***Monthly Spiritual Message***

**October 2019**

**(Part Two)**

In Part One, last month, I quoted Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi* n.72, and drew out three priorities of the laity, and specifically of the Secular Franciscans, in the world. “Hence the active presence of the laity in the temporal realities takes on all its importance” (n.73).

It may have surprised some to read that, “their primary and immediate task is **not** to establish and develop the ecclesial community – this is the specific role of the pastors.”

But Pope Paul VI continues:

73. One cannot, however, neglect or forget the other dimension: the laity can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord is pleased to give them.

We cannot but experience a great inner joy when we see so many pastors, religious and lay people, fired with their mission to evangelize, seeking ever more suitable ways of proclaiming the Gospel effectively. We encourage the openness which the Church is showing today in this direction and with this solicitude. It is an openness to meditation first of all, and then to ecclesial ministries capable of renewing and strengthening the evangelizing vigour of the Church.

It is certain that, side by side with the ordained ministries, whereby certain people are appointed pastors and consecrate themselves in a special way to the service of the community, the Church recognizes the place of non-ordained ministries which are able to offer a particular service to the Church.

Here, I take up the fourth priority of the laity as it applies to the Secular Franciscans.

1. **IN ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES**

The General Constitutions refer especially to the fourth priority of the lay apostolate, namely, to the church community in which Secular Franciscans present themselves as subjects of evangelization. It is presupposed, no doubt, that they fulfil their prior commitments towards their family and their work. Those who then have the time and the energy to spend in cooperating with the parish clergy and the diocese to develop the church community may be called to do so.

“Called to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made ‘witnesses and instruments of her mission’, Secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words” (GC 17.1).

**In the OFS**

“In the ecclesial community, they show concern for their own local Fraternity and for the Fraternities at other OFS levels. “The promotion of vocations to the Order is a duty of all the brothers and sisters… nothing can substitute for the witness of each member and of the fraternity” (GC 45.1,2).

Mainly the members of the Council evangelize the Fraternity. Instead of an honorary rank, “the office of Minister or Councillor is a fraternal service, a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the Fraternity, so that each one will realize his or her own vocation and each Fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society” (GC 31.2).

“It is the duty of the Council of the local Fraternity to promote the initiatives necessary for fostering fraternal life, for improving the human, Christian and Franciscan formation of its members, and for sustaining their witness and commitment in the world.” It is the task of the same Council “to make concrete and courageous choices, appropriate for the situation of the Fraternity, from among the numerous activities possible in the field of the apostolate” (GC 50).

**Outside the OFS**

In the broader ecclesial community outside the OFS Fraternity, Secular Franciscans take an interest in the parish, in the diocese, and in the Franciscan Family.

***In the parish***

“Those who are called to carry out the mission of catechists, presiders of ecclesial communities or other ministries, as well as the sacred ministers, should make the love of St Francis for the Word of God their own” (GC 17.3).

***In the diocese***

“The secular Franciscans should fulfil with dedication the duties with which they are occupied in their relations to the local Church. They should lend their help to activities of the apostolate as well as to the social activities existing in the diocese. In the spirit of service, they should make themselves present, as the Fraternity of the OFS, within the life of the diocese … ready to collaborate with other ecclesial groups and to participate in pastoral councils” (GC 100.2).

***In the Franciscan Family***

“Secular Franciscans should seek to live in life‑giving reciprocal communion with all the members of the Franciscan Family … in order to work together to spread the Gospel” (GC 98.1). They ought to be ready to share their “experience of evangelical life with the youth who feel attracted by St Francis of Assisi and to seek the means of adequately presenting it to them” (GC 96.1). This has reference to the Franciscan Youth and to the Franciscan Children.

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***Please distribute this Monthly Spiritual Message***

***To all members of your Fraternity, including isolated members***