

**General Chapter
Secular Franciscan Order
November 19th 2021**

Today's Gospel brings us to the famous scene of Christ in the Temple, when he chases away the sellers and the merchants. Jesus drives out the sellers: he does not want God's house to become a market. He does it harshly, with a gesture so strong that it will arouse the anger of the priests and scribes who decree his death. Today, these words are addressed to us, and from the words of Jesus spoken with so much passion, we find strength for our being in the world as disciples of the Gospel, as true Franciscans.

The Temple is a place and sign of God's presence among the people. Our relationship with the "Temple" speaks to us of our relationship with God. Our relationship with God is a message to the world. The "message" we give to the world speaks out of how much we have understood the Gospel. The message we give to the world is the chance that the world can have of knowing the Gospel and the plan of love that God gives to everyone and everything.

We can make a direct relationship between the Temple of Jerusalem and our times, our Churches, our communities, and that's okay: we are called to holiness, not to the market. We are called to prayer, not to speculation or to the claim of obtaining some personal gain or gratification in the Church.

he "Temple" shows quite other things: as I said, it is the sign of the presence of God in history, in society... So the style of our relationship with the Temple speaks of our believing relationship with the world. For us Franciscans, our relationship with the Temple is a sign of the style in which we are inserted, not only in the parish but above all in the world, in society.

God cannot be translated into some kind of market, of favours, of pleasures, of comforts. This would offer the world a horrible idea of God and Franciscanism. God cannot be translated into a simple marketplace. Our faith is not a simple adhesion to a group, but a profound identity: a profound way of being in the world and for the world.

Jesus speaks to us with strength and conviction because he wants us to go to the essential. God does not want an inauthentic existence for us, an egocentric existence.

Pope Francis asked you to be "part of the outgoing Church, bearing witness to the Gospel with a simple life, and working for justice, missions, integral ecology".

Indeed, he repeated that "it is precisely this mission and vocation that will carry the lymph for you of the" universal call to holiness ". A holiness, he says, which "involves the conversion of the heart to Christ, which makes you true penitents; but penitents engaged in the world. Men and women committed to living in the world according to the Franciscan charism".

The Pope also emphasizes that "The vocation of the Secular Franciscan is above all to live the Gospel *sine glossa* in the world", and "this living in the world for the Secular Franciscans (and I add: and not only the seculars); it is a" going out towards the existential peripheries of today, and there to make the word of the Gospel resounding "with the style of closeness, compassion and tenderness of God".

Furthermore, he called you to "be men and women of hope, committed to living it and also to" organizing" it, translating it into concrete everyday situations, into human relationships, into social

and political commitment; nourishing hope in tomorrow by alleviating today's pain, being artisans of justice and peace ”.

Therefore, It remains clear that what the Lord makes us called in our specific vocation is that of living and bearing witness to the Gospel in the Great Temple of the world. The Lord does not call us either to shut ourselves up in the sacristies, nor to transform the world into a large sacristy. He calls us to live in faith and by faith to generate a Christian humanism in society.

If we used our Franciscan vocation only to feel good, it would be like making a market in the Temple. That is, to make God's presence in history become only a step to be lifted up ourselves, to get something just for us. Instead we are "for the world".

Certainly that in the Gospel we find our consolation, but this is another thing: it is a question of meaning: the Gospel is the profound meaning of our existence. But through us this Gospel becomes good news for the world, and denounces everything in the world that leads to sin, dehumanization, pollution, injustice, death.

May this Chapter be a sign of hope for us Franciscans, for you specifically Secular Franciscans. But hope is not being stronger or more important, but more meaningful for ourselves, for the Church, and for the world, thirsting for authenticity. The life of penance is not living out of the world but living in the world and for the world, that is, so that the world knows Christ and so that the whole creation can reflect as much as possible the New Creation that we know in faith.

I wish all the best to the newly re-elected Minister General, to the new Council and to all the fraternities of the world, so that you may always be this beautiful witness of the Gospel.

Fra Carlos A. Trovarelli