "the door of the poor", as Bishop Enrique Alvear said, we too would like to enter through this door in our evangelizing action and from there proclaim the Gospel to all.

#### **2. THE PLACES OF FRONTIER**

In a spirit of availability to our Bishops, we would like to prioritize the most abandoned and farthest places to the Church, the frontier places, whether in geographical or cultural terms: marginal populations, distant fields, addicts, deprived of liberty, excluded in general. And using poor means, basically our own friendly and merciful presence.

Brother Charles tells us:

*"For me, always look for the last of the last positions, to be also small as my Master, to be with him, to march after him, step by step, as faithful servant, faithful disciple and - since in his infinite goodness, incomprehensible He deigns to*

*Speak like that - as a faithful brother and faithful husband*  
"(ESEs p.68).

*"This divine banquet, of which I am a minister, is necessary to present it not to the brothers and relatives, to the rich neighbors, but to the lame, the blind, the most abandoned souls and the lack of priests ... I have requested and obtained permission to settle in the Algerian Sahara. " (ESE p.80).*

If we are sent to more affluent places, we would like to be agents of social awareness and bridges between realities that are sometimes so different and distant.

### **3. THE PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

In every place, but particularly in border areas, we want to give priority to evangelization through testimony rather than through words. Testimony marked by closeness, simplicity, welcome, kindness, interest in what happens to the other, concrete service, inner joy. Brother Carlos wrote to a friend:

*"You want to know what I can do for the natives. It is not possible to speak directly about our Lord. This would be to make them flee. You have to inspire them confidence, make friends with each other, give them small services, give them good advice, make friends with them, discreetly encourage them to follow natural religion, show them that Christians love them "(ESE p.84).*

Already in a retreat in November 1897, he had formulated his way of evangelizing with this phrase, placed in the mouth of Jesus: **"Access your vocation: to proclaim the Gospel from the rooftops, not with your word, but with your life "**.

### **4. Our option for the Fraternity**

From our option for fraternity, we privilege teamwork with other priests, whether or not our Fraternity, religious, deacons and lay people. We want to be more brothers than religious authorities. Br. Charles went ahead in this sense to the Council when he seeks and values the work with laity:

*"Next to the priests, Priscilas and Aquilas are needed, to see those who the priest does not see, to penetrate where he cannot penetrate, to go to those who run away, to evangelize with a benevolent contact, with an overflowing kindness above all, an affection always willing to give, a good example that attracts those who turn their back on the priest and are hostile to them on principle "(from Assekrem, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1912).*

For this reason, we want to give time to the formation of the laity, to the spiritual accompaniment of them and to support the formation of fraternal communities, respecting the rhyme of each person.

## **5. SPIRITUAL LIFE AND EUCHARIST**

This way of evangelizing supposes a very deep spiritual life in each of us that leads us to contemplate Jesus in the Gospels in order to configure ourselves more and more with Him, which is the work of the Spirit in us. He will enable us to enter into the dynamics of the descent, of the reduction, characteristic of the mystery of the Incarnation, leaving many things (prejudices, material goods, prestige, search for power, securities, etc.) for Him and for fidelity to the Gospel. It will give us inner freedom to find new paths and fields in the evangelizing task of the Church, always seeking the will of the Father, with infinite confidence.

Our missionary impulse, above all is to reach and stay in the most difficult places, is sustained by the celebration of the Eucharist and daily Adoration. Here we become aware of the infinite Love of God for us, that enlightens us with his Word, nourishes us and shows us who our God is, to whom we belong, who is the only model and the only Absolute of our life.

The Eucharist, on the other hand, opens us to belonging to an ever-broader ecclesial body. We want to be very aware that Evangelization is a mission shared with the whole diocesan and universal Church. As diocesan priests we want to be the first to feel part of a presbytery, with its Bishop at the head, supporting the gestation and implementation of diocesan projects to which we contribute our pastoral charism and accents.

## **FOR PERSONAL WORK**

1. Would you add any item to this outline?
2. Would you add any elements to the paragraphs?
3. What characteristics should our styles of life have to be coherent with this way of evangelization?

TALK 11  
OUR CHOICE FOR GEOGRAPHICAL AND  
EXISTENTIAL PERIPHERIES. THE APOSTOLATE OF  
GOODNESS AND THE GOOD EXAMPLE

In the conception of the apostolate of Brother Charles, goodness and a good example take first place. One could speak of an evangelization or apostolate driven by kindness and expressed in good example.

The source of goodness and good example can only be the Beloved Brother and Lord Jesus Christ. Let us remember the countless Nazarian meditations that begin with the refrain "How good you are, my God!" ... echo of the psalm that sums up the being of God, "The Lord is good, His love has no end! "God is for Brother Charles throughout his life, the Good God.

The same thing we can say about the good example. It is the expression "ad extra" of the following of Jesus, an expression that becomes a vehicle for the conversion of souls. This is how Brother Charles writes in Nazareth, as he meditates on the Passion of the Lord: "As regards the examples to be deduced from the conduct of our Beloved Jesus, we can see that they are innumerable: courage, calmness, sweetness, obedient to the divine will, faith in the Holy Scriptures ... What a love for mortification we must extract at the sight of the pains that our Beloved suffers voluntarily for us ...!" (AOS 256).

Thus, Jesus is in all his life, but especially in the total disengagement of his Passion, the example to follow: *"It is the precept that Jesus gives us, it is also the example that He gives us, allowing himself to be stripped of everything, of everything, and dying naked on the Cross without resisting and praying for those who have stripped him and made him die"* (AOS 194). The examples of our Lord Jesus are completed on many occasions with those of the Virgin, and the saints. In them and them the example of our Lord is partially refracted, and therefore they can help as a second image of



follow-up. The saints belong in this plane to the great family of the intercessors of Br. Charles. "To follow as exactly as possible all your teachings and examples while we are in this life, and to die for your name, here is the means to love you and to prove to you that we love you; you are the one who tells us in the Gospel, my God ... Love asks for something else, my God, and the Gospel tells me also, not for your words, but for the example of the Blessed Virgin and Magdalena at the foot of the cross: Stabat Mater "(AOS 517).

These good examples, samples of kindness, will be with increasing acuity the privileged evangelizing instrument that Brother Charles intends to use. We could place as an illuminating beacon of everything he experienced related to the good example of one of the phrases on the exam that, in respect of his three years of apostolic life in Beni-Abbés, he wrote in 1905: "I have been too little vigilant and little careful, to show in me an image of Christ, "the lived Christian religion, alter Christus". (AOS 565).

And this conception, directly related to his person, will be nothing more than the concretion of what he already formulated as general of all apostolate: *"All our life, however mute, the life of Nazareth, the life of the desert, same as public life, they should be a preaching of the gospel by example. "* (AOS 395).

Throughout his spiritual itinerary he goes on living and proposing this apostolate of kindness and good example. In the resolutions that he adopted already in 1902 in Beni-Abbés after his annual retreat, we read: *"Be good for all, pray and do penance for all, give a good example so that seeing me see a faithful image of Jesus, so to sanctify myself as much as possible "* (AOS 538).

This experience will be explained, like almost all those that refer to his apostolate, in the Saharan trips, which taught him so much because of the abundant contact he had with both French and indigenous Christians of different towns and races. It is again in his "Apostolic Diary" of Beni-Abbés where these reflections were left written: June 21, 1903. *"Preachers of Jesus, who" did not have a stone on which to rest his head ", we must not do the opposite of what we preach, but to be a silent preaching, especially me, that I do*

*not preach but in that way: ... Christianus alter Christus. It is in relation to the missionaries that the gentiles judge Christianity. If we want them to see Jesus and religion as they are, let us be other Christs. " (CBA 68).*

In this same newspaper and wondering about the difficulty of conversion of Muslims, he writes among many other wishes, the following advice: *"May each of you offer to the Sacred Heart prayers and penance for the conversion of Muslims and the sending of numerous and holy workers to this field of the heavenly Father, that each one is not only a good example, but a "divine" perpetual example, an "alter Christus"; then grace will descend, ignorance will disappear, good will, will be born, Jesus will reign ... "(CBA 75).*

The small personal details perceive them as signs of this kindness that he values so much, and that considers the privileged spirit of the evangelizer. In all your correspondence, but especially in that addressed to the people of Our Lady of Snow, you can perceive this fact (Cf. LFT 298, 343, 363, 378).

It will be in 1909, and again on the occasion of a retreat, when he will make this form of apostolate more explicit for him: *"My apostolate must be the apostolate of goodness. Seeing me, it must be said: "Since this man is so good, his religion must be good." If you ask me why I am sweet and good, I must say: "Because I am the servant of Someone much better than I. If you knew how good my Master Jesus is" (AOS 383).*

In article XXVIII of the "Directory" of the "Union of the Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart" entitled "General means, in particular for the conversion of souls far from Jesus, and in particular of the gentiles belonging to the colonies of the mother country ", places in the 6th place the good example, and in the 7th the goodness. Explaining its content a few paragraphs later, he says: *"By their example, brothers and sisters must be a living preaching: each of them must be a model of evangelical life. Seeing them, one must see what the Christian life is, what the Christian religion is, what the Gospel is, what Jesus is. The difference between your life and the life of non-Christians should make it appear brightly where the truth*

*lies. They must be a living Gospel: people away from Jesus, and especially the gentiles, must know, without books and without words, the Gospel in view of their life. The example is the only external work by which they can act on souls completely rebellious to Jesus, who do not want to listen to the words of their servants, nor read their books, nor receive their goods, nor accept their friendship, nor communicate any way with them; on these there is no other action than the example; but this action by example is all the stronger because it arouses less distrust, since every appearance of deceit or seduction is set aside. "(DU 65-69).*

And speaking of kindness, when explaining the 7th medium, he says among many other things the following: *"That brothers and sisters are good. May they be good at obeying Jesus ... the manifestation of love for men is benevolence, goodness, the fact of wanting their good and doing it as much as possible ... That they are good at imitating Jesus ... Good to be truly his disciples ... good, because it is one of the means of doing good to souls ... That brothers and sisters are good to make themselves loved and make love all that is theirs, their religion, your Teacher. This kindness must have it towards all: all are children of the heavenly Father, all are images of God and members of Jesus. May the brothers and sisters placed in the midst of the gentiles approach them for their kindness and thus approach Jesus "* (DU 71-72).

When the Directory speaks of the obligations of its directors, General Director or diocesan or local Directors, the double concern of kindness and of testimony or good example will always be repeated. *"That the General Director instruct more by the example than by the word". "That the Director General be good"* (DU 84-89).

Among the duties of the members in relation to the neighbors is declared: *"Give holy examples. That they try to lead the good less by the word than by example. Make them good for everyone. It is because of their kindness that they will endear themselves and for which they will follow their examples "* (DU 94). And these same words are repeated in the case of relations with unfaithful neighbors (DU 97). And finally with regard to the gentiles of the mother country, the testimony - *"to put before their eyes"* - of Christian

families, which in the manner of Priscilla and Aquila show the true Christian religion, will be needed: "... after the as many families as possible of jealous and fervent Christians, destined to be missionaries in the manner of Saint Priscilla, to "put before the eyes of the gentiles for their lives the picture of Christianity that the priests teach them by mouth, to take closely contact with the gentiles, to bring them closer to Christians, for their examples, their patience, their kindness, their friendship ... " (DU 103).

In 1912, in a letter of May 1, he insisted to his friend L. Massignon that all Christians are called to the apostolate of goodness: *"It is by loving men that one learns to love God. The means of achieving charity towards God is to practice it with men. I do not know what God calls him especially: I know very well what he calls all Christians, men and women, priests and laity, celibate and married; to be apostles, apostles by example, by kindness, by a benevolent contact, by an affection that calls for conversion and leads to God, an apostle like Paul, like Aquila and Priscilla, but always an apostle, « doing everything to everyone to give all to Jesus »* (LLM 127).

In June 1916 there are some simple and sober meditative notes, very different from the long and tidy ones of Nazareth's time. In them he insists again on the means of the apostolate for all: "13. Lc. 1, 26, 38. *"You will call him Jesus."* *The name of Jesus, "Savior", expresses the work of Our Lord. If we want to imitate him, let's do his work. Let's consecrate our lives to save souls. Save by the means that God wants for each one of us. For all the good example, the prayer, the immolation, the virtue that for the communion of the saints most benefits for the salvation of all, for the brotherly love, the goodness. For the majority, the various works: charity, words, etc. "* (VDN 207)

## TALK 12

### THE UNIVERSAL FRATERNITY OR FRATERNAL LOVE FOR ALL MEN: ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The choice of universal brotherhood is inaugurated in the Gospel and in the New Testament through Jesus' attitude towards Gentiles and non-Jews. Jesus overthrows the barriers, makes himself near to those who are far away, he enters into dialogue or accepts the dialogue with them, lets himself be jostled by their expression of faith. But he runs up against the incomprehension of a part of his people, whose identity is seen as separate, exposed to violence and it is on the Cross "that he killed hatred" and that he gathered in unity the scattered children of God.

Charles de Foucauld, likewise, having lived all his adult life with non-believers or Jews and Muslims, developed early the relationship to the other as a fraternity, a universal fraternity or a brotherly love for all men. He is for us a master in change of scenery: he leaves his country to go to the country of the other (Morocco, Akbes, Algeria, Sahara).

He arrived at Beni-Abbès after his ordination, *"I want to become accustomed to all the inhabitants, Christians, Muslims, Jews and idolaters, to look at me as their brother, their universal brother"* He asks Castries to pray that he will be *"truly the brother of all the souls of this country"*. While waiting for him to become one, it is the "others" who are brothers for him, fraternal, military, and indigenous. He wants to accustom them to call his home "fraternity", he wants all the inhabitants of Béni Abbés to know that "the poor have a brother there: not only the poor but all the men". It's all about moving from hospitality to fraternity. In 1905 he moved to Tamanrasset, he spent a considerable time learning the language of the Touareg, learning their culture, he wanted to be one of them and serve for the understanding between Touareg and French by being translator between both languages. He respects the faith of the Muslims who welcome him.

He puts into practice the apostolate of goodness; he carries them in prayer.

## TALK 13

### THE POOR MEANS TO EVANGELIZE

Who has addressed the poorest of the poor, the most abandoned, the most remote, will he do so from strength, prestige or power, or from their own personal poverty?

There is no doubt that Br. Charles, by birth, culture, fortune, history, family, was someone besides rich, influential. Any French priest would not have obtained the permits that he achieved to settle in the Sahara, in a few years when the relations between the French State and the Church were so bad that it was reached until the separation of the Church and the State in 1904, without a little suffering and pain. He himself is aware of all this, as we have seen, (CBA 171) the moment he accompanies Laperrine on his appeasement tours. We can say something similar about the resources that his family and friends, and especially Mrs. Bondy, who put in his hands, so that he can not only stay in the Sahara, but also do the alms he did, both in kind, medicines, as in money. Br. Charles, who wanted to lower himself to the last place and in that movement of abasement lived subjective and personally his identification with poor Jesus, was not poor, although he lived in great austerity and poverty. This reached such a point that both his spiritual director and Bishop Guerin forced him to live taking more care of his body, both regarding food and sleep. But he was not poor, because he always had the money and resources he needed for everything he thought important: construction of his hermitages, alms, cost of routes through the Sahara, trips to France, printing regulations, etc. He remained a "gentleman", that even if he minutely recorded all the expenses and compared the prices of the products he distributed to the Tuareg in the markets, such as cotton, textiles, medicines, etc., he knew that it was enough, so he asked for it. To have what

was needed, just the contrary experience of who is really poor. Poverty is, in addition to the current lack of what is immediately necessary, the insecurity of tomorrow, which translates into vital uncertainty, and the burden of a daily and anxious search for daily bread.

And yet all this wealth of his, to which he could not completely renounce, even though he renounced his personal use, made it available to those, the poor, whom he first discovered in Armenia, in Akbes, in the persons of the peasants and orphans who surrounded the monastery, of all those who will find before and after his conversion in Saharan Africa: Muslims, "harratins", slaves, Tuareg, blacks, etc. And it was this disposition in charity that was the most important fruit of his poverty of life.

At the origin of his conversion we have observed what for Charles has represented the "descent" of the Verb from the Father. It is this descent that leads him to the stripping of his earthly wealth. With the passion of the conversion that is his in this moment of Nazareth, he writes:

Year 1898. "My God, I do not know if it is possible for some souls to see you poor and to remain voluntarily rich, to see themselves greater than their teacher, than their Beloved, not to want to resemble You in everything that depends on them and on everything in your descents, I believe that they love you, however I think that something is missing from their love, and in any case, I cannot conceive the love without a need, an imperious need of conformity, of similarity, and on everything to share all the pains, all the difficulties, all the hardships of life ... To be rich, to my taste, to live sweetly on my goods, when you have been poor, living painfully from a rough job! I cannot, my God ... I cannot love like this ... 'It is not good for the servant to be greater than the Master', nor for the wife to be rich when the Husband is poor, especially when He is voluntarily poor and is perfect!" (LDP, page 175)

And Charle returns to make his interlocutor Jesus speak, in this way:



"One of the reasons why I wanted to be poorer than the workers was that I have come to teach men contempt for men and contempt for the goods of the earth, and that I have endeavored to give them example of the greatest poverty and the greatest reduction ... Do the same ... You have the same motives as me ... including the last one, because it is your vocation to shout the Gospel on the rooftops, not with words, but with life " (LDP, page 175).

From what it follows that preaching with life is intimately linked to the poor life, and poor as that of Jesus.

But also, the practical detonating of this beloved Foucauldian idea will be a concrete event this time, especially regarding the means used in evangelization. He tells us in his Beni-Abbés diary:

June 2, 1903. "The visit of two marabouts of Ulad Mellaihaf, of the **Tafilelt**... Telling me of the trip of Monsignor Guerin and Father Vellard, they asked me: 'Are you traveling on foot?' In fact, these marabouts of the **Tafilelt**, although they didn't need to worry about Holy Poverty and seek enrichment, come from the **Tafilelt** on foot "(CBA, page 65).

A year later, in June 1904, he wrote, reviewing the needs of hypothetical future missionaries, who will make new journeys of recognition and appeasement for Sahara:

"As during the trip there are times when you have to do long stages and go through wide spaces without water, you have to foresee (with regard to the number of camels needed) that all missionaries and their servers are mounted, this should not prevent some and others do as much as possible of the stages on foot, to imitate Our Lord Jesus, and by penance, lowering and poverty, to relieve the animals and save for the purse of Jesus and the poor ... "(CBA , p 119)

The lesson received from the Muslim marabouts has not fallen on deaf ears.

But what matters above all is not so much the exclusive use of poor means, but the use of them because they were the ones used by Jesus.

And Jesus did not use the powerful means, but the small and humble ones:

"I have come to save the world, we have the same goal, we must not redeem the human race, but work for its salvation, let us employ the means that He himself has used, well, those means are not the wisdom human surrounded by splendor and brightness and sitting in the first place, but the divine wisdom, hidden under the appearance of a poor man, a man who lives by the work of his hands, a wise man and full of science, but poor, despised, abject, who never studied in the schools of men, but in his eyes was known as living humbly of a vile work ... "(AOS 186).

A new way of living apostolic poverty is deduced from the example of Jesus; it is to live from manual labor and also-in the consideration of the aristocrat Charles-a vile work.

Therefore, in the naivety of his imitative dream, Br. Charles in Beni-Abbés intends to imitate Jesus for vile work ... something he will never achieve.

"The second thing to do is find and do a job that ensures the daily bread of Paul and me, with the help of God, agriculture, orchard or trade, probably agriculture, vegetable garden and trade (according to the Regulation and according to the example of Jesus in Nazareth) " (CBA 103).

Poverty and the use of poor means always have the same objective in Carlos: the imitation of Jesus, and consequently the charity with the brothers. If poverty is accepted and even sought, it is because it is similar to Jesus, at the service of the charity of the brothers. Thus, in what we can call his "apostolic diary", Beni-Abbés notebook, he writes in May 1904:

"On these rocky outcrops that I myself have led you to, in spite of yourself, you can imitate my dwellings in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, you can completely imitate my life in Nazareth, you can exercise charity towards the inhabitants of the place and with the travelers Since you have them there,

charity towards your companion, relieving their fatigue, you can have recollection by suppressing the distractions caused by the long construction work on a mountain, poverty suppressing the expenses of this difficult construction, humility having like me a poor dwelling, humble and hidden, instead of one that can be seen from afar ... "(CBA 111).

When Brother Charles regulates this holy poverty for his brothers, he does it on the one hand with certain rigidity, but on the other he also understands that poverty is not only about giving, but also about receiving with love and delicacy the sharing of poor.

"We must live a very poor life, everything in the Fraternity must conform to the poverty of the Lord Jesus, the buildings, the furniture, the clothes, the food, the chapel, in short, everything.

We are allowed to receive, in case of urgent and exceptional need, either ours or our neighbor (because in this we do not make any difference between the Brothers and all the humans who are outside the Fraternity: *Love your neighbor as yourself*).

We are forbidden to receive loans, except for very small things or very little money, like the poor ... We do not receive stipends for Masses. We do not accept any remuneration from guests, from those who come to make a retreat, or from the sick who receive hospitality, relief or remedy: we give these reliefs for free, as Jesus gave them, as given by Jesus, as given to Jesus in his members.

We are allowed to receive gifts of little value, when they are offered to us spontaneously, and are rather signs of friendship than anything else, like a package of pious images or a basket of fruits...

We are driven according to the example of Our Lord Jesus in Nazareth, categorically prohibiting everything that would result in us not living by the work of our hands like Him, and granting us enough space to accept with small freedom of spirit, simplicity, sweetness, gratitude, small gifts friendly, as

he received them in Nazareth from his neighbors ... "(AOS 449-450).

As it can be seen, it is a poverty that, while remaining in a line of great austerity, nevertheless does not eliminate the most humane aspects of the relationship. Poverty is also measured, discerned, from the real situation of the neighbors, and at the same time by the freedom and the fruits of the Spirit that it produces. A beautiful way to live poverty from the Nazorean style of Jesus!

This invitation to apostolic poverty is proposed by Brother Charles not only to the religious, who were bound to it by the vows, but also later to the laity and priests who are part of the "Union", the work of his last years. Also in this case, the recommendations are made from the election of Jesus on the one hand, and, on the other, the need to dedicate the riches - those who have them and keep them - in favor of the most abandoned peoples, the gentile peoples.

Article IX of the Directory of the Union, which is dedicated to Holy Poverty, begins as follows:

"The brothers and sisters of the Sacred Heart will remember that in order to be united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we have to have the same tastes as He ... What example has he wanted to give us, to give us all, even to the King's children, since He was, to give it to all, not only celibates, but also married people, since in Nazareth he lived as a family, between Mary and Joseph, not only religious but also people who live in the world , since in Nazareth He lived in the middle of the world? What He wanted, what He chose for Him, was to be called "the son of the Carpenter, the carpenter son of Mary", that is his lot, the lot of the beloved ones ... Being as poor as the divine "carpenter son of Mary" is not a mandate, but it is an urgent advice ... "(DU 33).

In article XXI, dedicated to "Charity, Peace, Humility, Courage", he writes:

"With our resources, however small, let us do a part for poor Jesus, consulting our director about their amount, let us ask

the director for permission to make this amount great, since the only item of our goods that we will find in the afterlife is what we have given to Jesus in this, and of all the inheritances that we leave to our children, the best is by far the example and the habit of a life of charity and beneficence. If we are poor, we do not seek to earn much to be able do great alms, which would be contrary to the example of Jesus, let us take in this, as in everything, model in Him. He was poor in Nazareth and could not give more than very small alms, as a poor, but what he could, he gave with infinite charity, he gave his heart, his tenderness, his compassion, his good words, his cares, his services The houses of the brothers and sisters must be known by the poor and the unfortunate and it must be known in the neighborhood that they are charity handlers" (DU 56).

And after writing this beautiful article, in the XXXVII, which corresponds to the special duties of brothers and sisters towards the faithful of remote places, it nuances the ways and possibilities of living this holy poverty, and writes:

"If God allows some to keep the riches, instead of becoming materially poor as Jesus did, it is for them to avail themselves of this deposit entrusted to them, as faithful servants, according to the Master's will, to learn more, or educate their children better, or make other spiritual and temporal goods, or give spiritual resources where they are necessary for the fulfillment of the spiritual good. They will have to account for the good they should have done and did not do. In the Gospel, Jesus told us and repeated: Love each other ... Do what you want to be done ... Love your neighbor as yourself ... "(DU 99).

We contemplate that throughout his life, Br. Charles has made it clear that living as poor as Jesus and surrendering himself as poor to the poorest brothers are part of his way of understanding evangelization and the apostolate. If the model is Jesus, and Nazareth, nothing that is far from his poverty and smallness can fit into the apostolic form. Nothing different from a "Carpenter, son of

Mary", must be transparent and signified by those who wish to follow him, as his Spouse, Master and Unique Model. The discernment of the apostolic ways must be done on this imitation, updated by the "measure" of the poor that surround the fraternity-apostolic family that they know as a home of charity. If the means used by this fraternity make it far superior to those of the surrounding families, how can they recognize in this the Carpenter's house, the roof of the Good Shepherd? Because ultimately the great alms that a powerful community could do, is not comparable to the tenderness, compassion, good words, care and services that arise from the intimate love of the one who loves as himself ...

If the poor do not feel in the house of the Fraternity as in their own, they will not be able to recognize the Carpenter God who was one of them to save them.