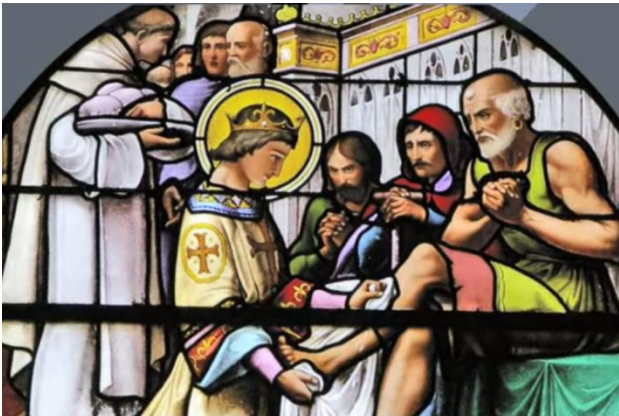


2014 CIOFS Program for Ongoing Formation

Theme VI: Saint Louis: The Good News is announced to the Poor¹



"If I sometimes spend a lot of money, I would rather it be on alms for the love of God than for my frivolities or mundane things." (*Jean de Joinville, Live of Saint Louis*)

"Dear son, I will teach you to have a compassionate heart for the poor and for all those whom you shall consider to be suffering in heart or body, and with your might willingly relieve them with moral support or alms." (*Saint Louis to his son Philip*)

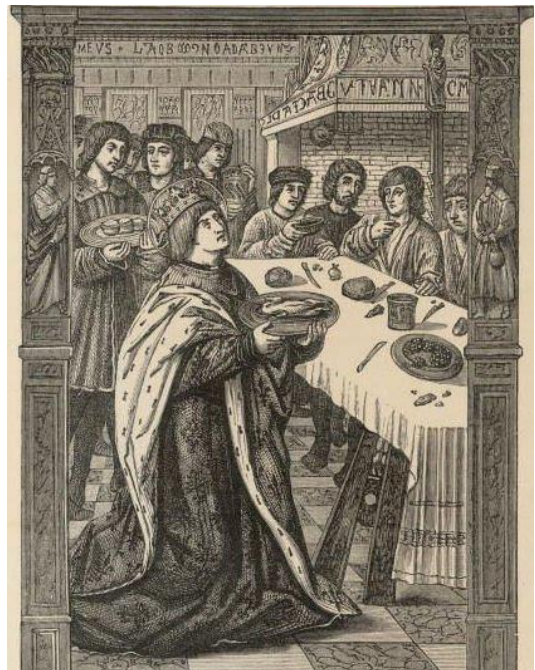
HISTORICAL ENLIGHTENMENT: "SAINT LOUIS AND HIS LOVE FOR THE POOR"

In the Royal Palace of Paris, one room is reserved for the most destitute; every day, food is served to whoever comes along. On feast days, there are more than two hundred, of all ages and both sexes, not so agreeable to look at, with their torn garments, so dirty and smelly that the refectory stinks, and the palace guards are offended. Who cares! Very often, the king comes in person to attend the meal of "the gentlemen-poor." He walks around the tables, shows concerns about one's wound that he points out to his doctor, listens to the grievance of another, orders a servant to help yet another to eat. On Wednesdays and Fridays, all year round, he invites thirteen of the poorest, and he personally serves them food. Every day, he calls three out of the most repulsive looking, to come and eat at a table just next to him. Even the lepers, whom everyone fears are contagious, do not repel him.

In Royaumont Abbey, which he founded, he often visits the infirmary when the sick are there, especially the lepers. In the most deprived of men, there is Jesus. Louis has known this since childhood, and will never forget it.

After Louis's death, the Church opened the canonization process and conducted a lengthy investigation. Sixty seven miracles of healing were selected. Most of the miracles happened in Saint-Denis around his tomb. A crowd of people, the ill, crippled and beggars gathers around the tomb, touching it and lying on it.

The vast majority of the miraculously cured people are poor or of modest income, who must work with their hands or who are driven to poverty or even to begging. Sometimes it is noted that the healing helped them to escape poverty.



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PASTORAL ENLIGHTENMENT: “THE GOOD NEWS IS ANNOUNCED TO THE POOR”

Louis' faith is not abstract, loving Christ means following Him, it means loving all men. The faith influences his behavior and regulates all his actions, hence his generosity. He lives daily in great frugality, dressing modestly when the exercise of his function does not force him to wear the official dress of his rank. He gladly receives Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure to dine with him, both of them giants in science and wisdom, great theologians and mendicant brothers, Franciscan and Dominican. With the same simplicity and ease, he receives the poor everyday, at his table. Louis wants to conform his life to Christ, poor and crucified.

One day he is asked what saint he admires more than any other and he answers: “*Saint Francis of Assisi, the joyful and gentle saint, because he loved poverty above all.*”

Let us read again our General Constitutions (GC) Art. 15.3: “Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person.” And GC Art. 19.2: “In the spirit of minority, they should opt for relationships which give preference to the poor and to those on the fringe of society, whether these be individuals or categories of persons or an entire people; they should collaborate in overcoming the exclusions of others and those forms of poverty that are the fruit of inefficiency and injustice.”

FROM SAINT LOUIS TO TODAY...



A time for sharing: here are a few questions, to help us exchange answers.

Being on mission

Jesus upon seeing the crowds, was moved with compassion toward them because they were bewildered and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd (Mt 9: 36). So many people these days are bewildered and dejected and they wait for the Church, we wait. How can we in fraternity reach them? How do we share with them the experience of faith, of the love of God, of the encounter with Jesus?

Conversion and sharing

We see so much poverty and loneliness in the world today. So many people ask us to be a sign of the goodness and mercy of the Lord. With so many expectations, we run the risk of getting scared and falling back in an attitude of fear and defense. How should we order our lives to support these brothers? What initiatives do we dare to take to touch the suffering flesh of Christ among the people (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 24)?

How do we live out concretely GC Art. 12.2: “They should take the risk of making courageous choices calmly and firmly”?

LIVING THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The goods of the earth and their division among all men



God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner. Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also

as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others. On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. [...] Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him," and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves. (*Gaudium et spes. The Church in the modern world. § 69.1*)

LIVING THE GOSPEL

To serve Christ in the poor (Mt 25, 31-46)

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."