

Re Workshop # 8: To live a faithful life

Excerpts from the CIOFS Manual : section The VOCATION, CHARISM and MISSION of S.F.

VOCATION AS TOTAL AVAILABILITY

The Vocation comes from God, therefore it cannot but be **oriented to Him**.

The only way in which man can correspond to God is by giving his **full and unlimited availability** to all which God wants to use him for (Gen 12:1; 1Sam 3:9; Is 6:8; Acts 9:6).

Vocation demands **man's entire life** and requires a correspondingly **complete response**. Those who are called by God to commit themselves and put conditions or time limits to their commitment, have not understood anything of the theological nature of vocation.

This **total availability is the necessary condition for any life of vocation to be able to produce fruits of salvation**.

The fulfilment of every call is realized in the Spirit. For this reason we have to invoke Him unceasingly with faith and passion.

Only unconditional docility enables the Spirit to work in us: *to welcome vocation is to let oneself be lead as leaves by the wind of Pentecost...*

Living the vocation as a life in the Spirit corresponds to **devoting oneself to others in love**, in an *exodus without return* in which we can reach the fulfilment of our —being || and of our —doing || in the accomplishment of God's plan: —Called for the love and sake of those who have not yet been called to realize the communion with God || .

THE SPECIFIC FRANCISCAN VOCATION

The treatment of this theme would require first the acquisition of sufficient elements on the *Charism of St. Francis* and of the *Franciscan Spirituality* to be coherently developed. However, while we still are in this *vocational* context we can start laying down some initial essential points.

¹³ This section and the following are taken from H. U. von Balthasar —*Vocazione*”, Ed. Rogate, 2002

Francis is always appealing and effectual because he —incarnates || the complete Jesus Christ. This is good in itself, because he draws us closer to Christ. However, when it comes to *vocation* this may cause some problems. Many people, in fact, are naturally attracted by Francis and believe they have a *Franciscan vocation*. Unfortunately this is not always necessarily so. Let us see why.

Every human being needs to give a meaning to his/her life, to find the origin of his/her life, to find a father, *the Father, the giver of Life*. In a sense we could say that, more or less consciously, in this search, as if *reminiscing about our origin*, we long for the Trinitarian homeland. Man, ultimately, searches for the Father, the origin of Life and for his perfect realization.

Jesus, the Son, is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He alone can lead us to the Father. Therefore, somehow, **Jesus is whom we search for and whom we long for**, whether we are aware of it or not.

The world is searching for Christ and finds in Francis His living, vibrant and fully understandable representation, in both a historical and human form. This is why all people feel attracted by Francis.

All that Francis did and what he became, was the result of his *imitatio Christi* (*imitation of Christ*). Francis became an *alter Christus* (*another Christ*).

This is why in every age, believers and non believers, have been inspired by Francis: he has become, and is, a true sacrament of Jesus Christ. It is perfectly understandable, then, to be attracted by Francis: he reminds of Christ and leads us to Him!

Being attracted, however, does not necessarily correspond to a vocation to bind oneself permanently into a —consecrated || Franciscan —religious || or —secular || form of life. An accurate discernment is necessary. It is necessary to understand with the help of God what He wants from us.

ONE CAN BE INSPIRED BY FRANCIS BUT NOT BE DESTINED TO SERVE IN A CONSECRATED FRANCISCAN FORM OF LIFE.

Francis was chosen by God as an example, as a model, for the entire People of God, for all mankind and not only for the —Franciscans || .

In order to understand if we have a genuine FRANCISCAN VOCATION it is essential **to know Francis**, to confront ourselves with him. It is necessary to move away from generic feelings, from romanticism and sentimentalism and understand if, in fact, the *project* God has prepared for us goes in the very same direction of Francis' project.

TO HAVE A REAL FRANCISCAN VOCATION, means to be called to take **the same path of identification and total conformity** that Francis took with *his Christ*.

To have a genuine FRANCISCAN VOCATION, whether religious apostolic, contemplative or secular, means this: to verify our own availability to fully embrace this path.

This FRANCISCAN WAY requires:

following Jesus without reservations in the footsteps of Saint Francis: in other words, to be ready, in our specific state of life, to follow Jesus just as Francis did.

to discover, accept and develop within ourselves the same Charism received by Saint Francis, so as to make it present and bring it to fruition in the world.

This spiritual —style || entails:

a very intense *Eucharistic spirituality* (kénosis)

a very strong *fraternal communion*

simplicity

love of *poverty*

humility

a genuine sense of *minority*

a complete and active abandonment to God, which materialises in *obedience*, particularly to the Church.

To have an AUTHENTIC FRANCISCAN VOCATION means, then, to find a full compatibility with what characterises this form of life, this charism-mission, this spirituality.

Those who, by way of a proper discernment, will have recognized that their project *corresponds* to all this, will have to embrace **entirely** this way of life, through a **public, solemn and perpetual commitment** (Profession) **before** God and the Church.

This is the case of all Franciscans of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Order.

Their commitment is specified in the Rules, which constitute, so to speak, so to speak, the *nuptial covenant* of each professed person with God and codify the form of life and the engagement sworn in with the Profession.

The Franciscan vocation, therefore, has to be carefully submitted to discernment according to the letter and the spirit of the Rule to which the specific vocation refers.

In this connection, Secular Franciscans, should refer particularly to:

The whole of chapter two of the Rule.

The articles 37:2-3; 38:1; 40: 1-2; of the CCGG (General Constitutions).

Title I of Chapter 2 of the CCGG.

VOCATION, CHARISM, MISSION, facets of the same project, God's project, linked one to the other.
Each of them presupposes and prepares the other.