**SPREAD GOD’S LOVE**

Tibor Kauser Minister General OFS

We Secular Franciscans are living in our families and in our Fraternities, in our working teams and in our parish communities: such a richness and treasure, where God has invited us to experience, to celebrate, and to spread his love!

## Family life

The community that gave us the most important part of our being, and of our identity, is our family. Everyone was born into a family. Except in some rare and sad stories, each of us has a good experience of family. We have the experience of the love of our father, which is the image of the love of our heavenly Father. We have the experience of the love of our mother, which is the image of the love of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Church.

"From the wedlock of Christians, there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism, are made children of God, thus perpetuating the People of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church” (LG 11).

Our families, being domestic churches, have to be places of prayer where we can convey the faith and love that we have received and have it to share with our children. Through the example of our spiritual life and of our love for our husband/wife and of our work, of our dedication to our Fraternity and to the poor and needy and to social affairs, we live our identity as the children of God and share all these good things with our children. By bringing up our children, we are instruments of God who is working in our children, too. Through our whole life, we are perpetuating the People of God.

## In society

Each Secular Franciscan is a citizen of a certain country, living in a town or village. Each of us is working (or used to work) for the good of society. We are not hermits. We are inserted by God into a wider community of fellow citizens. It is our responsibility and part of our vocation to strive always to form our society in a better way, in the spirit of service, and to do our best to "build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively" (OFS Rule 14).

We have to seek the good of all, particularly in the service of the smallest, the poorest, the most marginalized, those who do not have the essentials to live a life with human dignity, whether these essentials are material or spiritual. We have to take care of the created world, because the Spirit of God has been present over creation since the beginning of time (cf. Gen. 1.2).

We have to do our best, each one of us according to our possibilities, to create a spiritual and material environment responding to the initial project of God, by seeking the best solutions to the problems and tasks that we are facing in our daily life.

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## In the ecclesial community

The Apostle warns us: "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you" (1 Cor 6:19). We understand it, and it is correct, that each one's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. But it is worth considering that we, as the Body of Christ, when we think about the Church, are the temple of the Holy Spirit, too. Also, our communities are temples of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul's trinitarian spirit can lead us to a new approach to our role in the Church. We have to let the Holy Spirit dwell among us in the ecclesial community.

We shall be such stones of the Church, who are ready to receive Christ as the cornerstone and are ready to be a place for the Holy Spirit. It is our duty, particularly as Secular Franciscans, to bring our spirituality into the parish communities and to other ecclesial communities, so that we will be filled with joy, with a humble attitude of serving one another, with creative love, with an attitude that respects and strives for the care of creation in all our activities, intending to focus the parish life on the poorest and the most needy inside, but also outside, the members of our community.

As a temple of the Holy Spirit, we must fill the life of the Church with what we can give: fraternal love and respect of each other, with attention to everyone and bringing the good news that we are all children of God by the sacrament of baptism, and that God has made of us his People.

## Fraternity life

Our local Franciscan Fraternities are the places where we can live our vocation and can find the source of life by accepting, living and giving the love of God. We have to open ourselves in our fraternities, to make them real fraternities, that is, to share our lives with our sisters and brothers. The goal is to live not a nice fraternal life but a true and honest one. We shall not be afraid to expose ourselves to one another, to share our treasures, but also to accept and not to hide our weakness, our shortcomings! We have to be so close that our souls can touch one another.

We have to take the risk of being opened and to risk conflicts. Sincere and open fraternal life means to be ready to share all that we have. Real fraternal life also means to be opened to fraternal warning and correction. Remember, my dear sisters and brothers, that the Holy Spirit is working in our Fraternity through these fraternal relationships. We have to take the risk of hurting each other and also of having wounds, but these wounds help us to be reconciled. There is no real fraternity without reconciliation. As brothers and sisters of penance, we always have to live together with our fragility and our wounds, being always ready to ask for and to receive forgiveness. There is no renewal in the Fraternity if we cut ourselves off from each other and limit our relationships to a kind of tea party.

Our Fraternity is not there only for us and our good feelings. We bring our Fraternity out to the world, whether we are aware of it or not. We bring out what we receive and experience in our Fraternity. It is our deep responsibility to ensure that the Holy Spirit can fill our fraternities with the life that we will bring out and make visible to our neighbours. Let us give space to the Holy Spirit, my sisters and brothers, to shake our fraternities, to renew our fraternity life! God wants us not to sit comfortably, but to live a vivid life that produces fruits.

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(Translated, according to Tibor, “from English to English.)