



LIVE THE GOSPEL

WITH

Charles de FOUCAULD

You who are searching... and wish to know the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld.

You who are already committed in Fraternity... and want to deepen its essential dimensions...

## Take these sheets one by one,

Read, meditate, share, with the help of the proposed biblical references.

Read, meditate, share what Charles de Foucauld tells us, what he has lived.

Carry out a review of life (°), helped by the questions.

Charles de Foucauld - man of his time and prophet for today

Charles de Foucauld - a diverse life (biography)

Sheet 1: In the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth

Sheet 2: To be poor with Jesus

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Sheet 6: The desert

Sheet 7: The apostolate of friendship

Sheet 8: To be a universal brother

Sheet 9: The Master of the impossible

A Way of Unity: the Lay Fraternities

The prayer of abandonment

(°) Review of life: *“It is a moment when we help each other in a fraternal way to convert ourselves, to adjust our lives to the Gospel, to deepen the spiritual intentions of Fraternity.”* (Directory)

## **Charles de Foucauld - man of his time and prophet for today**

The contrast is striking between the destiny so special of this man, so marked by its origins, its epoch, its environment and far from common destiny and the universality of his message that lights up the road for so many people throughout the world.

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### **1 - Charles de Foucauld - man of his time**

It is interesting to situate Charles de Foucauld; his origins - aristocrat through his father, moneyed middle class through his mother - his military, nationalist environment, his epoch ("revenge" after the humiliating defeat of 1871, anti-clericalism and persecutions against the Church) that of republican France, his personal history (from the wounds inflicted by the rapid death of his parents to exploring Morocco) which, over and beyond the exploit, reveals the researcher who spent the last ten years of his life in a high-level scientific enterprise studying the Tuareg culture.

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### **2 -The message of Charles de Foucauld: "Let us go back to the Gospel"**

In the footsteps of the great saints - like Francis of Assisi, raised up by God, to remind Christian people of the exigencies of the Gospel, Charles de Foucauld reaffirms the essential : "Let us go back to the Gospel, if we do not go back to the Gospel, Jesus does not live in us."

To go back to the Gospel is to enable Jesus to live in us at Nazareth : a life of poverty at heart and of availability to all, in the last place, inserting oneself into what is most human.

Charles de Foucauld committed himself unconditionally to the Gospel, since in him dwelt the passionate love of Christ. It is from this source that we draw, we, members of his family, but also many others with us.

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### **3- Charles de Foucauld - Prophet for today**

Starting from this essential, return to the Gospel, here a few points through which Charles de Foucauld lights up our way in a Church anxious to respond to the actual needs of the world.

#### 1. Charles de Foucauld, a man who is seeking

He is close to all those, the young in particular, who are looking for a direction in their life - he who spent a third of his life in agnosticism.

He searched throughout his life, but with a fixed point, to imitate the life of Jesus at Nazareth. He knew how to discern God's will in events that happened. In a world that is changing so rapidly, he can help us to go along with these changes to respond to the needs of our contemporaries.

2. Nazareth: being present to the Lord, present to men

To establish the link is essential to our lives. Charles de Foucauld will think of staying a monk for always while living closer and closer to people, having become so approachable and humble at Tamanrasset. Being present to men in simple relationship of friendship, but also in solidarity with those who are victims of injustice (his struggle against slavery) : he will approach the Tuareg people with great respect, wishing to get to know them with the exigencies of a scientific approach and to make their culture known and recognised.

3. Concern for those "far off"

Starting from his faith in Jesus-Saviour, from it he will reach the point of accepting the prospect of priesthood. And once he is a priest he will want to devote himself to the most neglected of people, first of all the inhabitants of Morocco (which he will not be able to enter), then the people of the oases and finally to the Tuaregs. He will devote his last years to this people, while declaring himself ready to go to the ends of the earth to announce the Gospel.

4. Build a universal fraternity starting with the poor, to place at the centre of society and of the Church.

5. Live the Church, people of God

Not the Church pyramid shaped society, but the Church, People of God, in whose service certain ones exercise a ministry in simplicity.

Charles de Foucauld very soon had this conviction of the common vocation of those who are baptised; in his congregation, no distinction between priests and brothers: the Association will be welcoming to all, lay people, religious (members of religious orders), priests. He will seek to attract - as collaborators- lay people, missionaries on equal footing, as were Priscilla and Aquilla for Saint Paul (*Acts of the Apostles 18 vv 1-4, 18-19, 26*).

Henri LE MASNE, priest, member of the Priest fraternity and of the Lay fraternities

## Charles de Foucauld – a diverse life

“The life of Charles de Foucauld was a succession of diverse actions, of periods of time, each of them an abandonment of the previous position which brought about a new beginning, often of a fundamental nature.” A. Chatelard (Little brother of Jesus)

### **BIRTH:** 1858

- 15 September 1858 in Strasbourg in a family belonging to the nobility with the motto “Never backwards”. He is baptized.

### **CHILDHOOD – YOUTH:** 1858-1876

**“I, who have been surrounded, since childhood, with so many graces, son of a saintly mother...”**

*November 1897.*

- Charles has a sister, Marie, three years younger.
- His parents die one after the other in 1864. It will leave Charles psychologically scarred.
- The orphans are left in the care of their grandfather on their mother’s side, Colonel Morlet, a good but weak man.
- After the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, France has lost Alsace-Lorraine. The family leaves Strasbourg for Nancy and keeps its French nationality.
- Secondary school in Nancy, then Paris with the Jesuits where he passes his “Baccalauréat” and starts the preparatory year for Saint Cyr (Military Academy). Judged lazy and undisciplined, he is sent away during the year. Charles identifies his loss of faith at the end of his time at secondary school, when about 16 years old.

### **MILITARY LIFE:** 1876-1881

**“I moved away from you more and more, Lord. All faith had disappeared from my life”**

*Retreat  
November 1897.*

- 1876: He starts at Saint Cyr.
- 1878: His grandfather dies (March). He inherits a very big fortune which he proceeds to squander. In October he starts at the Cavalry School in Saumur. He will leave it in 1879, 87th of 87.  
In school he lives a life of pleasure and increases his acts of indiscipline and eccentricity (when on sentry duty, he leaves his post and disguises himself as a beggar...) He draws and improves himself by much reading.
- 1879: Garrisoned in Pont-à-Mousson, he is profligate and associates with a young woman of ill repute: Mimi.
- 1880: His regiment is sent to Algeria. He takes Mimi with him, pretending she’s his wife. When the deception is discovered, the Army summons him to send her away. Charles refuses and prefers to be taken out of action for “indiscipline and notorious misconduct”. He goes back to France to live in Evian.
- 1881: He finds out that his regiment is engaged in a dangerous action in Algeria. He leaves Mimi, asks to be reinstated and to rejoin his comrades.  
For 8 months, he is an excellent officer, appreciated by his superiors and his soldiers.

**EXPLORATIONS:**  
1882-1886

**"The Islam has brought about a profound change in me"**

Letter of 8 Jan 1901.

- 1882: Attracted by North Africa, he discharges himself from the Army and settles in Algeria to prepare for a scientific expedition in Morocco. He learns to speak Arabic and Hebrew.
- June 1883 – May 1884: Disguised as a rabbi, he traverses Morocco illegally, guided by rabbi Mardochée. He risks his life several times. He is impressed by the faith and the prayers of the Muslims.
- 1884: Charles gets engaged in Algeria, but breaks off the engagement because his family is opposed to the marriage.
- 1885: He receives the gold medal of the French Geographic Society for his first report on his expedition in Morocco.
- 1885-1886: Trip to South Algerian and Tunisian oases.
- 1886: He returns to France, rediscovers his family, in particular his niece Marie de Bondy. He edits "Reconnaissance in Morocco". He lives a sober and ascetical life. He questions himself on the inner life and spirituality. Without faith, he enters into churches and repeats this strange prayer: "God, if you exist, make me know you".

**CONVERSION:**  
1886-1889

**"As soon as I believed that there is a God, I understood that I could not do anything else than live for him..."**

Letter August 1901

- End October 1886: He enters the Saint-Augustine church in Paris to ask Abbé Huvelin (whom he came to know via Marie de Bondy) for religious instruction. Huvelin requests that he confesses and receives Communion immediately.
- 1887-1888: He stays with his family, with his sister Marie, and starts to think about a religious life.
- December 1888 – January 1889: He visits the Holy Land. Nazareth leaves a strong impression. Back in France he hands over his goods to his sister. He goes on many retreats to find a religious order where he could enter. He feels called to live "the hidden life of the humble and poor labourer of Nazareth". The Trappist Order seems the most appropriate.

**RELIGIOUS LIFE:  
1889-1897**

**"My religious vocation dates  
from the same hour as my  
faith: God is so great"**

August 1901

**NAZARETH:  
1897-1900**

**"To resemble Jesus even  
more ..."**

August 1901

**"By the mere fact of  
celebrating Mass ..., I shall  
offer the biggest glory to  
God and I shall do the best  
possible thing for men"**

Letter of 26/4/1901.

**BENI-ABBES AND TRIPS TO  
THE TUAREG:  
1901-1906**

**"To continue in the Sahara  
the hidden life of Jesus, not  
to preach but to live in  
solitude and poverty the  
humble work of Jesus."**

April 1904

- 1890 (16 January): He enters the "Notre Dame des Neiges" ("Our Lady of the Snows") Trappist monastery in France. 6 Months later he goes off to a much poorer trappist monastery in Akbes, Syria.  
He doesn't feel at ease. His way of life doesn't seem to encourage imitating Jesus in Nazareth.  
He drafts an initial constitution for a religious order "in his own way". "I yearn for Nazareth" ... so he writes.  
He asks to be relieved of his vows. In October 1896 he is sent to Rome for studies.
- January 1897: The prior (father superior) of the Trappists gives him the freedom to follow his vocation.
- As of March 1897 he is found in ... Nazareth, where he has agreed to be a domestic servant of the Poor Clares. He lives in a shed near their cloister.  
"I receive permission to travel to Nazareth alone, and to live there unknown, as a labourer, doing my everyday work.  
Solitude – prayer – adoration – Gospel meditation – humble work."
- He stays there for 4 years. Little by little the Poor Clares and his confessor, father Huvelin, lead him to requesting that he be ordained as a priest.  
  
He goes back to France, to Notre Dame des Neiges, to get prepared.
- 9 June 1901: He is ordained priest.
- September 1901: Charles de Foucauld is in Algeria. He settles in Beni-Abbes and builds a hermitage to found a monastic fraternity.
- 1902: He alerts friends and authorities to the evils of slavery...  
He secures the release of several slaves.
- 1905: He makes several trips to the Tuareg.  
He learns their language.  
No priest has visited their land before him.
- He drafts a catechism for them and he starts to translate the Gospel.
- 1906: After all this time a companion joins him. But brother Michel becomes ill and quickly leaves.

**TAMANRASSET  
3 TRIPS TO FRANCE:  
1907-1916**

**“My apostolate must be that of goodness. When people see me they must say: «Because this man is good, so must be his religion»”**  
1909

**LAST YEAR – DEATH:  
1916**

**“Our annihilation is the most powerful way that we have to unite with Jesus and to do good for the souls.”**  
1st December 1916  
to Marie de Bondy

**“When the grain of corn falls to the earth and it doesn’t die, it stays alone, but when it dies it bears a lot of fruit; I haven’t died, I am alone... Pray for my conversion so that I can die and bear fruit”**  
to Suzanne Perret

- July 1907: Charles settles in Tamanrasset. He undertakes an enormous scientific work on the Tuareg language, their songs and poetry. He gets help from an inhabitant. He’s the only christian. He is not allowed to say Mass. But he chooses to stay... for the people. That will last for six months. Then he obtains permission to celebrate on his own but not to expose the Blessed Sacrament.
- January 1908: Exhausted, he falls ill and barely escapes death. The Tuareg save him by sharing the small amount of goat’s milk that they have left in this dry period. Charles is helpless and depends upon his neighbours... He comes to realize that friendship and brotherly love have to work via exchange and reciprocity.
- 1909 – 1911 – 1913: Three trips to France to present his proposal for a “Union of the brothers and sisters of the Sacred Heart”, a lay association for the conversion of the unbelieving. “Fervent christians of all classes, capable of making known, by their example, what christian life is all about, and of showing the Gospel in their life”. (Rules – Advise) 1909-1913.
- 1914: War breaks out in France. Charles de Foucauld stays in Tamanrasset on Laperrine’s advice (a military friend).
- 1915: Riots in the desert: Moroccan Rezzous and Libyan Senoussites are a threat.
- A small fortress is built in Tamanrasset to protect the people. Charles installs himself there alone, waiting to welcome people living in the neighbourhood in case of danger. He continues to work on Tuareg poetry and proverbs.

1st December 1916: Tuaregs of Senoussite influence make him leave the fortress, overpower him and tie him up. During the plundering, soldiers arrive unexpectedly. They get desperate, a bullet is fired, he is killed. His body is buried in the the ditch around the fortress.

At his death, Charles de Foucauld is alone ... or almost. In France, 49 people have enrolled in the Association of the brothers and sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for which he had obtained approval from the Church authorities.

In 2001, 19 different Fraternities, lay people, priests and religious, live the Gospel throughout the world, based upon Charles de Foucauld’s intuitions.

# 1 In the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth

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## *In the Bible*

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

"Come and see" (John 1, 46)

### **Nazareth: Jesus, Son of God, is born of a woman -**

"Behold you shall conceive and bring forth a son and you shall give him the name of Jesus" (Luke 1, 26-28)

### **Nazareth: Friendship arises - Mary goes to Elizabeth**

She entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth... "whence is it given to me that the mother of my God should come to me?". Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months (Luke 1, 39-56)

### **Nazareth - family life - the child is reared.**

"The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom.

And the favour of God was upon him... and he was subject to them" (Luke 2, 40-54)

### **Nazareth - The life of faith is given expression in community**

"Each year his parents went up to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. They went up when he was twelve... his mother kept all these things in her heart" (Luke 2, 41-52)

### **Nazareth - Jesus does manual work**

"Isn't he the carpenter?" (Matthew 6, 3)

### **Nazareth - Jesus takes the risk of reading in the Synagogue**

"According to his custom on the Sabbath Day, he entered into the Synagogue and rose to do the reading... All... were filled with wrath." (Luke 4, 14-28)

### **Nazareth - love, humble and reciprocated (Wedding Feast of Cana)**

The risen Christ appears to his disciples on the shores of the lake near Nazareth. He says to them - "Come and eat." After the meal Jesus says to Simon Peter - "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? ... follow me. (John 21 1-19)

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## ***What Charles de Foucauld says to us :***

"I long for Nazareth"

"The Gospel showed me that the "first commandment is to love God with all one's heart" and that everything had to be enclosed in love; each of us knows that the first effect of love is imitation... I had therefore to imitate the hidden life of the poor, humble workman of Nazareth."

*Letter to Henri de Castries - 14 August 1901*

"Ask yourself, in all things, what would Our Lord have done and do it... it's your only rule, your hard and fast rule!"

"In order to save us God came to us and involved Himself with us in the most familiar and close contact. For the salvation of souls, He is still coming to us, involving Himself with us, living with us in closest contact, each day and each hour in the Holy Eucharist. Thus we ought to work for the salvation of souls, go out to meet them, involve ourselves with them, live with them in familiar and close contact." (*Rules and Directory 1909*)

"Make your objective the life of Nazareth, in everything and for everything, in its simplicity and breadth" (*Tamanrasset Notebooks - 1905*)

### **Jesus speaks to us through Charles de Foucauld**

"I teach you first of all that one can do good to men, much good, infinite good, divine good, without words, without sermons, without noise, in silence and by giving good example... What example? That of piety, of our duties towards God lovingly accomplished, of kindness to all men, of tenderness for those around us...

"I teach you to live by the work of your hands so as not to be a burden to anyone, to have something to give to the poor and I bestow incomparable beauty on this way of life that is possessed by no other, unless it is that of the evangelical worker, a life in imitation of mine... (*Retreat at Ephraim 1898*)

"You can live your life of Nazareth everywhere: live it in the place where it is most useful to your neighbour." (*Tamanrasset Notebooks - 1905*)

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### ***Reappraisal of life in fraternity***

- Today, how to imitate Jesus in my life?
- How do I live the realities of Nazareth in my family life?
- Wishing to imitate Jesus of Nazareth at work, how do I carry out my own work (honesty, struggle against corruption, correctness, quality...)?
- How to live the hidden life of Nazareth and affirm my faith in a non-Christian environment?
- Does my behaviour allow others to have easy access to me?

(Vide - Directory of the Fraternity, pp 116-119 and 121-123. The Directory is a "reflection based on the objectives and spirit of the Lay Fraternity.)

## 2 To be poor with Jesus

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### ***In the Bible***

"You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Luke 2,12)

"For you know the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, he became poor for our sake, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ( 2 Corinthians 8,9

### **To be poor in heart and spirit**

"Father...not mine but thy will be done" Luke 22,42.

"Happy the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of God is theirs. Matthew 5,3

"He has filled the hungry with good things" Luke 1, 53.

### **To be free from all attachment to material riches**

"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" Luke 6,20

"One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me "Luke 18, 18-23.

"How hard it is for those who have riches, to enter the Kingdom of God. Luke 18,24.

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### ***What Charles de Foucauld tells us***

#### **Poverty of heart, an opening to God**

"To give up everything in spirit, to be detached in heart from everything, to be poor in spirit, void of all attachment, is absolutely essential to be a disciple of Jesus" (*Meditation on the Gospel (OS p 176)*)

"The brothers and sisters.... will remember that, in order to be united to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one must have the same likings as He. Jesus did not condemn the rich, and he had rich friends, but he did not extol wealth. He extolled poverty" (*Draft for Constitutions*)

"The more we empty ourselves, the more God fills us with His grace... gives Himself fully to us" (*Meditations on the Gospel OS p 180*)

#### **Poverty to imitate Jesus and to be one with the poor**

"My Lord Jesus, how quickly will he become poor, he who, loving you with all his heart, will not be able to support being richer than his Well-Beloved." (*Retreat at Nazareth, November, 1897*)

"Let us never cease from being poor as regards everything, brothers of the poor, companions of the poor" (*263rd Meditation on the Gospel OS p 174*)

"When one loves one's neighbour, the first fruit of this love is to become poor oneself in order to relieve him.... Poverty, love of one's neighbour. We see how these two virtues are linked together." (*Meditations on the Gospel OS p176*)

"Even if God desires us to remain rich, it is solely to allow us to become the treasurer of the poor, to live as one of the poor, and only to make use of our possessions in the service of souls and bodies" (*Meditations on the Gospel OS p p176*)

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*The reappraisal of life in Fraternity*

What are the attachments that prevent me from -

- allowing God to act in me?
- responding to the appeals of my brothers?
- how do I imitate Jesus poor in my life?
- what are my relationships with other people?

*(See Fraternity Directory pp 125-28)*

*Note OS = Oeuvres spirituelles (Spiritual Works) - an anthology edited by Denise Barrat - Seuil publications.*

### 3 Evangelical preference for the poor

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#### *In the Bible*

##### **God listens to the poor**

"This poor man cried, the Lord heard him." Psalm 34. 6

##### **God prefers righteousness and justice to all ceremonies**

"I hate, I despise your feasts...

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." (Amos 5 - vv21-24)

"Is it fasting that pleases me?

Loose the bonds of wickedness... let the oppressed go free.... share your bread with the hungry." (Isaiah 58 - vv6 and 7)

##### **God takes notice of the one who is humble, small, poor:**

"Mary said.... he has regarded the low state of his handmaiden... and exalted those of low degree." (Luke 1 vv46-56)

##### **God invites the poor**

"Go out quickly... and bring in the poor and the maimed..." (Luke 14 vv 15-24)

##### **With Jesus God invites the poor**

"What you did to one of these the least of my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25 vv31-46)

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#### ***What Charles de Foucauld tells us***

"We are all sons of the Most High! All of us ... the poorest, the most repugnant, a new-born child, a decrepit old man, the least intelligent human -being..... an idiot, madman, a sinner... the one who is most repugnant physically and morally, is a child of God. (*Commentary Psalm 82/81*)

"Let us not worry about those who want for nothing, those who people think of, let us worry and be concerned of those who lack everything, those nobody thinks of. Let us be the friends of those who have no friends. (*Commentary Psalm 82/81*)

There is no statement in the Gospel, I think, that has made a greater impression or transformed my life more than this "All that you do to one of these little ones you do it to me." When one thinks that these words are of eternal truth.... with what strength one is moved to seek out and love Jesus in these "little ones", these sinners, these poor and bring all the spiritual resources one has for the conversion of souls, all one's material resources for the relief of temporal destitution."

(*Letter to Louis Massignon 1 April 1916*)

"To give you a true idea of my life you must know that someone is knocking at my door at least ten times an hour, rather more than less, poor people, sick people, passers-by, so that alongside much peace, I have much to occupy me." (*to Monsignor Guerin 30 September 1901*)

"To be able to preserve a very contemplative life, while making myself available to all in everything, so as to be able to offer Jesus to all." (*Retreat Resolution June 1902*)

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***Reappraisal of life in Fraternity***

- How do I behave towards someone whose physical appearance puts one off?
- What sort of interest do I take in people in need of others... the elderly, sick people, those with no friends or acquaintances...?

*(See Fraternity Directory pp 120-125 to 128)*

## 4 Read and live the Gospel

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### *In the Bible*

#### **Gospel - Word of Life**

"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" John 6,63

"You Lord have the message of eternal life" John 6, 68.

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" Letter to Hebrews 4,12.

#### **Believe in the Gospel**

"The kingdom of God is at hand - believe in the Good News" Mark 1, 14-15.

#### **Give one's life for the Gospel**

" If any man would come after me....

Whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it" Mark 8 34-35.

#### **Listen to the Gospel and put it into practice**

"My mother and my brethren are those who hear the Word of God and keep it" Luke 8,21.

#### **With the Holy Spirit to be witnesses**

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the Earth. Acts of the Apostles 1,8

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### ***What Charles de Foucauld tells us:***

"let us come back to the Gospel, if we do not live the Gospel, Jesus does not live in us."

*(Letter to Abbe Carron - 30 June 1909)*

#### **Read the Gospel and become imbued with it**

"Try to find time to read a few lines of the Holy Gospels, following on from each other each day, so that after a certain time they will have come entirely before your eyes; after (which should not be long 10, 15, 20 lines, half a chapter at most) meditate for a few minutes either mentally or in writing on the teaching contained in what you have read. We must strive to become imbued with the Spirit of Jesus by reading and re-reading, ceaselessly meditating and re-meditating, his words and examples : let them be for our souls like a drop of water that falls and continues to fall on a flagstone always on the same spot." *(Letter to Louis Massignon 22 July 1914)*

#### **Proclaim the Gospel with our whole life**

"Work for the sanctification of the world... without words, in silence... carry along the Gospel not by preaching it by word of mouth but preaching it by example, not by announcing but by living it." *(Meditation on the Visitation 1898)*

"Our whole life, however silent it be... should be a preaching of the Gospel by example, our whole existence, our whole being must proclaim the Gospel on the rooftops, must be living preaching." *(Meditation on the Gospel - OS p395)*

"We do good, not according to the measure of what we say or do, but according to the measure of what we are... according to the measure in which Jesus lives in us." *(Rules and Directory)*

"People at a distance from Jesus, should, without books or words, come to know the Gospel by observing my life. Seeing me, they should see what Jesus is." *(Rules and Directory)*

"The brothers should be a living Gospel." *(Directory of the Union)*

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***Reappraisal of life in Fraternity***

- Do I read the Gospel - when, how?
- Give one or two events of my life in which I have proclaimed the Gospel without saying a word.
- Give one or two events in the life of a Christian whom I saw proclaiming the Gospel without saying a word.
- In my life, what have I done because of the Gospel, which goes counter to what is generally done?"

*(See Fraternity Directory pp 129 and 141)*

## 5 Eucharist and Adoration

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### *In the Bible*

"I am with you always, till the end of the world." Matt 28,30.

"My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from Heaven and gives life to the world.

"I am the bread of life." John 6 vv 32-35.

"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him."

"He who eats me will live because of me."  
John 6 vv 56-7

"Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it

and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; and he vanished out of their sight." Luke 24 vv 30-31.

"You shall worship the Lord your God." Matt 4, v10 (referring to Exodus 34 v14.)

"O come, let us worship and bow down,  
Let us kneel before the Lord our maker!

For he is our God,

and we are the people of his pasture

and the sheep of his hand." Ps 95 vv6-7.

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### *What Charles de Foucauld tells us -*

"This is my body, this is my blood" Mt 26 vv26-28

"How this infinite grace of the Holy Eucharist should make us love a God so good, a God so near to us. How the Holy Eucharist should make us tender, kind, for all" (*Meditation 1897*)

"The Eucharist is Jesus, the whole Jesus! In the Holy Eucharist, you are wholly living, my beloved Jesus, as completely as you were in the house of the Holy Family of Nazareth - as you were in the midst of the Apostles." (*174th Meditation on the Gospel.*)

"The Eucharist is not simply communion.. It is also the tabernacle and the monstrance, Jesus present on our altars... the true Emmanuel, true "God with us", showing himself at every hour in all parts of the world, to our gaze, to our adoration and our love."

(*The Gospel presented to the poor people of the Sahara.*)

"Exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are, together with the universal and burning charity for our neighbour and imitation of the hidden life of Our Lord, the characteristic note, special to the Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart" (*Future Fraternities*).

Rules of Nazareth 1899 -

For Charles de Foucauld : Adoration = Act of Faith

"Faith... would wish to spend its whole life motionless at the foot of the tabernacle" (*Retreat at Nazareth Nov 1897*)

Adoration = Act of Love

He puts these words in the mouth of Jesus: "Gazing on me in love is the only thing that is necessary and that I love best.... if you only understood what happiness there is to be at my feet and look at me."(*Retreat at Nazareth Nov 1897*)

Adoration = to receive everything from Jesus; "You have given yourself to me, I am guiding you in the proper way... Don't ask of yourself what is impossible, nothing too hard... I want to act in you through grace, great grace, but not through miracle."

(*Retreat at Nazareth Nov 1897*)

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***Reappraisal in Fraternity***

- What does the Eucharist mean to me?
- How do I prepare myself to receive the Eucharist? What does the liturgy of the Word mean to me who am going to receive the Eucharist?
- What is to be done to prepare to adore:
- Do I fix a time? Do I seek out a suitable place, signifying the greatness of God? How do I spend my time of silence? What steps do I take to ensure silence around me?

*(See Directory of the Fraternity pp 133 -4 )*

## 6 The desert

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### *In the Bible:*

#### **God seeks for man, man seeks for God**

"O God you are my God, I seek you,  
my soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land where no  
water is."

*Ps 63(62)*

I am going to win her over (the  
woman = the people, the soul), lead  
her into the desert and speak to her  
heart.

*Hosea 2 v16*

"And in the morning, a great while  
before day, he rose and went out to a  
lonely place and there he prayed."

*Mark 1 v35*

"And the disciples said to Jesus,  
"where are we to get bread enough in  
the desert to feed so great a crowd?  
.... And they ate and were satisfied."

*Matthew 15 vv 32-39*

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but  
by every word that proceeds from the  
mouth of God."

*Matthew 4 v4*

"But when you pray go into your room  
and shut the door and prayer to your

Father in secret."

*Matthew 6 vv 5-14*

#### **The call to conversion**

"And you shall remember all the way  
which the Lord your God has led you  
these forty years in the wilderness,  
that he might humble you, testing you  
to know what was in your heart,  
whether you would keep his  
commandments or not."

*Deuteronomy 8 v2*

"I will scatter you among the nations  
and there I shall judge you face to  
face....

Like a perfume of peace, I shall  
welcome you when I bring you out  
from amidst the peoples... and you  
will know that I am Yahweh."

*Ezekiel 22,35,41, and 42*

Jesus was led into the desert by the  
Spirit to be tempted by the devil."

*Matthew 4 vv 1-11*

"Watch and pray that you not enter  
into temptation."

*Matthew 26 and 41*

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### ***What Charles de Foucauld tells us -***

#### **To be alone with God alone:**

"In our life, whether hidden, or especially when public.. let us take periods of repose, periods of solitude spent in the company of Jesus... Let these retreats have the three characteristics that Jesus indicates. Let them be peace and quiet..... times of appeasement.... A time of solitude: the more we are alone with Jesus, the more we shall find happiness in him, love loves private conversation. Let it be a time of solitude in the company of Jesus... now looking at him without saying anything (= contemplation), now questioning him (= meditation)." (*Meditation on Mark 6 vv30-32.*)

"One has to pass through the desert and sojourn there to receive the grace of God; it is there that one empties oneself, that one drives away from oneself all that is not God and that one completely empties the little house of our soul, to leave space for God alone... It is a time of grace, a period through which every soul must necessarily pass that wishes to bear fruit... Intimate life with God, a turning of the soul to God, in faith, hope and charity.... One can only give what one has and it is in

solitude, in this life, alone with God alone... that God gives himself completely to the one who gives himself completely to Him. Do not fear that you are neglecting your duties towards creatures; on the contrary, it's the only means you have of serving them effectively." (*Letter to Father Jerome, 19 May 1898*)

### **God is with us in the desert**

"The desert is only a very short passage, a time of purification and test, abounding in grace... where one receives the law of God... God is always there with us... there God speaks to us and always gives us guidance." (*Commentary on Psalm 104(105)*)

### **Charles de Foucauld put these words into the mouth of Jesus**

"I allowed the devil to tempt me in the desert and that for you, through love for you... so that you may see that temptation is not sin since I myself am tempted.... so that you may see how one resists temptations.. . an excellent means of fighting them is to confront them with the words of Holy Scripture which find their origin in divine strength. For that it is necessary to be well-acquainted with Holy Scripture ; read it.

(*Commentary Luke 4 and 12*)

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### ***Reappraisal of life in Fraternity***

- For me, the desert, what is it?
- How do I make the desert? --a time of solitude? a time of total receptivity with regard to God, leaving aside all habitual preoccupations;
- How do I practise prayer? In what way does my prayer change the way I live?
- How does my prayer take account of my life and that of others?

(*See Directory of the Fraternity pp 131, 136-8*)

## 7 The apostolate of friendship

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### ***In the Bible***

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (*Matthew 28, 19*)

"The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few; pray therefore the lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go you way. Behold I send you out as lambs among wolves." (*Luke 10 vv 1-7*)

"So have no fear.. what I tell you in the dark, utter in the light and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops." (*Matthew 10 vv 26-7*)

"If a man has a hundred sheep and one has gone astray does he not leave the ninety-nine

on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? So it is not the will of my Father, who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." (*Matthew 18 vv 12-14*)

"So the woman left her water jar and went away into the city and said to the people: "Come and see a man who told me all that I ever did." (*The Samaritan Woman John 4 vv 28-29*)

Father "as thou didst send me in to the world, so I have sent them into the world (*John 17 and 18*)

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### ***What Charles de Foucauld tells us:***

"My apostolate ought to be one of kindness. On seeing me people should say : "since this man is so good, his religion must be good." I should wish to be good enough to make people say "if such is the servant, what then is the master?" (*Diary 1909*)

To make myself everything to all: laugh with those who laugh, weep with those who weep, to bring them all to Jesus.

To place myself at the disposition of all, to draw them all to Jesus."(*Diary 1909*)

"I am not here to convert the Tuaregs but to try and understand them." (*In the Sahara with Father de Foucauld*)

"One has not to speak to the Tuaregs directly of Our Lord; that would make them run away. One must give them confidence, make friends of them, do little services for them, be linked with them in friendship." (*Letter to Marie de Bondy 16 December 1905*)

### **Apostolate of lay people taking their inspiration from Charles de Foucauld**

It is certain that beside the priests, Priscillas and Aquilas are needed (*Priscilla and Aquila, friends and collaborators of Paul at Corinth - Acts 18 vv18-19; Romans 16 v3*) seeing those whom the priest does not see, entering where he cannot enter, going to those who run away from him, evangelising by means of beneficent contact, kindness poured out on everybody. Charity which is the basis of religion... obliges every Christian to love his/her neighbour, that is every human being, as himself/herself. Every Christian should therefore be an apostle: that is not a recommendation, it is a commandment, the commandment of charity.

Lay people should be apostles to all those they can reach: their relatives and friends first, but not only them; there is nothing restricted about charity, which embraces all those embraced by the Heart of Jesus.... By what means?...with all those they are connected with, without exception, by goodness, tenderness, fraternal affection, example of virtue... with certain people without saying a word about God or religion, waiting patiently as God waits patiently, being good as God is good, with brotherly tenderness and praying; by speaking according to the measure which they can take it in... above all to see a brother in every human being... to see a child of God in every human being.

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#### ***Reappraisal of life in Fraternity***

- In the Church how do I perceive my mission as a lay person?
- By what means can I be an apostle  
in my family            in my work            in my district

(See *Directory of the Fraternity* pages 124, 140-1; 144-47)

## 8 To be a universal brother

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### ***In the Bible***

"You have only one Master and you are all brothers ." (*Matthew 23 and 8*)

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven... For if you love those who love you what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others?" (*Matthew 5 vv 44-47*)

"He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner! Jesus said "he also is a son of Abraham" (*Zachaeus Luke 19 vv 1-10*)

"A woman whose little daughter was

possessed by an unclean spirit... came and fell down at his feet. Now this woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by birth... "Please Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." And he said to her : "For saying this you may go your way, the demon has left your daughter."

(*Mark 7 vv 24-30*)

"And who is my neighbour"?.. Who proved neighbour to the man who fell among robbers." The lawyer replied: "the one who showed mercy to him." And Jesus said to him : "go and do likewise."

(*Luke 10 vv 29-37*)

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### ***What Charles de Foucauld tells us .....***

"We are all sons of the Most High! How we ought to esteem every human being, How we ought to love every human being! He is a child of God.... Let us love this man as God loves him every moment of his life.. Let us esteem, let us love every man from the bottom of our heart, because of God, our common Father." (*Commentary on Psalm 81*)

It is evangelisation not by word, but by the presence of the Most Holy Sacrament... charity, fraternal and universal charity, sharing up to our last mouthful of bread with each poor person, each guest, each stranger and welcoming each human being as a well-loved brother." (*Letter to Henri de Castries 23 June 1901*)

"Not to become attached to look after the well-fed sheep, clean and docile, leaving the scabby ones to their wretched fate, but loving all men and women because of God their Father and their Saviour, and giving care and attention especially to the sick, to sinners, because they are more in need." (*Meditation on the Gospel Matthew 9 and 13*)

"To be the friend of everyone, good and bad, to be the universal brother." (*Letter to Abbe Huvelin 13 July 1905*)

"All, the poor Turk and the bishop, all, in welcoming them all we welcome Jesus."

"I want all the inhabitants, Christians, Muslims, Jews and idolators, to become accustomed to look upon me as their brother, the universal brother. They are beginning to call my house "the Fraternity" and that pleases me."

(*Letter to Marie de Bondy 7 January 1902*)

"To put the love of God into practice, put into practice the love of men."

(*Letter to Louis Massignon 1916*)"

"Here there are very many slaves.. I don't conceal from my French friends that this slavery is an injustice, monstrous immorality and it is their duty to do all they can to suppress it... It is our duty to take all the necessary steps to bring relief to these poor unfortunates... we have n't the right to be as dogs that don't bark, dumb watchmen : we must cry aloud something wrong." (*Letter to Father Guerin 4 February 1902*)

To be a "universal brother" demands, for Charles de Foucauld, profound respect for men and women deep into their roots, their culture :

"In the general interest of science and of the Tuareg people, and of the good administration of what belongs to this people... before the old people have disappeared, it would be very interesting to write down the memories of some of them at their dictation and learn from them in conversation what they can tell us about the past history of their country and its old customs." (*Letter to Monsieur L Mercier*)

For the Brothers of the Sacred Heart - "May their universal and fraternal charity shine out as a beacon." (*Constitutions - Art 30*)

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#### ***Re-appraisal of life in Fraternity***

- Who is my neighbour? (re-read Luke 10 vv 29-37)
- What is my reaction?
  - - faced with someone who offends me
  - - faced with someone of a different religion from me
  - - faced with someone whose political opinions are different from mine
  - - faced with someone who has not the same spirituality as me
- What interest do I take in the culture and traditions of people from a different ethnic group?

(*See Directory of the Fraternity page 124*)

## 9 The Master of the impossible

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***In the Bible : God takes care of the one who abandons himself to Him: "As for me, I would seek God..."***

Who does great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number." (*Job 5 vv8-9*)

"As for me Yahweh, I entrust myself to your love." (*Psalms 13*)

"Yahweh guards the one he loves as he/she sleeps" (*Psalms 127*)

"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." (*John 4 v 34*)

God guides the one who has confidence in Him:

"They left everything and followed him." (*Luke 5*)

"You must be born again from on high. The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound of it but you do not know whence it comes nor whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (*John 3 vv 7-8*)

The will of God, that is what God's friend wants :

"Our Father... thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (*Matt 26, 39*)

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### ***What Charles de Foucauld tells us***

God takes care of the one who abandons himself to Him.

That which is impossible to man is possible to God...

God loves and he can do all things. He respects the liberty that he has given to man, but does not withhold free gifts of his grace, which is such that it can overturn all obstacles." (*Letter to Marie de Bondy 23 March 1916*)

I try to do the will of Jesus from day to day and am in great interior peace." (*Letter to Marie de Bondy*)

My God, "you will not leave us in darkness when we have need of light... You will watch over us and lead us by the hand, without our being aware of it and when our souls need light, you will always give it." (*Meditation on the Gospel*)

God guides the one who has confidence in Him. God leads us along such unexpected paths! Only let us be faithful and let ourselves be carried along with great love." (*Letter to Trappist Brothers*)

"It is through reason and the Gospel, with enlightenment from the Holy Spirit, that God lights the way for us." (*Spiritual Writings quoted by M. Lafon*)

"I shall do what I think best with regard to the circumstances." (*Letter to Marie de Bondy*)

"We must neither act without praying (that never) nor pray without acting when we have the means of acting." (*503rd Meditation on the Gospel*)

"Let us never worry about the future: at each instant of our life.. let us do what the will of God imposes on us at the present moment."(234th Meditation on the Gospel)

The will of God, that is the desire of God's friend.

"To do the Father's will, that is our life."(438th Meditation on the Gospel)

"To do the will of God whatever it requires of us, without hesitating, in spite of the apparent impossibilities of death, it is for the senses." (Daily Notes 1916)

"To love, what is it? ....It is to desire passionately ..... the welfare of the beloved." (Meditation on the Gospel Luke 10 ,27)

"Let the heart cry out, let it ask of God, with childlike simplicity, what it desires... for oneself or one's neighbour... always to be followed by "not my will, but Thine." The other way of praying is to say in simplicity the words at the end = "My Father, Thy will be done."(245th Meditation on the Gospel)

"Jesus is the Master of the impossible." (Meditation Matthew 14,31)

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#### **Reappraisal of life in Fraternity**

- On what occasion in my life was I aware that God had taken care of me.
- How do I let myself be guided by God?
- In what circumstances has it occurred to me to say to God: "not as I want, but as you want."

(See Directory of the Lay Fraternity page 128 and the Prayer of Abandonment)

## **A Way of Unity – 2000 version**

### **I. - THE LAY FRATERNITY**

The lay fraternity brings together women and men of all ethnic origins, of all social classes and from different states of life who, following the example of Charles de Foucauld, wish to help each other to follow Jesus and to live the Gospel.

The fraternity had its origin in the Roman Catholic Church but it is open to all those who are drawn by the message of Brother Charles.

### **II. - THE SPIRIT**

Faithful to the inspiration of Brother Charles, members of the fraternity are called to live the hidden life of Nazareth which for them is:

- a) The constant search and welcome of the incarnate Son of God who became the “carpenter’s son” (Matt 13 : 55)
  - b) “To cry the gospel with their life”.
  - c) Solidarity with the poor - the living presence of Christ in the midst of the world.
  - d) The search for communion and universal friendship with all the Churches, religions and people of the world.
- 1. Fraternity members wish to model their lives on the example of Jesus Christ:**
    - a) In adoring him and receiving him in the Eucharist - the real presence of God amongst us.
    - b) In welcoming him in his Word, especially in the Gospel.
    - c) In searching for him in personal prayer, in retreat, in “desert days” and in self-abandonment.
    - d) In meeting him, in loving him and serving him in all people.
  - 2. In solidarity with the poor, fraternity members try to:**
    - a) Live a simple life, which is an alternative to the consumer society.
    - b) Share their sorrows, their hopes and their conflicts in the search for true freedom.
    - c) Recognise in all people, particularly our neighbours, a brother and a sister to love, and especially the most abandoned who are in need of material, spiritual or moral support.
  - 3. By their life in fraternity members are called to:**
    - a) Have mutual understanding and affection for each other and to be aware of the others’ need whatever it may be.
    - b) A true conversion of heart, particularly through the “review of life” where they are called to scrutinise their personal and public lives in accordance with the demands of the gospel.
    - c) A true sharing pre-supposing renunciation of privileges in order to seek a more communal management of material goods.

4. The fraternity must take a clear position when human rights are threatened by any form of oppression but without placing individual members under an obligation to concur with or act on that position.
5. Brother Charles must always be a source of renewal for the fraternities. Knowledge of his life, his writings, his spirituality are means through which fraternity members can remain faithful to their vocation and today's demands of the gospel in their lives.

### **III. - ORGANISATION**

The fraternity is made up of small local groups.

1. To ensure liaison and support between these local groups each country has a national team one of whose members is, where possible, a priest of the family of Brother Charles.
2. Each country is organised according to its national needs and characteristics, always remaining faithful to the spirit of Brother Charles and in liaison with the international team.
3. The fraternity is aware of and feels a duty to those who, because of their particular circumstances, are unable to attend regular meetings but wish to follow the way of life and spirituality of Brother Charles' family.
4. Each continent should have a regional organisation thus encouraging international discussion and support.
5. There is a general assembly every six years.
6. The purposes of the general assembly are:
  - a) To meet delegate representatives from each country.
  - b) To live together, praying, listening and sharing.
  - c) To discern what is and what is not faithful to the spirit of the fraternity.
  - d) To elect an international team for a period of six years. This team should have, if possible, a priest member and also two or three other members who are present and therefore known to the General Assembly.  
This team must be the sign of unity with all the fraternities and has responsibility for giving support, encouraging growth and maintaining liaison throughout the world.
7. The Fraternity has regular contact with all other branches of the spiritual family of Brother Charles, particularly in the General Association of the Fraternities of Brother Charles of Jesus.

*Text discussed and approved by the General Assembly of the Lay Fraternities at San Cugat (Barcelona) Spain, 15th August 1982, and modified by the General Assembly of the Lay Fraternities at Araruama (Rio de Janeiro), Brazil, 29th July 2000.*

## Prayer of abandonment

Father,  
I abandon myself into your hands;  
do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do,  
I thank you:  
I am ready for all,  
I accept all.  
Let only your will be done in me,  
and in all your creatures.  
I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul;  
I offer it to you  
with all the love of my heart,  
for I love you, Lord,  
and so need to give myself,  
to surrender myself into your hands,  
without reserve,  
and with boundless confidence,  
for you are my Father.

Lay fraternities in Africa  
Cotonou (Benin), May 1998

