

2104 CIOFS Ongoing Formation Program

Theme II: St. Louis and His Public Commitment as a Christian¹



“How great was his justice! One could touch it with one’s finger. He would sit almost continuously on the floor or on a rug to listen to judicial matters, especially those that had to do with the poor or orphans. He would make sure they had justice.” (Pope Boniface VIII)

“If it pleased Our Lord that you received the anointing with which the French Kings are consecrated as such, be mindful to have the qualities that belong to Kings, that is, that you never separate yourself from justice (...) Sustain more voluntarily the poor

against the rich until the truth is known and when you know it, do Justice.” (St. Louis to his son Philip)

HISTORICAL VISION: “ST. LOUIS CONFORMS TO THE MODEL OF THE CHRISTIAN KING”

St. Louis endeavored to complete as best as possible all the responsibilities of a Christian King. He considered himself responsible, not only for the material well-being, but also for the spiritual well-being of his people. He repressed the abuses of the Royal Administration and the demands of nobility, seeking to enforce and make justice accessible to all and equal for all. He particularly showed great concern for the poor. (GC 22).

St. Louis was “peacemaker” within the French Kingdom. Acting various times as mediator in conflicts among foreign sovereigns, he was the messenger of peace outside his reign as well. (Rule 19, GC 23).

In order to improve the customs of his citizens, he strongly sanctioned blasphemy; he prohibited gambling and prostitution in the center of the city.

PASTORAL VISION: “DARE TO MAKE A PUBLIC COMMITMENT”

St. Louis is a model for contemporary politicians. (GC 20.2) Because of his example, many Secular Franciscans have become involved in politics, like Thomas More, Garcia Moreno, Giorgio La Pira, Frank Nosek, Konrad Adenaver, Alcides de Gasperi, etc.

Christians sometimes show a resistance to becoming involved in politics, and Christian politicians venture little into defending Church positions. What do our Rule and Constitutions say about this?

¹ Source: <http://www.catholique78.fr/8-themes-approfondir-0010200>. Theme adapted with the kind permission of the Diocese de Versailles.

FROM ST. LOUIS TO TODAY...

Following Christ

Throughout his public life, Jesus was committed, exposed himself even risking not being understood by the people or his own disciples. What Gospel passages make us think about the “commitment of Jesus”?

Spiritual Life

We Christians have received from God the mission of participating in the coming of His Kingdom of Justice and Peace. Does this mission mobilize us? What are our real commitments, in this regard, today? Shall we reread together Rule 15 (GC 12.2; GC 22.23)?

Which of our commitments (in associations, professionally, in politics, interest groups) have transformed us up to the present?

How do our diverse commitments (associations, professional, political, etc.) nourish our spiritual life and, vice-versa, how does our spiritual life push us to make a commitment?

Being in the world

What is mobilizing us to make a commitment on a timely basis or particularly in our contemporary society? Where would we like to invest our energy primarily and why?

Do we really know the conditions of those who live marginalized in society...at the periphery? What is our capacity for outrage and resistance in the face of the unacceptable? (GC 19.2)



What criteria do we use when we vote in elections? Moreover, how do we scrutinize those men and women on the ballots?

Formation

An involved Christian is invited to know the Social Doctrine of the Church in depth and to form himself/herself in order to take positions in complex debates (bioethical, etc.) Is this our situation? Through which means are we driving our thinking: Reading (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, etc.)? Participating in conferences or sessions? On the CIOFS website <http://www.ciofs.org> portal?

Questioning

On Friday, June 7, 2013, Pope Francis exhorted Christians to make a commitment to politics. “Involvement in politics is an obligation for a Christian. We Christians cannot “play the role of Pilate”, washing our hands of it; we cannot. We must be involved in politics because politics is one of the highest forms of charity for it seeks the common good”. He added, following St. Thomas Aquinas: “Christian lay people must work in politics [...] politics has become too dirty:

but I ask myself: Why has it become dirty? Why aren't Christians involved in politics with an evangelical spirit?"² How does this make me react?

LIVING THE VATICAN COUNCIL II

Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all His life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.



In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (Matt. 25:40).

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator.³

LIVING THE GOSPEL (Mt 5, 1-2, 13-16)

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: [...] "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."



² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130607_scuole-gesuiti.html

³ Constitution on the Church in the Present World "Gaudium et spes", § 27.