

## Missionary diocesan priests in the light of Blessed Brother Charles de Foucauld

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Today, at the beginning of the year 2019, we find ourselves in a new international context which presents several challenges.

- **The challenge of the degradation of our common house** with its amount of sufferings as Pope Francis calls it. Climatic changes, rising sea water, multiplication of cyclones in several regions of the earth, tornadoes, floods and in other areas drought and desertification of certain other areas. We can observe that it's often the most deprived populations that are primarily concerned by these calamities. These climate changes started to force millions of people to take the route to exile. Concerned with the multiple shipwrecks of migrants coming from Africa trying to reach the coast of Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, Pope Francis reminds us of these facts during his journey to the Isle of Lampedusa in Italy.

- **The challenge of immigration** concerning all the countries in the world. We know that the migrations inside the southern hemisphere are more frequent than those from the south to the north.

Because of violence, insecurity and all sort of misery, a more and more critical number of populations are taking the road to exile looking for a haven of peace and a place to live in absolute security with their family...

Concerned with the multiple shipwrecks of migrants coming from Africa trying to reach the coast of Europe and the Mediterranean Sea, Pope Francis reminds us of these facts during his journey to the Isle of Lampedusa in Italy.

“ Today, this question emerges with force: Who is responsible for all the misery encountered by these brothers and sisters? None! They all say: It's not me! I'm not from here! It's the others! And certainly not me!

God is asking us the question: « Where is the blood of your brother crying out for me?” Today, nobody in this world feels he is responsible for this. We've lost the feeling of brotherhood responsibility. We fell into the priest's and Levite's hypocritical attitude Jesus was talking about in the Good Samaritan's parable.

We are looking at the half-dead brother on the side of the road, maybe we're thinking “poor guy,” but we will continue our way, it's not our business!

In this world of globalization, we fell into the globalization of indifference.”

- In front of the risks of destabilization of our societies, we find more and more **temptations of identity withdrawal** and the implementation of governments who exalt national pride and national preference and who don't want to hear anything about international solidarity. In Europe, in the United States of America and other countries of the world, the leaders have become champions in the fight against immigration and nationalism is substantially supported by a large part of their population! Under these conditions, living together in mutual respect of our cultural and religious diversities becomes very difficult. Moreover, it becomes very urgent that a proposition of meditation, a real service of encounter is made. All this is a real challenge for us, disciples of Charles de Foucauld.

- Otherwise, in many countries of the world we see Islam tearing itself apart and the development of extremist tendencies. **The fear of Islam** touches a large part of the public opinion in our countries. The international context is ready for all kinds of dramatizations. Via the internet, the fragile minds of our societies are touched by the Islam atrocities. Fear of terrorism and the violence are making their way in public opinion. Amalgams between Islam and Islamism, maintained by irresponsible political leaders, is gaining ground. We are disconcerted by the divisions of the Muslim's communities in our countries. In numerous countries, the figure of Muslim focuses on fear and discriminations. And it is evident that more the dialogue with the Muslims becomes difficult the more it becomes urgent.

- Finally, more generally, I would like to talk about the diagnostic on the actual state of our human family, made by a French theologian, Paul Valadier. « **The human family is at a point of its history where it could lose itself.** Lose itself biologically if it destroys its foster ecosystems or destroys itself using mass destruction arms or with the explosive cocktail of misery and humiliation which produces more and more unsustainable wars, including wars of religion. However, it may also destroy itself morally and spiritually. Paul Valadier questions the dominant cultural and political system which has a kind of blindness for the tragic international situation as we know it.” Also, he adds “We can have hope only if we think about the extent of the tragic risks we have to face.”

Confronted with this extraordinarily critical and tense situation, with many conflicts and multiple acts of violence, I'm asking myself the following question: **“How is the Universal Brotherhood going to bear witness relevantly as it was lived and expressed by our brother Charles?”**

**More particularly, how are we, diocesan priests and missionary disciples enlightened by the message of Brother Charles, confronted with new cultural and religious diversities, going to be servants of the encounter within the heart of the Christian communities of which we are the pastors?**

Nowadays, in Church, we are asking ourselves these questions, and particularly in the light of the new missionary momentum brought forward by Pope François in the apostolic exhortation "the Joy of the Gospel" which invites us to become "a Church in the exterior."

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More than ever, I would like to talk to you about my conviction that in this troubled context, crossed by temptations of retreat where the other appears more as a threat than as a brother, Brother Charles's message of universal fraternity seems as hot news.

We, his disciples, like him diocesan priests, like him carried by this passion of shouting the Gospel by all our lives and pastors of Christian communities who are called to be salt of the earth, and witnesses, at the heart of our societies, "An authentic fraternity in respect of the cultural and religious diversity of the populations where we are located, we have the imperative to be like him servants of the meeting, initiators of the dialogue, whatever it costs.

I will, therefore, endeavor to contemplate with Brother Charles the art of dialogue and fraternity with the poor and persons of another religion

I'll answer these questions by attaching myself to the figure of Charles de Foucauld as a master of dialogue with those who do not have the same faith as we do. I do not refer to the interreligious dialogue to which Brother Charles, in the theological context of his time, was a stranger.

I believe that he has installed "dialogue of life" with the Muslim Tuaregs when he met them. It was presented as the fundamental basis of all dialogue by the Vatican Council II and by Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*.

He was able to open the dialogue between him and his guests and create a climate of confidence at a point of becoming for them "a friend."

He showed that the mission of the Church is also to arouse the brother's interest in respecting the differences of culture and religion as it is used later by the Church as a strong opening of the dialogues started by the Vatican Council II and in particular by the decree "Nostra Aetate."

So we can recognize that for the diocesan priests of the priestly brotherhood *Jesus Caritas* that Brother Charles has initiated a spirituality of dialogue which today still can inspire us in our pastoral and missionary responsibility as well as in all encounters that we experience not only with the Muslims but also with all other individuals that don't have the same faith as we do.

He realized by all his life, this expression of the apostolic exhortation of Pope John-Paul II "Pastores dabo vobis" in 1992:

"As the priest is in the church the man of communion, he has to be with all the men, man of mission and dialog. Deeply rooted in the Truth and charity of Christ and animated by the desire and inner need to announce to all salvation, he is called to form with all men relations of brotherhood and service in a common search of the truth by working to promote justice and peace"

It shows us that we are not only priests for our Christian communities but signs in Christ belonging to a fraternity with all men and women regardless of their affiliation.

Doing so we can contribute in giving a concrete and incarnate image to this definition of the Church provided by the Vatican Council II: "Sacramento in Christ, which means sign and way of intimate union between God and unity of the whole humanity."

I'll give you some items concerning the way Brother Charles opened the dialogue with "the others" which seem fundamental to me.

### **1. Consent to change of scenery**

We all find that to live the encounter and start the dialogue with the one we recognize as "different," we must agree to "go out" of our familiar places to go on the ground of the other. Also, it's never easy to live this "migration."

In this sense, Brother Charles is for us a master of change of scenery.

This change of scenery, he lived it in stages:

First of all by personal taste. It was before his conversion, the trip of recognition to Morocco, a country in which he enters disguised as a rabbi. To do this, he first learned Hebrew and Arabic ...And this trip is marked by a remarkable concern for understanding the other and also to be touched by the people he meets. So his life x=will be saved thanks to the intervention of a Muslim friend. This experience was recorded in his beautiful book : "Recognition in Marocco."

But the fundamental change of scenery for him, it is his conversion that is the cause, his personal encounter with this God he was looking for and shockingly revealed to him at the end of October 1886:

"As soon as I thought there was a God, I realized that I could not help but live for Him alone. " It is from now God who will take him by the hand.

So after this meeting, he make this choice "leave forever my family who was doing all my happiness by going far away from her to live and die. "

It is for him to leave his familiar world, as before him Abraham has received the call of God to leave the house of his father

He will live this change of scenery successively at the Notre Dame Neiges abbey then at the Trap of Akbès in Syria, then as a servant at the Poor Clares of Nazareth, in a heart to hear with this poor Jesus of Nazareth and hidden life that has revealed itself to him in the Holy Land.

And it is the second term of his change of scenery: to go to the others to meet them to immerse oneself in a people like Jesus in the mystery of the incarnation.

And these two terms of the change of scenery will be intimately linked. We cannot think of Brother's Charles universal fraternity without his answer to the call of God.

From this call he makes the choice to migrate to one who is most forgotten

"My diaconate and priesthood retreats have shown me that this life of Nazareth, it was necessary to lead it not in the beloved Holy Land, but among the sickest souls, the most abandoned sheep." LHC June 23, 1901

He went to Algeria, to Beni Abbès, to enter Morocco later.

Then in Beni Abbès, while he seems stabilized in a life shared between the contemplation and service of the country's natives and soldiers, he feels a call again to leave with the letters of Colonel Laperrine.

And in this invitation to a new change of scenery, he saw a certain inner turmoil that he spoke about to Monseigneur Guérin:

"Yes, every shift, every movement frightens me, makes me dizzy. I'm afraid of going astray, and I'm worried I won't be able.

All at once the fear of illusion and natural cowardice inspires me with this dread of every decisive action. However, usually, this dread ceases as soon as I put myself in the hands of my director and

abandon to him. From that moment, reigns a deep peace and all hesitation stops... It is the peace, the joy, calm confidence, and a lively but very quiet desire. LMG June 30, 1903

These words show us that this change of scenery is always a source of destabilization, but carried by prayer and verified by those who accompany it, and it becomes an essential path for the mission. However, this expatriation carries for Brother Charles his requirements:

Learning the language of the people in which he comes to immerse himself:

Time to learn the Tamahac language which was for him another way to get away from it all where he put all his energy and his intelligence.. He shows us that the price for entering into dialogue is through this introduction to the language of the other. And he will make from this knowledge of this language a big French tamajeq dictionary which allow communication of one population to another, spiritual service of fraternity.

Learning the culture of the other.

Brother Charles also spent much time getting acquainted with Tuareg poetry. He has thus penetrated the universe of the culture of the other, of his genius by the discovery of the feelings that inhabit him. He shows us that there is no in-depth knowledge of a people without understanding their way of being in their relationship with nature, in their relationship with others and with God.

Pope Francis agrees with this call to change of scenery when he invites us to "come out the geographical and existential peripheries. "In his exhortation, he develops at length "the joy of the Gospel" what this dynamic of "going out" for our Christian communities implies. (see in particular §24 which details the major features of an outgoing Church.) He places this dynamic in the line of the primordial call made by Yahweh to Abraham: "Go, leave your country, your Father's house to the land that I will show you" Gn.12,1It is the necessary condition for him to become a mediator of God's blessings among the nations.

Call for us Priests of the Priestly Fraternity Jesus Caritas. We have to initiate our communities to this dynamic of "exit" which is not very familiar to our parishioners rather centered on their "steeple." Teach them to go out to others. Accept the change of scenery that it implies. Consent to receive the hospitality of the other. Learn little by little its culture, "its language." Enter through dialogue in otherness and reciprocity with the other. Re-read all that these dialogues have as a repercussion on the life of the faith. It is at this price that we live the first steps of evangelization. We must ensure that our communities do not become "self-referential" as Pope Francis invites us to do.

## **2. Respect for the freedom of others**

Brother Charles never used constraint to spread his faith. While keeping a sincere desire that Muslims can discover the faith and the person of Christ, he has always respected their freedom. There was a moment when he understood that he would not make any conversion to the Christian faith. In 1908, at a turning point in his life, he wrote:

"I have not made a severe conversion for 7 years that I am here ... As a serious conversion, it's zero!

I will say something sadder still; The more I go, the more I think there is no point in trying to do isolated conversions for the moment. No doubt, God can do anything. He can, by his grace, convert Muslims and whomever He wants in a moment. However, so far he did not want to do it.

It seems that it is not his intention to grant this conversion to holiness alone. It remains to employ the most reasonable means while sanctifying itself as much as possible and remembering that we do good to the extent that we are good.

These slow and ungrateful means are education through contact and instruction. Above all, one must not be discouraged by the difficulty, but to say to oneself that the more difficult, slow, ungrateful the work is, the more it is necessary to put in great haste to work and to make great efforts. "

What is striking in this letter is that Brother Charles's finding of the impossibility of conversion, in pain, in no way leads to a choice to interrupt his presence in this people whose lives he shares. He could have said to himself that the conversion of the "infidels" being his priority, he was going to seek other more favorable grounds for his mission.

On the contrary, he resolutely decides to remain in the midst of these people with whom, in the name of Jesus, he has somehow contracted an alliance.

He wants to continue this friendship dialogue that has already begun. He wants to make his contribution to the education of these people by leaving God the leisure to lead these people according to their mysterious designs.

Later, in a letter to Joseph Hours whom he wants to initiate to the mission that he started, he will say that it is necessary to ban "all militant spirit," that is to say any spirit of coercion. In this, he is sure to be in the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus who always respects the freedom of the people he meets. "Jesus taught us to go like" lambs among the wolves, "and not to speak sourly, harshly, or to take up my arms." LJH May 3, 1912

To follow this path, only one way: "Read and re-read the Holy Gospel incessantly, to have before the mind the acts, the words, the thoughts of Jesus to think, speak, act like Him. "

This is enough to enlighten us, diocesan priests, in the dialogues that we can establish not only with the Muslims but with all the people who do not share our faith.

In a context where what is said about "the new evangelization" can sometimes appear marked by means of "marketing" or advertising, it is good to assert with Brother Charles that the testimony of faith cannot pass only by the most profound respect of the people with whom we dialogue.

As Brother Charles says: "It is a question of preaching the Gospel on the roofs, not by word, like Saint Francis of Assisi, but by one's whole life. "... which does not exempt us from" giving an account of hope to those who ask us to account ... but with gentleness and respect. » (IP.3,15)

We have to be only "presence of Gospel" by radiating it by all our life.

### **3) Win the trust, become a friend**

The dialogue to which Paul VI invites us in the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* calls clarity, gentleness, humility, kindness, generosity, patience, trust, prudence...

In this context of the conditions of dialogue, Brother Charles also appears as a pioneer:

In the same letter to Joseph Hours, he characterizes the relations that can be formed with the Muslims who surround him: "To first prepare the ground in silence by kindness, intimate contact, a good example; to love them from the bottom of the heart, to be esteemed by them, and to love them; in this way, to break down prejudices, to gain confidence, to acquire authority - it takes time -

then to talk to the most willing, very cautiously, little by little, differently, giving everyone what they are able to receive ... "

I note several realities in this process:

"Silence and goodness" because goodness is already a language. It knits with the person met a relationship that allows it to be welcomed as it is with a spirit of benevolence devoid of any possessiveness.

"Love them from the bottom of the heart and enter into reciprocal esteem" ... which supposes to refuse any relation which would aim to annex the other or to try to assimilate it. On the contrary enter into reciprocal esteem where everyone in the relationship gives and receives.

"Breaking down prejudices." It is often the representation we have of the other that prevents dialogue: prejudices because of past history and centuries of accumulated resentment, international events that highlight the violence and aggression that mark relations between Muslims and Christians ... in particular the relations between Christians and Muslims are hampered by this sum of prejudices that we must overcome to enter into reciprocal esteem. "Getting confidence ... it takes much time." Claude Rault, the former bishop of the Sahara speaks of the need for "geological patience" to gain confidence.

Brother Charles speaks of an "apostolate of goodness" that has its source in the love of Christ in us, to enter into dialogue with Muslims. "What M. Huvelin told me on my last trip to France (in 1909): My apostolate must be that of kindness. When one sees me, he must say to himself: "Since this man is good, his religion must be good. If one asks why I am kind and good, I must say, "Because I am the servant of a good much better than me. If you only knew how good my master Jesus is! " For Brother Charles, the only way that can bear witness to the Gospel right now is to establish dialogue and trust with Muslims.

For us, diocesan priests, it is a call to recognize that strong friendships can be forged with people who do not share our faith and enlighten the life of our communities to bring down fears.

With respect for differences, a spiritual depth can develop to the point that dialogue can become for both of us a necessity that allows us to deepen our respective faith.

Thus, in my diocese, we have initiated for the duration of one year, a monthly meeting between Muslims and Christians. The starting point of the dialogue is a book written by a Muslim and a Christian theologian, and we can express how prayer, the reference to our respective Scriptures, the love of our neighbor takes place in our paths of faith.

To be able to have such dialogues, it was necessary that each one took the time of the reciprocal accepting and getting to know the other.

It is also necessary that both recognized the clarity of the differences, and that there is no temptation to proselytize or assimilate on either side.

#### **4) Adjust oneself to God's view of the people we meet.**

This friendship that Brother Charles wants to develop with the Tuaregs is rooted in the spirituality of Nazareth and is inseparable from the constant prayer that unites him to his beloved Lord: Christ.

In the same letter to Joseph Hours, he refers to "look upon every human being as a beloved brother, as a child of God, a soul redeemed by the blood of Jesus, a beloved soul of Jesus."

Brother Charles in his meeting with the Tuaregs insists on the rooting of the apostle in the charity of Jesus: "It is the basis of our religion. It compels the Christian to love the neighbor, that is to say, all human, like himself, and consequently to make of salvation to his neighbor, as of his salvation, the biggest business of his life. Every Christian must be an apostle: it is not guidance, it is a commandment, the commandment of charity. "

It was in prayer, at the foot of the tabernacle, in an attitude of deep adoration, during the retreat that prepared him for the priesthood that imposed on him the new direction of his life that pushed him towards the poorest and in particular to Muslims.

It is there that he becomes aware that if the priesthood demands an absolute gift of himself to Jesus, he also calls for a universal fraternity, a complete consecration to all men and in particular to the poorest. Also, he continues to invite the secular with whom he wants to ensure his mission to enter this movement.

It is the originality of the spirituality of Nazareth that closely combines the contemplation of God in the incarnation of his Son in the heart of our humanity and a desire for closeness to all suffering humanity for which Christ gave his life and open his salvation.

Following Brother Charles, I believe that for us, members of the priestly fraternity, there can be no encounter and dialogue with the brothers who do not share our faith that springs from the consciousness of being worn and inhabited by the love of Christ.

At the beginning of every encounter with the unknown brother or who comes from elsewhere, there is this word of God: "Do not be afraid! I am with you! "

It is this love of God incarnated in the person of Jesus that gives us sufficient assurance to risk us to meet the other differently.

There is a contemplative dimension of universal brotherhood that we must never forget. It is being inhabited by the Spirit of the Risen One that we are called to meet our brothers and sisters and to accompany our communities in this movement of brotherhood. It emphasizes the importance for us the importance for us to respect our times of adoration and desert because they are times earned by the others.

Starting only from this experience of prayer, we can adjust ourselves to the look of love and mercy that God has on all his children; Do we know how to be the reflections of this divine benevolence near them?

This is what Brother Christian de Chergé wrote on March 8, 1996, shortly before the abduction of the monks:

"We have to be witnesses of Emmanuel, that is to say of" with God ". There is a presence of the "God among men" that we must assume.

It is in this perspective that we understand our vocation to be the fraternal presence of men and women who share the life of Algerians in prayer, silence, and friendship. God loved the Algerians so much that he gave them his Son, his Church and each of us with them.

"There is no greater love than giving your life for those we love! (In "Seven lives for God and for Algeria" p.207-208)

**5) Work together in the service of justice and development in society.**

Brother Charles wanted to share as closely as possible the living conditions of the Tuaregs in whose midst he lived. He didn't stop only at living with them, but he invested himself in improving the daily life of the inhabitants of Hoggar and in the human and social development of this region. He paid attention to the health problems that affected this population and brought in medications that could relieve some ailments. He worked on economic problems, irrigation techniques, water retention, and local agriculture.

He tries to obtain plowing tools, seeds because he makes every effort for the sedentarisation of the populations.

He worries about herd diseases, drought, locusts that destroy meager crops, a fly that attacks camels ...

It encourages the development of communications and supports development for the first car connection across the desert, the trans-Saharan train project, all for the well-being of the people. Previously when he was in Beni Abbès, he actively engaged in the fight against slavery practices on which the French authorities closed their eyes complacently. He wanted to alert public opinion to these serious attacks on people's dignity.

"Woe to you, hypocrites, who put on the stamps and everywhere" Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Human Rights, and who attach the irons of slavery, who condemn to hell those who falsify your banknotes and allow to steal children from their parents and sell them publicly ... " "We do not have the right to be sleeping sentries, dumb dogs, indifferent smugglers ..." He is not afraid to denounce the political attitudes that generate the injustices of which the poor are the victims. It was by common humanity that he forged an educational and constructive "dialogue of works" with this population whose living conditions he shared. There was for him in this concrete commitment in the service of development an element of verification of the strength of charity that Christ had put in him: "It is a question of proving to these poor brothers that our religion is all charity, all fraternity and that his emblem is a heart. »LAH July 15, 1904. He has thus shown us the face of a "diaconal Church" which contributes to the improvement of the human condition and the struggle against all that disfigures humanity.

This perspective joins Pope Francis' call to make our church communities places where an active universal fraternity is experienced. "Authentic faith ... always implies a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave something better after our journey on earth. We love this magnificent planet where God has placed us, and we love the humanity that inhabits it, with all its dramas and its weariness, with its aspirations and hopes, with its values and its weaknesses. The earth is our common home, and we are all brothers. Although "the just order of society and the state is an essential duty of the political," the Church can not and must not be left out in the struggle for justice. All Christians and also priests are called to care for the construction of a better world. E.G., No. 183.

The Christian communities we accompany are located in human settlements, in neighborhoods or villages where they share the same living conditions as their fellow citizens. The faithful of our parishes experience the same problems of unemployment, economic precariousness, insecurity concerning the future, and tensions between generations in the families.

With all the citizens of these neighborhoods, whatever their culture or their religious conviction, they are called to commit themselves to the defense of the dignity of the people, for solidarity with the most fragile, to fight against exclusion, for life in a community.

These areas of common commitment where people diverse in culture or religion can establish simple places of dialogue that allow each other to grow in mutual trust and where the barriers that hold human communities in the fear and distrust are reversed.

As pastors, disciples of Brother Charles, we have to initiate a dynamic of "Exit" from our communities to help the faithful not only to participate actively in the animation of the local life but also to carry in prayer and the liturgy all this humanity on the path of fraternity.

Thus, in Val de Reuil, in a city in my diocese where populations from Africa and Asia rub shoulders with the Normans, the Catholic parish is part of a collective of associations that aims to offer parties and intercultural encounters to develop the social bond and create a sense of belonging to a real human community. This is an opportunity for Christians to dialogue with Muslims and Buddhists and to get to know each other better.

Thus, in line with Brother Charles' message of universal fraternity, the Church participates in building the unity of the human family according to the vocation recognized by Vatican Council II.

Brother Charles would be happy to see his intuition extend and flourish for the good of the whole Church through the Council.

## **6) The place of the paschal mystery in the dynamics of universal fraternity**

All those who have placed, at the heart of their faith and mission, the desire to witness to the universal brotherhood, know that the Cross is never far away. Our brothers and sisters in Algeria who were beatified last December are here to remind us. They went so far as to give their lives in fidelity to the Algerian people whose lives they shared and in loyalty to Christ who was at the source of this gift.

Brother Charles reminds us of it, until the day of his death on December 1, 1916:

"Our annihilation is the most powerful way to unite ourselves to Jesus and to do good to souls," he wrote to his cousin Marie de Bondy.

For him, there is a close link between the mystery of the Cross and the universality of Christ's love:

"He (Brother Charles) knows that by standing at the foot of the Cross, he will be, above all, a savior with Jesus. He learned it from Saint John, whose gospel he meditated: It is at the moment when the beloved apostle finds himself, silent and helpless, on Calvary and keeps his gaze fixed on Jesus while doing nothing. Other than to contemplate it ... it is at this very moment that St. John is present to the "last," to the unhappy, to the abandoned, to all those deprived of love, to all men; He is more deeply and intensely present to them than ever before, for he is with Jesus-Savior, in the heart, with Him all over the world ... "Jean-François Six" Spiritual Route of Charles de Foucauld "Ed. du Seuil p.264

So it is in the mystery of the Eucharist that he realizes in him God's universality of the gift in the person of Jesus. He feels impelled to meet the most forgotten men to witness to them the universal radiance of the love of Christ. This is what makes him state this recommendation in the Constitution of the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart:

"May their universal and fraternal charity shine like a beacon: Let no one, even a sinner, even an unfaithful one, know very far around, that they are the universal friends, the universal brothers, consuming their lives to pray for all men without exception and to do them good.

Let them know that their fraternity is a harbor, an asylum where every human, especially poor and unhappy, is at every hour fraternally invited, desired and received.

And that this fraternity is, according to its name, the house of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the divine love radiating on earth, of the burning charity of the savior of all men. "

Well, I think that if we, priests of the Priesthood Fraternity Jesus Caritas, want to live in the aftermath of Brother Charles, this universal fraternity with people who do not share our faith and who sometimes oppose to us, we will avoid the Cross. And this for several reasons:

### 1) Because following Jesus is also carrying his cross

We know that if, as Brother Charles did, we put our steps in those of Jesus, it is a matter of following him to the end, who tells us incessantly: "If anyone wants to walk with me then, let him deny himself and take up his cross every day and follow me "Lk. 9.23

The disciple is not above the master...

### 2) Because dialogue constantly calls for space for the other,

to listen to them, to give up any temptation to hold on to the other ... This ties in with Brother Charles's call to "take the last place," which then becomes an essential principle for entering into otherness.

In order to enter into a fraternal relationship with "the other", we have to "die" in a certain way to the "old man", to the one who tenses in a possessive way about his cultural or national identity, about his claim to hold the truth in an exclusive way and to dominate the other or reject it when it bothers us.

Dialogue always calls for consenting to let oneself somehow be transformed by the other, to allow oneself to be "corrupted" by the other, and even to assume some injury to the relationship with the other.

Brother Charles teaches us that in every way of universal fraternity, there is a paschal dimension of the relationship that we must assume.

So it is also a challenge inherent in our pastoral responsibility within our communities to help them open up to this Easter dimension of this path of fraternity that we must trace to the heart of our societies.

### 3) Because this path of universal fraternity will always be confronted with the violence of identities in the societies where we live.

Christ himself came up against this violence at the moment of passion on this path of fraternity where he broke down the religious barriers that separated the "pure" from the "impure" and where he called for the love of enemies. This attitude earned him the condemnation of the High Priest: "It is better for one man to die rather than to perish the whole nation." However, it is in this very place of the confrontation with the paroxysm of the violence and the refusal of the other, by dying on the cross, until the end of the love which consists of giving one's life and introducing the forgiveness, that

universal fraternity manifests its power. As St. Paul will later say, "In his person, he has killed hate"  
Eph. 2.16

We know, then, that Jesus' "excess of openness," and this path of universal brotherhood he calls us to live, always disturbs a possessive and exclusive conception of the identity of a people or a nation.

We, diocesan priests, following Brother Charles, if we undertake to defend the principle of hospitality to migrants, if we open ourselves to dialogue with Muslims, if we are servants of the meeting between people who are often afraid of each other, if we fight against discriminations, we know that we will inevitably encounter hostility and contradiction even within our communities. But it is at this price that we will be peacemakers and fraternity at the heart of our peoples who are now won by fear. And it is also at that price that the Christian communities which we accompany will become with Christ "signs of the intimate union with God and the unity of the human family" as we call it *Lumen Gentium*.

Remember this word of Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

"Let us go out, let us go out to offer to all the life of Jesus Christ ... I prefer a Church that is hilly, wounded and dirty to have gone out by the ways than a Church sick of being closed up and in the comfort of clinging to its security ... »EG N ° 19

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In conclusion, I would like to quote this expression of Pope Francis which characterizes well the approach of Brother Charles in his relationship with Tuaregs:

"Love for people is a spiritual force that enables total encounter with God, so much that one who does not love his brother" walks in darkness "(1 Jn.2,11)," dwells in darkness "(1 Jn.3,14) and" did not know God "(1 Jn.4,8) ...

So when we live the mystic of approaching each other, to seek their good, we dilate our inner being to receive the most beautiful gifts of the Lord.

Whenever we meet a human being in love, we put ourselves in a condition that allows us to discover something new from God.

Every time our eyes open to recognize the neighbor, our faith is illuminated to recognize God.

It turns out that if we want to grow in spiritual life, we can not stop being missionaries.

The work of evangelization enriches the mind and the heart, opens our spiritual horizons, makes us more sensitive to recognize the action of the Spirit, takes us out of our limited spiritual patterns ...

"EG.No. 272

These words are like an anticipation of what Brother Charles wrote in 1898;

"We have only one heart; the same heart with which we love God is also the one with which we love our neighbor.

If our heart heats up, ignites, becomes tender in the practice of the love of the neighbor, it also becomes warmer, more delicate to love God.

Our heart cannot be fire for God and ice for men; neither fire for men nor ice for God.

So the more our hearts gain heat by applying themselves to love men, the more they can love God.

So that it is right said that if one wants to acquire the love of God, the best way is to apply to love men.

Thus neighborly love is not only one of the surest signs of God's love, but one of the surest means of acquiring it. "

Blessed Brother Charles, Pope Francis, same path of fraternity, same passionate desire to go out to meet brothers and sisters who do not yet know Christ, same concern to "cry out the Gospel through all his life", diocesan priests, disciples of Brother Charles, let us be the prophetic pastors that our fractured world needs!