

STIGMATIZATION: BEARING THE WOUNDS OF JESUS CHRIST

THEME 1: MARKED BY THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

Final Document of the 2021 General Chapter: nn. 10,12,13,15,17

REFLECTION: FRIARS MINOR: BEING CONFIGURED TO THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

FRANCISCAN TEXTS TO STUDY

2Cel 10; FF: 593-594 1Cel 71: FF 444-445 UffPass 6: FF 287 Am 5.8: FF 154

At La Verna with the stigmata, as Bonaventure recalls, "the true love of Christ transformed the lover into the very image of the beloved" (LM 13: FF 1227). This is not an isolated event in the life of Francis, but the ripe fruit of a long journey that began by listening to the words of the Crucified One of San Damiano, when: "compassion for the Crucified One was imprinted on his holy soul and [...] the venerable wounds of the Passion were deeply impressed on his heart" (2 Cel 10). A heart that, from the very beginning, becomes capable of "showing mercy" to lepers (cf. Test) and to all the crucified in history.

- How does Francis contemplate and pray the Passion of Jesus Christ? How can contemplation and prayer of the Passion of Jesus Christ help us in our lives as Friars Minor?
- What relationship do I see in my life between contemplating the passion of Jesus Christ and "showing mercy" to my neighbour?
- If we say that the stigmata are the fruit and part of a process of unification of Francis with Jesus Christ, we invite you to re-read your process of personal relationship with Jesus. What big milestones or moments can you record? What feelings have accompanied you? What you were experiencing, where, with whom; How would you describe the moment or stage in which you find yourself in your relationship with the mystery of God and the person of Jesus? What do they mean for you? What do you feel invited or called to? How do you live your consecration to him?

1Cel 91-93: FF 479-483 Rer: FF 136-138 Francis, as described in his biographies, often retired to isolated places to "concern himself only with God and purify his spirit" (FF 479). It was precisely in one of these Lents, while at La Verna he was living according to the Rule for Hermitages that he himself had composed, that Francis received the stigmata.

- Can this fact help us to understand our charism more deeply or is it simply a coincidence? How can I actualize in my life as a Friar Minor today, this strong contemplative emphasis lived by Francis in some moments of his life? Can the Rule for hermitages still be a source of inspiration today?
- For Francis, meditation on the Word of God played a fundamental role in understanding "the will of the heavenly Father" (FF 482). What role does *listening* to the Word play in my life, how much space can I devote to the prayerful reading of the Word?

- For Francis, "assiduously withdrawing" or at different Lenten times during the year were the meditations he put in place to cultivate his personal encounter with Jesus... And what meditations do I put in place in my spiritual journey to cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus?

1Cel 94-95: FF 484-486 LM 13, 4: FF 1227 2Lf 10-15: 183-185 LodAl: FF 261

- What is the profound meaning of the stigmata in Francis' Christian life and experience?
- What is the profound significance of Francis' stigmata for our life as Friars Minor? How can the memory of this event help us in our lives as friars and minors?
- How does the mystery of the Cross and the experience of stigmatization illuminate the following of Jesus Christ?
- What significance does it give to the experience of stigmatization that a LodAl prayer emerges from it?

BIBLE TEXTS TO STUDY

Gal 6:14-18; 1 Cor 2:2 Mt 16:24-25

- What does it mean in my life to "bear the signs of Jesus"? To know Christ crucified?
- What is the relationship in our lives between "carrying the cross of Christ" and being a "new creation"? Jn 3:14-17; Num 20:4-9
- How do I understand and live these words about the salvation that comes from contemplating Jesus Christ "lifted up"? Does the experience of Francis' stigmatization enlighten me in this? Lk 12:22-32
- How can I live today the priority of seeking the Kingdom of God and abandoning myself to Providence?

TOPICS TO BE EXPLORED

- Observe the different accounts of the stigmatization event in Franciscan sources: 1Cel 94-95; 2Cel 217; LM 13,1-5; 3Comp 69-70; Cass 118; Brother Leo's column at LodAl. How are they similar, how do they differ, what is interesting to each author?
- To discover how the understanding of our spirituality as Friars Minor is illuminated and enriched in the light of the event of Francis' stigmatization.
- Read the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* composed by Bonaventure at La Verna precisely by meditating on the mister of the stigmata (cf. Prologue).
- Read a selection of texts by St. John Paul II "pilgrim" to La Verna (Annex A).

ACTIONS

- Organize some moments of prayer remembering this experience of Francis (using biblical texts, Franciscan texts, current testimonies...).
- Re-evaluate the prayer of the Way of the Cross at some point.
- In fraternal study meetings, re-read and rethink our lifestyle based on the call to live marked by the wounds of Christ, reflect on whether to review one's own life project and the life project of the Fraternities.
- To live a time of prayer by meditating in community on the Considerations on the Stigmata (FF 1896-1957).

THEME 2: TOUCHING THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST IN THE WOUNDED

*Final Document of the 2021 General Chapter: Introduction, nn. 7,8,12,18,27,28,30,31
Guidelines and mandates, nos. 9,14,28*

REFLECTION: FRIARS MINOR AMONG THE LEAST

FRANCISCAN TEXTS TO STUDY

BfL: FF 252 •

- How can the celebration of Francis' stigmatization stimulate us to greater attention and care for the difficulties experienced by the brothers and sisters of the community?

Rnb 9.2: FF: 30

2Cel 83: FF 670-671

- How can we rediscover and revive our vocation as Friars Minor who know how to "rejoice when they live amongst people of little account and contempt, among the poor and the weak"?
- What choices do these words of Francis ask of us?
- What brings us closer to these words of Francis and what distances us from them in our concrete lives?

Tests 1-4: FF 110-111;

Cass9: FF 1549 [1658]; Spec 44: FF1730

- What would it be like for us today, for our community, to allow ourselves to be led into the midst of lepers? Who are these stricken lepers to whom the Lord sends us to show mercy?

BIBLE TEXTS TO STUDY

Lk 10:15-37; Lk 10:38-42; Lk 12:22-32; Lk 16:19-31

In Luke's Gospel, the parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus' welcome into the house of Martha and Mary are two consecutive passages that are profoundly united. In the Test, Francis quotes the Good Samaritan about his conversion and refers to the two sisters to describe the life of the friars in the hermitage, who seek first the Kingdom of God. Moreover, unique in the history of the Church, it speaks of them as mothers and children.

- How can we actualize today this fruitful complementarity between active life and contemplative life?
- How do we deal with our wounded and wounded brothers and sisters? What does this Gospel word reveal to us about our way of acting? What prevents us from caring for our wounded brothers and sisters?

Is 58:6-10; Mt 5:3-10

- How can we listen to and live the word of God that combines the practice of mercy towards those who suffer with the possibility of discovering the face of God?

Mt 4:23-25; 8,16-17; 10,7-8; Mk 1:40-43

- What does Jesus want His disciples' mission to be?

TOPICS TO BE EXPLORED

The experience of stigmatization leads Francis to praise God (LodAl) and to worry about and bless his brother in difficulty (BenL).

- I seek to discover in the writings and life of Francis the profound union and coherence that exists between the encounter with Christ, the praise of God and the vital communion with the poor and their sufferings. How can we make this coherence a criterion for discerning our life as Friars Minor and revise it from there?
- "What does the Spirit say to us today through the lives of so many, especially the least and the poorest? This is the real question to know where our Order is going" (Introduction of the Minister General to the Final Document, chapter 2021.).
- Study *Fratelli tutti* 56-68 in community.

ACTIONS

- Question ourselves personally and as a community about our presence in the places of suffering that occur around us and, if possible, create new ways to increase this presence.
- Strengthen everything that helps us to be more informed and therefore sensitized, to be more in solidarity with situations of suffering in different areas (wars in the world; situations of poverty, hunger, injustice; needy people around us...).
- Continually review our lifestyle so that no one feels excluded from us and everyone feels invited to come to our homes with confidence.