

**“BROTHER CHARLES DE FOUCAULD”  
LAY FRATERNITY**

**« *THE LITTLE GUIDE* »**

**a practical guide to fraternity living and spirituality**

**PAPAL MESSAGE DURING THE BEATIFICATION OF BROTHER CHARLES DE FOUCAULD  
NOVEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup> 2005  
ST. PETER'S BASILICA, ROME**

**His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI:**

*«Let us give thanks for the testimony of Charles de Foucauld. Through his contemplative and hidden life at Nazareth, having discovered the truth about the humanity of Jesus, he invites us to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation. There he learned much about the Lord whom he wished to follow in humility and poverty. He discovered that Jesus, having come to us to join in our humanity, invites us to universal fraternity which he would later live in the Sahara with a love of which Christ was the example. As a priest, he put the Eucharist and the Gospel, the twin tables of Bread and the Word, the source of Christian life and mission, at the center of his life. »*

**Extract from Homily of Card. José Saraiva Martins:**

*«Charles de Foucauld had a renowned influence on spirituality in the XX century and, at the beginning of the Third Millennium, continues to be a fruitful reference and invitation to a style of life radically evangelical not only for those of the different, numerous and diversified groups who make up his Spiritual Family. To receive the Gospel with simplicity, to evangelize without wanting to impose oneself, to witness to Jesus through respect for other religious experiences, to affirm the primacy of charity lived in the fraternity are only some of the most important aspects of a precious heritage which encourages us to act and behave so that our own life may be like that of Blessed Charles in «crying out the Gospel from the rooftop, crying out that we are of Jesus.»*

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## Preface

The former International Team (IT) of the Lay Fraternity “Brother Charles de Foucauld” (René Haentjens, Marie Fernando, Christophe Daga, Thérèse and Jean Gernigon, Amand de Cock and Henri Le Masne) saw the need to produce a “Little Guide “ for the Fraternity. First drafts were presented to the International Assembly at Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) 2000 where Fraternity delegates enriched the project with their own ideas mandating the new IT to continue the work.

The present IT has added other paragraphs and chapters; and during five years has tried to make it into a truly intercontinental text. All the proposals have been reread in the different Continents and have been edited and corrected, either during IT meetings in Spain (2001), Germany (2003) and Tanzania (2004), or by means of Email.

We believe the “Little Guide” will be useful to all fraternities, but above all to beginners. It will become equally a tool of great value for our sisters and brothers in other branches of the Spiritual Family of Brother Charles, as it will help them to interest lay people in building up new fraternities.

Brother Charles wrote in the annex to his “Directory” :

*“This rule contains very few external precepts so that we do not become too concerned with observing this or that rule in order that, freed from this worry, we will have our soul occupied only in loving God. The goal of this rule is to give us a family life that is simple and stripped of all that hinder the spirit of contemplation of God, and to give us a life that will be like that of the most holy Virgin and Saint Joseph in Nazareth”*

The “Little Guide” should not therefore be understood as a rule but rather as guidelines that will have to be adapted to your own situations.

The life and message of Brother Charles de Foucauld, the Lay Fraternity and his Spiritual Family are presented in the first chapters (I-III). Then the Mission of the laity in the world and the Church is taken up (chapter IV) before explaining the main characteristics of Fraternity life itself (chapter V). Concrete orientations for practising Fraternity living and spirituality are to be found in chapter VI . Chapter VII is dedicated to presenting important prayers within the Brother Charles tradition with their historical background. Chapter VIII offers some final information and contacts.

This task was completed on the feast of Epiphany 2006. The *Magi* followed the star which guided them to Bethlehem where they found the Divine Infant. May our eyes also be opened to that star that will guide us to the “Master of the Impossible”, our “Unique Model”. And may this “Little Guide” become a fruitful resource for our following in the steps of our Blessed Brother Charles.

January 6<sup>th</sup> 2006

International Team, Lay Fraternity “Brother Charles de Foucauld” (Marianne Bonzelet with Charlotte Furaha and Jean Chris Bisimwa Muganguzi, Anoinette and Fidaa Boutros, Fatima and Patricio Rice, Moing-Jun Pak and Josef Freitag)

## 1 Charles de Foucauld : Life and Message

### 1.1 CHARLES DE FOUCAULD: 1858 - 1916

#### **BIRTH: 1858**

- Born Sept. 15, 1858 in Strasburg into an aristocratic family with its motto «Never to yield». Baptised at the time of his birth.

#### **CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH : 1858-1876**

"I, who was surrounded with so many graces, from my early childhood, the son of a saintly mother..."

*November 1897*

- Charles had one sister, Marie, three years younger than him.
- **Both his parents died, one after the other, in 1864 leaving Charles emotionally scarred by that experience**
- **The orphans were put under the care of their maternal grandfather, Colonel de Morlet, a good but weak minded man.**
- **After the 1870 Franco-Prussian war, France lost Alsace-Lorraine (including Strasbourg) to Germany. The family moved to Nancy and kept their French nationality.**
- He attended secondary school in Nancy, then in Paris with the Jesuits where he obtained his baccalaureate and began preparing for military school. By his own account, he lost his faith at age 16 on finishing high school.

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

"I was straying further and further away from you, Lord. All faith had disappeared from my life."

*Retreat, November 1897*

- 1876: he entered Saint- Cyr Military Academy. He was dismissed before the end of the year on the grounds of laziness and undisciplined behaviour .
- 1878: His grandfather died in February, leaving him heir to a considerable fortune which he squandered. He entered the Saumur Cavalry School in October, and graduated the last - 87th out of a class of 87 - in 1879.
- **At military school he lived a life of pleasure and his acts of indiscipline and eccentricity increased (once on sentry duty he left his post, as a prank, to disguise himself as a beggar). However he began to draw and sketch and educate himself by reading**
- 1879: While stationed in Pont-à-Mousson, **his behaviour became profligate and associated himself with a young woman of dubious repute called *Mimi*.**
- 1880: His regiment was sent to Algeria. **He took *Mimi* with him pretending she was his wife. When that deception was discovered, the Army summoned him for another commission. Charles refused and preferred to be dismissed for "lack of discipline and notorious misconduct". He then returned to France to live in Evian.**
- 1881: Hearing that his regiment was involved in dangerous action in Tunisia, he asked to be reinstated, left Mimi and joined a new regiment in the South Oran area.
- For the next 8 months, he proved to be an excellent officer, praised **by his superiors and troops under his command.**

### **JOURNEYS OF EXPLORATION: 1882-1886.**

"The encounter with Islam caused a profound upheaval within me..."

*Letter: Aug. 7, 1901*

- 1882: Fascinated by North Africa, he requested discharge from the French Army and settled in Algiers to prepare a scientific expedition to Morocco. He learned to speak Arabic and Hebrew.
- June 1883 - May 1884: Disguised as a Jewish Rabbi and accompanied by another Rabbi Mardochee, he travelled clandestinely throughout Morocco. He risked his life several times on the expedition but was deeply impressed by the faith and prayer life of Moslems.
- 1884: Charles got engaged to marry in Algeria, but broke off the engagement as his family was opposed to the marriage.
- 1885: He received a prestigious gold medal from the French Geographic Society for the report on his Moroccan expedition.
- 1885-1886: He travelled to Oases in Southern Algeria and Tunisia.
- 1886: He returned to France and rebuilt relations with his own family in particular with his cousin Marie de Bondy.
- He published "*An Exploration of Morocco*".
- He began to live a more sober and austere life.
- He questioned himself on his inner life and spirituality.
- **Despite having no faith, he used to visit churches and repeated this strange prayer: "God, if you exist, make yourself known to me".**

### **CONVERSION : 1886-1889**

"As soon as I believed that there was a God, I understood that I could not do otherwise than to live only for Him..."

*August 14, 1901*

- Late October 1886: he went to the Saint Augustin Church in Paris to ask for religious instruction from Father Huvelin, whose name had been mentioned to him by Marie de Bondy.
- Father Huvelin told him to immediately make his Confession, and he received Communion.
- 1887-1888: He lived with his family at the home of his sister Marie in the Provinces and began to think about entering religious life.
- Dec. 1888 – Jan. 1889: Charles visited the Holy Land where Nazareth made a very strong impression on him.
- On his return to France, he gave all his possessions to his sister and made retreats in the search of a religious order he might join.
- He felt called to live "the hidden life of the poor and humble worker of Nazareth".
- The Trappist order seemed the most suitable to his vocation.

### **RELIGIOUS LIFE: 1890- 1897**

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

*Letter: Aug. 14, 1901*

- 1890 (Jan 15): He entered the Trappist monastery of Notre-Dame des Neiges (Our Lady of the Snows) in France with the hope of joining a much poorer Trappist monastery in Akbes, Syria. He was in fact sent to Akbes six months later.
- **He drafted an initial rule for a religious order "according to his ideas"**. He wrote: "I long for Nazareth".
- He requested to be dispensed from his vows. In October 1896 he was sent to Rome for further studies.
- January, 1897: the Abbot General of the Trappists granted him freedom to follow his own vocation.

### **NAZARETH: 1897-1900**

"In order to be even more like Jesus..."

*Letter: Aug. 14, 1901*

"By the very fact of celebrating Mass, I will pay God the greatest tribute, and do most good to humanity.

*Letter: April 26, 1900*

- In March 1897, he began to live in Nazareth where he worked as a house worker for the Poor Clare Sisters and lived in a hut near their cloister.
- "I obtained permission to go to Nazareth alone, and live there unknown as a labourer doing everyday work: solitude, prayer, adoration, meditation of the Gospel, humble work."
- He remained there for a little over 3 years. Little by little, the Poor Clares and his confessor, Father Huvelin, encouraged him to request ordination to the priesthood.
- He returned to France to Notre-Dame des Neiges Monastery to make final preparations.
- June 9<sup>th</sup> 1901: He was ordained a priest in Viviers (Ardeche France).

### **BENI-ABBES AND VISITS TO THE TUAREGS: 1901-1906**

"To lead in the Sahara the hidden life of Jesus at Nazareth, not in order to preach, but to live in solitude, the poverty and the humble work of Jesus "

*April 1904*

- September 1901, Charles de Foucauld returned to Algeria. He settled in Beni-Abbes where he built a **hermitage with the objective of founding a monastic fraternity which he called the "Little Brothers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."**
- 1902: He drew the attention of friends and the authorities to the evils of slavery
- He secured the freedom of several slaves through paying their ransom.
- 1904 and 1905: He made several trips to the Tuaregs in the Sahara. In 1905 he moved to Tamanrasset in their territory.
- He learned their language.
- No priest had gone into their territory before.
- He began to translate the Gospel into the Tuareg language.
- 1906: At last, a companion joined him but Brother Michael soon fell ill, and returned to France.

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

"My apostolate must be the apostolate of goodness. In seeing me, people should be able to say to one another, "Since this man is so good, his religion must be good."

*1909*

- July 1907: Charles **undertook a major scientific task of translating the Tuareg language by working on their songs and poetry and getting help from local inhabitants.**
- He was the only Christian, and so was not allowed to celebrate the Eucharist. But he chose to remain for the sake of the people. After 6 months he got permission to celebrate alone, but not to reserve the Blessed Sacrament.
- January 1908: **Exhausted during a major drought, he fell seriously ill and barely escaped death. The Tuareg assisted him by sharing small amounts of goat's milk with him. Charles was so helpless that he depended upon his neighbours. He came to realise that friendship and fraternal love has to work through exchange and reciprocity.**
- 1909-1911-1913: He made three trips to France to present his plans for a "Union of Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart", an association for the conversion of unbelievers. "Fervent Christians from all walks of life are able to make known through their example, what the Christian religion is, and to "demonstrate" the Gospel in their lives" (Rules and Counsels, 1910-1913).
- 1914: the war broke out in Europe. Charles de Foucauld remained in Tamanrasset on the advice of General Laperrine who

was one of his friends.

- 1915 : A time of unrest in the Sahara desert: Raids by Moroccans and Senoussites from Libya threatened the area.

### ***THE FINAL YEAR HIS DEATH: 1916***

"Our self-abasement is the most powerful means that we have to unite us to Jesus and do good to souls."

*Letter to Marie de Bondy: Dec.1, 1916.*

"If the grain of wheat that has fallen into the ground does not die, it remains alone. If it dies, it bears much fruit. I have not died, and so I remain alone... Pray for my conversion so that in dying I may bear fruit"

*To Suzanne Perret*

- To protect the local people, Charles de Foucauld built a small fortress in Tamanrasset. He moved in there on his own, prepared to receive the people from the surrounding area in case of danger.
- He continued to work on Tuareg poetry and proverbs.
- Dec 1, 1916: Some Tuaregs under Senoussite influence, lured him outside the fortress, took hold of him, and bound him up.
- During the looting, there was a warning that French soldiers were unexpectedly coming. There was panic. A shot was fired. Charles was killed. His body was buried in a ditch that surrounded the fort.
- At the time of his death, Charles de Foucauld was alone, or almost. In France, 49 people had joined the Union of Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart, which had succeeded in getting its approval from the religious authorities.
- Today, 19 different groups of lay people, priests, religious brothers and sisters live the Gospel throughout the world following the intuitions and charisma of Charles de Foucauld.

## 1.2 Charles de Foucauld, Man of his Times and Prophet for Today

There is a striking contrast between the exceptional destiny of this man, so deeply marked by his origins, his own times, his background and that of his eventual out-of-the-ordinary experiences, and the universality of his spiritual message that today guides the lives of so many people around the world.

### 1.2.1 Charles de Foucauld, a Man of his Times

It is necessary to situate Charles de Foucauld in his origins (an aristocrat from his father's side, a wealthy bourgeois from his mother), his military background, a special period of the French Republic ("Revenge" after the humiliating 1871 defeat by Prussia, anticlericalism and "persecutions" against the Church), his own personal story from overcoming the emotional wounds provoked by the early death of his parents to the exploration of Morocco which, aside from the feat itself, revealed a seeker who would dedicate the last tens years of his life in an important scientific undertaking aimed at a better understanding of Tuareg culture.

### 1.2.2 The Message of Charles de Foucauld: "Let us return to the Gospel"

Following the the way of the great saints who, like Francis of Assisi, are raised up by God to recall Christian people to the demands of the Gospel, Charles de Foucauld restated the most essential: "Let us return to the Gospel. If we do not return to the Gospel, Jesus will not live in us." To return to the Gospel is to allow Jesus of Nazareth live in us through a life of poverty of spirit and of availability to all by putting ourselves in the last place, and committing ourselves to humanity. Brother Charles, filled as he was with the passionate love of Christ. was wholeheartedly committed to the Gospel. It is from that source that we, members of his Family but many others with us, draw strength and inspiration.

### 1.2.3 Charles de Foucauld, a Prophet for Today

Besides this basic element of Christian living, which is the return to the Gospel, there are others aspects by which Charles de Foucauld illuminates our way in a Church concerned about responding to the needs of the contemporary world.

#### 1. Charles de Foucauld was man in spiritual search

- He spent a third of his life as an unbeliever and is close to all, especially young people, who are searching for a direction to their lives.
- He searched all his life but with only one focus: to imitate the life of Jesus at Nazareth. He knew how to discern the will of God in events. In a world that so quickly changes, he can help us to keep up with these changes so as to answer the needs of our sisters and brothers.

#### 2. Nazareth

Being present to God and present to men and women. To make that connection is essential in our lives. Presence to God: Charles de Foucauld was to remain a monk while becoming closer and closer to people. At Tamanrasset he was most approachable, accessible and so little. Presence to men and women: In the simple relationship of friendship but also in solidarity with those who are victims of injustice ( his struggle against slavery ). He approached the Tuareg people with great respect, trying to get to know them better through the rigour of a scientific approach, so as to make their culture better appreciated and wider known.

### 3. Concern for those “farthest away”

Sharing his faith in Jesus the Savior, he came to accept the perspective of priesthood. And once a priest, he wanted to dedicate himself to the most neglected, firstly, the inhabitants of Morocco but when he could not go there, the people of the oasis, and finally, the Tuareg. He would consecrate the last years of his life to this people although he felt prepared to announce the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

### 4. To build a universal Fraternity

of the the poor and put them in the center of society and of the Church.

### 5. To live the Church as the People of God

Not the pyramidal society of the Church, but the Church, the People of God, in whose service certain people carry out a ministry.

*“Charles de Foucauld from very early on, had this conviction on the common vocation of the baptized. In his proposed congregation, no distinction was made between priests and lay brothers and sisters; the Association was to welcome all -- laymen, religious, and priests. In this way he wished to call lay men and women as collaborators in his mission as were called Priscilla and Aquila by St. Paul in the early Church (Acts 18,1-4 ; 18, 19-26)”.*

Father Henri LE MASNE,  
Member of the Priest and Lay Fraternities

### **Questions:**

- What do I discover from reflecting on the life of Charles de Foucauld?
- What can I learn that applies to my own life, my own relationship to God and to others?
- How does the life and the message of Brother Charles help me to follow Jesus?
- What is the message for me? How can I try to practice it in my daily life?

## 2 The Spiritual Family of Charles de Foucauld

### 2.1 The Spiritual Family of Brother Charles

*“If the grain of wheat fallen to the ground does not die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”*

Today there are ten religious congregations and nine associations of spiritual life in the Spiritual Family of Brother Charles:

- Sodality Union
- Charles de Foucauld Group
- Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart
- Little Brothers of Jesus
- Little Sisters of Jesus
- Jesus Caritas Priests Fraternity
- Jesus-Caritas Fraternity
- Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld
- Little Brothers of the Gospel
- Little Sisters of the Gospel
- Little Sisters of Nazareth
- Comunitat de Jesus
- Little Brothers of Jesus Caritas
- Little Brothers of the Incarnation
- Little Sisters of the Heart of Jesus
- Little Brothers of the Cross
- Little Sisters of the Incarnation
- Charles de Foucauld Fraternity
- Missionaries of Jesus the Servant (TSGTT)

### 2.2 A Large Family

#### 2.2.1 Origins

When Charles de Foucauld died in Tamanrasset on December 1, 1916, there were 49 people including himself, on the list of members of the *Union of Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, which he had worked to set up during the last years of his life, and for which he had written the *Directory*. The Secretary of the Union, Father Laurain wrote: “Now everything has been destroyed by his death”, and everybody thought the group, which had scarcely started, would disappear.

Everybody except one man, **Louis Massignon** (1882-1962), who was to gain an international reputation as a specialist in Islam. He had first met Charles de Foucauld in 1909, and corresponded with him until his death. He did everything he could to keep the Union alive, as his “older brother” would have wished. He published the *Directory*. He launched the *Charles de Foucauld Association* for which he secured authorization from Cardinal Amette. And above all, he “commissioned”, to use his own word, Rene Bazin, to write a biography of Brother Charles. That book, which was published in 1921 under the title “*Charles de Foucauld, Explorer in Morocco, Hermit in the Sahara*” was the first to draw a portrait of Charles de Foucauld and present the core of his message. It was as a result of this biography that spiritual

groups and religious congregations began. They all found support and advice from the Association and from Louis Massignon.

Louis Massignon gradually distanced himself from the Association itself, but until his death, continued to lead a group of men and women, lay people, religious brothers, sisters and priests, who drew their inspiration from the spirituality of the *Directory*. In 1947, he named the group the "Sodality of the Directory". Today this original group is called "**Sodality Union**" and has members in all five Continents.

### **2.2.2 The First Groups.**

When Bazin's book was published, lay people were the first to hear the call. Brother Charles had voiced repeatedly: "*We need Christians like Priscilla and Aquila doing good in silence*". From 1923 onwards, Suzanne Garde began to think of a form of presence in North Africa: "*Evangelization would be done by women. They could begin with a dispensary, a sewing workshop, and with everything that would make the Arabs appreciate us.*" This was the beginning of the **Charles de Foucauld Group** in Algeria, first in Tlemcen, then in El Bayad, then, after 1945, in Dalidah, near the Tunisian border. It had to withdraw to France because of the Algerian War of Independence, and in 1968, it based itself in Bon Encontre, near Agen (France).

In the same years, the group of **Nurses of Our Lady of Carthage (Notre Dame de Carthage)** was formed in Tunisia at the suggestion of the Bishop of Carthage and Tunis. In 1924, this same Bishop had conferred the habit of Charles de Foucauld on **Charles Henrion** and **Emile Malcor**. The last members of the group of nurses had to withdraw and return to France in 1961, (with Father Henrion) and settled in Villecroze (France). Today there is one Sister who lives in an old people's home, but the group as such no longer exists.

Still in the same period, in 1927, Father **Albert Peyriguere** settled in Morocco. He had first tried to live in Algeria with a companion, following the *Rule* drafted by Charles de Foucauld in 1889. He remained in El Kbab in the Moroccan Middle Atlas region until his death in 1959. Father Michel Lafon continued this presence as a "monk-missionary", as Charles de Foucauld described himself, an expression that Father Peyriguere made his own.

A few years later, the first religious communities appeared. In August 1933, the Fraternity of the **Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart** was founded by Sister Marie-Charles, near Montpellier (France). A month later, Rene Voillaume and four other brothers received the habit of the **Little Brothers of Jesus**, and founded their first fraternity in Algeria. In 1939, in Algiers, Little Sister Magdeleine and a companion made their vows as the **Little Sisters of Jesus**, and based themselves in Touggourt (Algeria) among the nomads. With differing emphases, all three groups were intended to be contemplative and missionary communities.

The Little Brothers of Jesus and Little Sisters of the Sacred Heart lived at first in a 'monastic' form. But after World War II (for the former), and the second Vatican Council (for the latter), they changed their lifestyles, and small fraternities were set up in working class neighborhoods – something the Little Sisters of Jesus were already doing. The keyword was 'Nazareth' as a form of religious life: to seek God by taking the path that Jesus took, which was that of sharing ordinary, daily life. Fraternities were established in disadvantaged or extremely marginalized environments in all four corners of the world.

Even though the group no longer exists today, we should also mention the **Union of Nazarenes of Charles de Foucauld** founded in 1947 in Bordeaux (France) by Magdeleine de Vimont. She was touched when she read the *Directory*, and also deeply moved by contact with the mentally ill to whom her group was initially dedicated.

### **2.2.3 The publication of *The Seeds of the Desert, (In the Heart of the Masses, in French)* and new developments.**

In 1950, Father Voillaume published *The Seeds of the Desert*. This book described the life of the Little Brothers of Jesus, their way of following Brother Charles and their understanding of his message. Because there was a need to explain what appeared at the time as a novelty, he stressed the vocation of every Christian to a life of friendship with God, and the paths to take in order to lead a contemplative life "at the heart of the world". This book had considerable influence, and was translated into many languages. It was through this book that many people came to know Charles de Foucauld and his spirituality. Father Voillaume also acted as an adviser to the groups that began at this time.

In 1950, Mgr de Provençères, bishop of Aix-en-Provence, gave official recognition to the **Lay Fraternity of Charles de Foucauld** (initially called Charles de Foucauld Fraternity). But in fact, many years earlier, in several cities in France, groups of Christians (men and women, single and married, lay people and priests) had begun to meet regularly to help one another follow Jesus and live the Gospel in the spirit of Brother Charles. Today, the Lay Fraternity is present on every Continent, and new groups are formed every year. In terms of numbers it is the largest group in the family.

Within this group, some priests had begun to meet among themselves with a desire to give their lives and their priestly ministry the evangelical 'flavor' of Brother Charles. A **Union** of priests was formed, which took the name of **Priests Fraternity Jesus Caritas** in 1976. Today it is present on every Continent.

In the same years, some young Christian women felt a call to a contemplative life lived in celibacy, bound by vows, while keeping their professional commitments in society, and without taking the form of a religious life in community. The **Jesus-Caritas Fraternity** was thus formed by Marguerite Poncet in 1952. It was given official recognition as a Secular Institute for women. From this group the **Charles de Foucauld Fraternity** was created in 1991, as an association of lay women, committed in celibacy.

From the experience of the Little Brothers of Jesus, Father Voillaume then thought of communities that would be able to take charge of the sharing of the Good News with more disadvantaged people and their human development. In 1956, he founded the **Little Brothers of the Gospel**, then, in 1963, the **Little Sisters of the Gospel**.

#### ***2.2.4 The Beni-Abbès Meeting (1955) and the Spiritual Family of Charles de Foucauld Association***

Faced with the rapid increase in the number of groups related with Charles de Foucauld, the need was felt for "a meeting that would make fraternal unity concrete, with respect for the diversity of vocations and in a communal fidelity to the message left by Brother Charles" (as Little Sister Magdeleine said). Also, in the context of decolonization, some groups, particularly in France, were tempted to make Charles de Foucauld appear as a defender of 'Christian civilization' against the move towards independence by the peoples of the Maghreb (North Africa). There was a desire to set up a representative association that could respond and show that the message of the 'universal brother' could not be distorted or used for ends contrary to his intentions.

So a meeting was organized in Beni-Abbes from November 14 to 16, 1955. It was led by Mgr Mercier, the bishop of the Sahara, who welcomed the meeting, and by Louis Massignon. Mgr De Provençères, the Bishop of Aix en Provence, who had been a friend and protector of the different groups from the beginning, also took part, as did Mgr Duperray, the bishop of Montpellier, Fr Peyriguere and representatives (often the founders) of the different groups then in existence. Sharing and prayer were the hallmark of this meeting-pilgrimage. It was decided to create the Charles of Jesus - Father de Foucauld Association. Its aim was "to express the unity of the spirituality that inspires the different groups that claim kinship with the religious thought and spirituality of Brother Charles; to make known the personality and writings of their founder; and to defend, if need be, his memory and the meaning of his message against the distortions to which they are exposed". It was also decided that the *Jesus Caritas* bulletin would be a link among all the groups, expressing their common spirituality.

Today the Association is known as the **Spiritual Family of Charles de Foucauld Association**. It regularly receives new members. Although not an essential characteristic, it is worth noting that all the new groups were formed outside France – in Europe first of all, and then on other Continents.

#### ***2.2.5 The Family is still growing.***

August 15, 1966 is the official birthday of the **Little Sisters of Nazareth**, in Ghent, Belgium. They were a group of young women, active in the working world through their membership of the Catholic Young Workers movement, who wanted to live both the message of Brother Charles and of Cardinal Cardijn, and find a form of religious life characterized by sharing ordinary working class life. They wanted to proclaim to everyone they met in their life and activity that "your life is worth more than all the gold in the world".

Also in the early 1960s, in Catalonia (Spain), both *The Spiritual Itinerary of Charles de Foucauld* (by Jean Francois Six), and Father Peyriguere's letters made a strong impression on Pedro Vilaplana. He became the focus of a community of young

people who consecrated themselves to the Lord, either in married life (each household constituting a fraternity) or in celibacy, in small fraternities. The first commitments were made in 1968, constituting the **Community de Jesus**.

In 1969, in the diocese of Foligno (Italy), the bishop gave official recognition to a new community that had started in his Diocese: **Community of the Little Brothers of Jesus Caritas**, founded by Giancarlo Sibilis. This included priests who wanted to live in a monastic community with strong fraternal ties while serving in various pastoral ministries for the dioceses.

Thousands of miles from there in Haiti, the **Little Brothers and Sisters of the Incarnation** were formed (the Brothers in 1976, the Sisters in 1985) with Franklin Armand and Emmanuelle Victor. In that country marked by difficulties of all sorts, they wanted to be "peasants with the peasants, for the sake of Jesus and his Gospel", and work for the development and evangelization of the rural world.

In the diocese of Bangui (Central Africa), a religious community of women began in 1977: the **Little Sisters of the Heart of Jesus**. In one of the poorest countries on the planet, shaken by political troubles for years, a fraternal presence given to prayer, welcoming every person, and placing itself at the service of the people, constitutes a welcome haven of peace.

In 1980, in Canada, a monastic community, **Little Brothers of the Cross**, was founded by Father Michel Verret (Brother Michel Marie of the Cross). Following Brother Charles, they wanted to lead a fraternal 'family' life in the setting of a monastery, ready to welcome and accompany all who come to their door.

The most recent group to join the family was founded in Vietnam in the early 1980s, with a view to at becoming a Secular Institute. The Vietnamese name, whose acronym is **TSGTT**, means **Secular Institute of the Missionaries of Jesus the Servant**. The group includes a branch for men as well as one for women, and also a branch for associates.

This is a rather large Family for a man who died alone! And the Family of those who find inspiration for their lives in Charles de Foucauld is not limited to the membership of the Association. Other groups exist, which are often integrated in the Family at a local level. Some groups have disappeared, others are created. And many others who are not part of any group see in Brother Charles a beloved personality who, inspired by the spirit of the Gospel and humanity, touches their inner selves and sets them on their way to a profound spiritual search.

The Association now holds its general assembly every two years. That is an opportunity for the leaders of the different groups to exchange and meet. An elected team ensures coordination between meetings. During their lives people such as Mgr de Provencheres, Father Voillaume, and Little Sister Magdeleine have significantly influenced these meetings and the life of the Association. Today leaders of the Association and representatives of the members are trying to deepen the message of Brother Charles, and to discover the wealth and diversity of the responses given by each group to that message. Although different they recognize that as each branch is inspired by a common spirit, like a rainbow, all the colors are needed to display its full splendor.

The sense of being united in the *Family* of Brother Charles has grown in the past years. Now in most countries, December 1<sup>st</sup> is a milestone opportunity for members of the spiritual *Family* in each country to gather and meet. Moreover, in many countries the spiritual Family organize activities together so as to show forth the spirituality of Brother Charles to the world and the Church as was the case during recent celebrations of the Beatification of Brother Charles (November 13, 2005). The Association often plays an important role in facilitating contacts.

### **Questions:**

- How are contacts developed in my country / my region among the groups of the *Spiritual Family* of Brother Charles?
- Each member of the Lay Fraternity and of the *Spiritual Family* has something to give and to receive. I am invited to discover my talents and charism and to offer them as my contribution. What is my own personal contribution?
- How can I contribute to further exchange and dialogue among members?

### 3 Mission of the Laity

#### 3.1 Unedited Correspondence between Charles de Foucauld and Monsignor Joseph Hours:

##### 3.1.1 May 3, 1912, Assekrem (Ahaggar) , Algeria

“Monsignor,

*I received your letter telling me of the need, both in France and mission countries, to reinforce some important truths on the work of the laity which I myself have been thinking about for some time. As you say, the ecclesiastical and lay worlds know each other so very little that one cannot communicate easily with the other.*

*Certainly there has to be Priscillas and Aquilas on the side of a priest, to meet those whom he cannot meet, to enter into places where he cannot go, to reach out to those who have moved away from him, and to evangelize through friendly contact by becoming an overflowing goodness to all, a love always ready to give of itself, an appealing good example for all who have turned their backs on the priest, or maybe, through prejudice, are hostile to him.*

*It seems that the evils of society go very deep indeed. Fundamental virtues are lacking, or are very feeble such as the fundamental Christian virtues themselves: charity, humility, gentleness. They are weak and little understood.*

*Charity, which is the heart of religion, obliges every Christian to love his or her neighbor. (The first duty is to love God, the second like the first, is to love one's neighbor as oneself). That is to say that one should make the salvation of one's neighbor like one's own, the important business of life. Every Christian, then, must become an apostle. This is not just advice, it is a commandment, the commandment of love.*

*To be an apostle but by what means? By those very means that God puts at our disposition. Priests have superiors who tell them what they must do. The laity should become apostles to all they can reach: at first their family, close relations and friends, but not only them, love cannot be restrictive, it embraces all those who are embraced by the Heart of Jesus.*

*By what means? By giving the very best of themselves to those whom they meet, and to all, without exception, with whom they have any rapport whatsoever, by means of goodness, tenderness, filial affection, the example of virtue, humility and gentleness - attitudes which are always appealing and so Christian. Some may not even say a word about God or religion but being patient as God is patient, good as God is good, they become a dear sister or brother. And when praying with others they speak of God in the measure that others are able to understand them. When they come to that point when the other is of a mind to seek truth and study religion, they will introduce him or her to a well-chosen priest capable of doing them good.*

*Above all, one must learn to see in every other human being a brother or a sister. "You are all brothers and sisters as you have one Father who is in heaven". And we must learn to see in every human being a child of God, a soul redeemed by the blood of Jesus, a soul loved by Jesus, a soul we must love as much as we love ourselves, and for whose salvation we must work. We must banish far from us the militant spirit. "I send you as lambs into a pack of wolves," says Jesus. What a great distance between Jesus' way of doing and speaking and the militant spirit of those who are not Christians or bad Christians! The latter see enemies they must fight, instead of ill brothers and sisters they must care for, as for a wounded traveler lying on the roadside, to whom they must be as good Samaritans.*

*It seems that what is most needed is that parents in their homes, priests in catechism and religious instruction, and all those whose mission is to raise children and youth, that they inculcate these truths in children from their earliest age by returning endlessly to them.*

*Every Christian must become an apostle. That is a strict obligation of love. Every Christian should regard every other human being as a beloved brother or sister. If he or she be a sinner, an enemy of God, he or she then is very ill indeed. One should show such profound compassion and care as for a deranged brother or sister. Non-Christians can be enemies of a Christian but a Christian is always a tender friend of every other human being. He or she must have for every human being the sentiments of the Heart of Jesus. We have to learn to be loving, gentle, and humble with all people and not militant with them. Jesus taught us to go 'as lambs among wolves'.*

*"To do all for all, so as to give all to Jesus": Having goodness and affection for all, rendering all possible help, making friendly contacts, becoming a tender sister or brother to everyone so that, by practicing the gentleness of Jesus, one leads souls, little by little, to Jesus.*

*To read and endlessly reread the Holy Gospel in order to always to have in mind the acts, the words and the thoughts of Jesus so as to think, speak and act like Jesus, to follow the examples and teachings of Jesus, and not the ways and examples of the world into which we fall so easily as soon as we take our eyes away from the Divine Model.*

*In my opinion this is the remedy. However its implementation is difficult because it deals with fundamental things, with interior matters of the soul. And that spiritual need is universal. The difficulty is that we are not able to stop. However, as the need becomes greater, the quicker one must get to the task and work at it with all one's efforts. God always helps those who serve. God is never lacking to anyone: It is we who are so often lacking to God! Should one not succeed, one should not have any less enthusiasm. Because in so working one does no other than accomplish the Divine Will, as best one can, in obedience to God. ....*

*Please present my humble respects to Father Crozier as soon as you have the chance to see him. And kindly believe the deep, spiritual devotion of your humble servant in the Heart of Jesus."*

Br. Charles de Jesus

### **3.1.2 Echoes of Brother Charles:**

In an excellent article in *The Spiritual Life* (June, 1949) by Dominican Father T.R.P. Sertillanges, we can read this extract:

*“Strive to act upon others always with gentleness and patience. If you try to destroy a prejudice with too much haste, you may wound eyes that otherwise would have been able to be slowly opened to your light; You may rumple the depths of a soul to correct a fault. And to break the bonds of sin, instead of gently disentangling them, you may throw despairing hearts back into the void of total death. Error and evil, waiting in ambush in the depths of a soul, can sometimes wound less than the imprudent sword thrust into the soul with which one intended to defend it.”*

In these counsels by the author of *The Catechism of Unbelievers*, full of wisdom and humanity, does one not hear an echo of the most intimate thoughts of Charles de Foucauld?

## **3.2 Leaven in the Bread**

All Christians are called by baptism to proclaim the Gospel, or what they have understood from the Gospel, by their lives. The special task and challenge of lay people is to make the Gospel present in places where the Church or priests cannot enter. We are present in offices, shops, schools, hospitals, markets, buses, trains, etc., in fact, in any place that can be named. Hence our presence in all these places gives us a big responsibility – A mission is entrusted to us by Jesus himself. Our calling to be leaven in the dough. It is a call to be the leaven in society, in the Church and in the world.

Our Little Brother Charles de Foucauld was ahead of the majority of his contemporaries in the belief that the laity have a vital role to play in spreading the Gospel. As far back as 1912, over fifty years before Vatican II, Brother Charles wrote to J. Hours of the need of the laity to spread God’s Kingdom, since lay folk unlike the hierarchy or the clergy, are present in every nook and corner of society. In this connection Brother Charles spells out the role performed by Aquila and Priscilla during the time of St. Paul at Corinth (Acts 18,18-19). Faith, hope and love becomes visible for other people in our broken world in Christians like Aquila and Priscilla. In the measure that God’s love becomes the source of our life and we accept ourselves as God’s beloved daughters or sons, we will become able to love other people and to regard them as our sisters or brothers.

The following key words, taken from the New Testament, show us the areas for our mission. Yet they describe a vision that is not yet reality. In our Fraternity groups we help each other to find our orientation towards achieving that vision. In the “Way of Unity” and in the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld we will find some other key-words to further explain that vision.

### **3.2.1 FRIENDSHIP (Koinonia)**

Friendship and fraternal living is primarily lived in our families. Fraternity members are invited to extend their friendship by caring and sharing. They should be apostles of goodness, warmth, affection and gentleness. The leaven is very little and unobtrusive. It cannot be identified when mixed with the flour but it has a value of its own. Through this insertion into the lives of others transformation takes place. Even if we are small in numbers, we can truly become a sign of God’s friendship and love by a gratuitous presence not looking for success. “Success” is not among the names of God! The whole dough is raised from within and this tiny insignificant little pinch of leaven becomes a life force.

### **3.2.2 SERVICE (Diakonia)**

Jesus has shown us by his life that we should be of service to others. Our service should not be self-centred and dominating. Brother Charles in his life witnessed to availability, by keeping his doors open to all travellers, extending his hospitality and friendship to all, irrespective of class, caste or creed. As he served with such an attentive love that he became more and more a “universal brother”.

Humility and gentleness are qualities needed to win the hearts of others. Jesus has amply shown us these qualities in his life. He was also upright and straight forward on the issues of justice. In today’s society, if one is to be the leaven in the dough, our option for and with the poor must be very clear. Imitating the life and ministry of Jesus Christ we cannot support unjust evil structures. As Brother Charles said: “We should not be as mute watchdogs who do not bark.”

### **3.2.3 PROCLAMATION (Martyria)**

Brother Charles speaks of evangelisation by the laity. He had already written in April 1908 some basic ideas for his planned association of the laity: “The ecclesiastical and the lay world do not realise what they can give to each other. Certainly working along side the priest, there need to be Priscillas and Aquilas who can see what the priest does not see and go where the priest cannot go.”

However, proclamation cannot be confined only to the ministry of the Word and words need to be translated into deeds as Jesus himself showed us. In order to proclaim the “Good News”, all Christians are called to be disciples of Jesus. For this we have to intensify our relation with him, to experientially know and to love him more intimately. Therefore fraternity members are invited to read and re-read the Gospel and live by it. This should become a daily practice in the life of a fraternity member because it gives her or him the capacity and joy of living a meaningful life, that is, the capacity “to cry out the Gospel by her/his life”.

### **3.2.4 THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE (Liturgie)**

The Eucharist is the sacrament that has to be lived out in the world and not only celebrated in church. Celebration cannot end at the church portal nor should we limit ourselves by confining it to a ritual but proclaim the Eucharist in our lives. Our whole life has to be sacramental, because we are created in God’s image. Our whole life should be a life of praise and thanksgiving to God that is lived in a commitment for unity, in sharing “bread” with the “hungry”, and being “broken” for others by a commitment for justice.

It is important to realise that lay people are not (and must not be!) a copy of the priest or the missionary, because every human being is unique as God’s image! That is both a gift and a challenge at the same time. It is a gift, because everybody has her/his special talents, that only she/he can offer to the world. And it is a challenge, because realising that oneself is unique helps others to discover that they are unique as well

#### **Questions:**

- What is my contribution to receiving and proclaiming God’s Kingdom to our broken world?
- How can I live as a witness of hope and of confidence in God?
- What can I do so that my spirituality becomes more and more rooted in the life of Jesus?

## 4 What is the Lay Fraternity?

### 4.1 A Brief history of the Lay Fraternity

Brother Charles named the first Lay Fraternity “Union of Little Brothers and Sisters of the Sacred Heart” (March 11, 1909). He gave it a triple purpose:

- to bring Christians back to a life in conformity with the Gospel
- to increase love for the Holy Eucharist among the laity
- to bring about an effective movement toward the conversion of unbelievers

In the language of the time, he reminded laity of their vocation to holiness and their missionary responsibility. During the last seven years of his life, the “Union”, was his constant concern. He made three trips to France in order to promote it and achieve its recognition by the Church.

#### 4.1.1 *The role of Louis Massignon*

Nevertheless on Brother Charles unexpected death it had only forty-eight members and certainly would not have survived but for the tenacity of Louis Massignon. This young university student, who would later become an Islamic scholar of renown, considered himself the spiritual heir of Charles de Foucauld who, at one time, had hoped he would join him in the Hoggar (Algeria). In 1909, during a trip to France, Charles de Foucauld and Louis Massignon spent a night in prayer together at the Sacre Coeur (Sacred Heart) Church, Montmartre (Paris). This night may be considered as the mystical birth time of Brother Charles’ project for the laity.

After the death of Brother Charles, Louis Massignon revived the “Union” and achieved a new status for it in 1923 by founding the Charles de Foucauld Association. He also took the initiative of requesting French writer Rene Bazin to write the biography of Brother Charles. This book was published in 1921 and would encourage many to follow Brother Charles including Father René Voillaume and Little Sister Magdeleine.

In 1928 Louis Massignon published the “Directory”, the book that Brother Charles had planned to publish for members of the “Union.” He saw the “Directory” not as rule but rather a spiritual guide and was revising it right up to the moment of his death.

#### 4.1.2 *Growth of the Lay Fraternity*

The Association, as envisioned by Brother Charles, brought together laity, priests and religious. It was reorganized in 1950 under the name “Charles de Foucauld Fraternity” to bring together other groups such as one in Lyon (France) which originated before the Second World War.

Meanwhile Father René Voillaume dedicated himself to propagating the message of Brother Charles. It was the time when copies of his conferences, and letters to the Little Brothers, were widely disseminated. They summed up the “Foucauld” spirituality and at the end of 1950, were published in his book *In the Heart of the Masses* which enjoyed a great success. *Charles de Foucauld Dairy and Notes* also published his letters to Joseph Hours, his friend in Lyon, which prophetically approached the subject of the place of the laity in the Church and society. All of these texts had profound repercussions for many people.

Father Voillaume's retreats were to be the opportunity for deepening the Gospel message of Brother Charles, and simultaneously strengthening bonds between members of his Spiritual Family. Several groups began to grow, and their representatives met at Tubet near Aix-en-Provence (France), then the central fraternity of the Little Sisters of Jesus, in a fraternal atmosphere of enthusiasm and freedom. In 1953, a retreat brought together two hundred people in the former Chartreuse (Carthusian Monastery) of Bosserville near Nancy (France). This event proved to be a decisive moment for the blossoming of the Lay Fraternity through its exceptional ambience of participation and adoration of the Eucharist. This movement would become the "Charles de Jesus Lay Fraternity" in 1955. From then on, it became a specifically lay movement. The year 1955 also saw the founding meeting, at Beni-Abbes (Algeria), of the "General Association of the Fraternities of Brother Charles of Jesus" which brought together into one Spiritual Family all the groups of laity, religious and priests inspiring themselves on Brother Charles's spiritual heritage. This Association was renamed "Association of the Spiritual Family of Charles de Foucauld" at its meeting in Tre Fontane (Italy) 2003.

#### **4.1.3 The growth of the Lay Fraternity at an international level**

The ideals of "Nazareth living" and of "universal brotherhood /sisterhood" led a certain number of lay people in the European Fraternity to put themselves at the service of countries in the Third World - North Africa (The Mahgreb), Africa, Latin America, and to engage in solidarity and human rights work especially after the 1973 Pinochet Coup in Chile. From the 1950's lay fraternities had already begun to flourish in many countries including Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy, the US and Canada. This development would necessitate international meetings.

The first meeting took place in Marseille, France in 1964, with eleven national delegations participating. Since that time, these meetings have taken place every six years.

#### **4.1.4 International Meetings of the Lay Fraternity:**

1964 Marseille, France: The meeting emphasized structures and statutes as well as spirituality. The Fraternities were regrouped into five regions: Northern Europe, Southern Europe, North America, South America, and Asia-Africa. Regional Responsibles were elected and together they formed the Central Committee of the Lay Fraternity.

In 1966 the new statutes of the Lay Fraternity were published in French as *The Directory* and translated into many languages.

1970 Assisi, Italy (17 delegations)

This meeting put the accent on commitment. The phrase "International Team" was chosen to replace "Central Committee" for the leadership.

1976 Tarbes, near Lourdes, France (18 delegations)

An important debate took place on the effective participation in the Lay Fraternity by fraternities of countries outside of Europe. Benedito Prezia from Brazil was elected as General Secretary to lead the fraternity as a sign of the desire to listen to non-Europeans.

1982 San Cugat, near Barcelona, Spain (16 delegations)

The focus was on the place of the poor in the Lay Fraternity both in terms of mission as well as participation. The short document "The Way of Unity" was drafted in order to express both the identify of the Lay Fraternity and the connection between prayer and commitment and this would become the *Magna Carta* for the Lay Fraternity. Members of the fraternities of Belgium were elected to form the International Team.

1988 Natoye, near Namur, Belgium (22 delegations)

The International Team is formed by representatives from different regions of the world.

1994 Orsay, near Paris, France (27 delegations)

This would be again an international team of representatives of each continent. René Haentgen (Belgium) became General Coordinator.

2000 Araruama, near Rio, Brazil (24 delegations)

This was the first International Meeting outside of Europe. The theme was "God Recreates the Universe" and over 100 participants were present. North and South America were amalgamated into one region "The Americas". The new International Team was made up of representatives from each continent that is Europe, Africa, Asia, the Arab World and the Americas. The new general coordinator elected was Marianne Bonzelet (Germany).

2006 Arusha, Tanzania. The central theme: "Apostolic and Prophetic Vision of the Lay Fraternity"

## 4.2 "THE WAY OF UNITY"

*(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).*

### **Cugat, Barcelona 1982**

#### **4.2.1 THE LAY FRATERNITY**

The Lay Fraternity brings together women and men from 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.

#### **4.2.2 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 means:

- a) The constant search and welcoming of the Incarnate Son of God who became the "carpenter's son" (Matt 13 : 55).
- b) "To cry out the Gospel with their lives".
- 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 retreats, 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 alternative to the consumer society.
  - b) Sharing their sorrows, their hopes and their conflicts in the search for true freedom.
  - c) Recognising 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 which suppose the 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 and his spirituality are means through which fraternity members remain faithful to their vocation and today's demands of the Gospel in their lives.

#### **4.2.3 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' Spiritual 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) Facilitate the meeting of delegates representing each country.
  - b) To live, pray, listen and share together.
  - c) To discern that which is in accordance or not with 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 should 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.

## 4.3 The Lay Fraternity Around the World

The following list follows the division of Continents in the Fraternity

### **ARAB WORLD**

Lebanon  
Egypt  
Iraq  
Jordan  
Algeria

### **AFRICA**

Benin  
Burkina Faso  
Burundi  
Cameroun  
Central African Republic  
Kenya  
Madagascar  
Niger  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Rwanda  
Sierra Leone  
Tanzania

### **THE AMERICAS**

Argentina  
Bolivia  
Brazil  
Chile  
Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Cuba  
Ecuador  
Haiti  
Mexico  
Peru  
Uruguay  
Venezuela  
Canada  
United States

### **ASIA**

South Korea  
India  
Japan  
Pakistan  
Philippines  
Sri Lanka  
Vietnam  
Australia

### **EUROPE**

Germany  
England  
Belgium  
Spain  
France  
Hungary  
Ireland  
Italy  
Malta  
The Netherlands  
Poland  
Portugal  
Switzerland

# 5 Life in the Fraternity

The following orientations are proposed as paths to be followed rather than authoritative rulings. It is important at the grass roots level of fraternities, to take into account the living realities of each member. For example, progress will be different according to whether the majority of the members are young or old, married with families or single, living in the same or different neighborhoods. Within the Fraternity each one is responsible for their own spiritual life. The group nor its responsables will not take “charge” of their spiritual life.

## 5.1 Membership

Members of the Lay Fraternity can be

- women and men
- single and married
- families with their children and young people
- priests and religious

Ages and occupations vary. Members are of different ethnic origins and come from all social backgrounds. Although children are not automatically members of the Fraternity, it is of absolute importance to be very attentive to their needs.

*“The Fraternity was born in the Catholic Church, but it is open to all those who adhere to the message of Brother Charles.”*

There is a great opportunity today to live this ecumenical dimension in meetings with members of Eastern Rite Churches, other Christian Churches such as Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox, and even to enter into inter-religious dialogue with major religions such as Judaism, Islam and Buddhism.

Local fraternity: Small groups of 3 to 15 members so as to allow for personal reflexion from real life. As soon as the group becomes larger than 10, the local group should think about dividing itself into two fraternities so to facilitate personal exchange. Also to be welcomed are those who are interested in the spirituality of Brother Charles, but have not yet declared themselves as “members” of the Fraternity.

The declaration (“Promise”) of personal “commitment” to the Lay Fraternity can be made during a regional or national Fraternity event. That public celebration of membership creates an awareness of the universality of the Fraternity.

## 5.2 “Isolated” membership

There are also “isolated” members. They usually are former members who want to continue to take part, or who belong to a local fraternity but who, for reasons of health, age, family situation, distance cannot take part anymore in the life of the group. Some others desire to live the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld, but for personal reasons cannot join or be integrated into a local fraternity. They give concrete expression of their belonging to the Lay Fraternity by participating in regional or national meetings as often as possible.

The Fraternity should keep contact with “isolated” members. The link can be by means of:

- written or audiovisual information: national bulletins, letters, videos, telephone, etc.
- conviviality: visits by other members of the Fraternity, links with national responsables, etc.
- invitation and practical planning to permit their participation at the important times in the Fraternity (December 1<sup>st</sup> Celebrations...)

### **5.3 The role of young people**

The meaning of “young people” varies according to socio-cultural contexts. As we consider that young adults (25-40 years) are assimilated with adults, it is sometimes preferable that the “young” (16-25 years) constitute separate fraternities because of:

- shared special interests
- preference to meet with people of the same age, having similar problems
- other needs and customs with regard to the running of meetings
- youth approach to silence is different from that of adults
- need to appropriate their own activities

Youth fraternities are sometimes made up of students and/or of the children of adult members. It is important that they declare their own adherence to the Fraternity.

### **5.4 Local Fraternity Meetings: Purpose**

Fraternity members, following Brother Charles, try to help one another in the local fraternity meeting to:

- Follow Jesus and live the Gospel in the world
- Live as sisters and brothers of Jesus
- Experience the living presence of Jesus in the midst of the world
- Be open to people, especially the poor, the most abandoned, the hopeless, the marginalized, or the outcasts
- Live a simple life (the life of Nazareth)
- Form a cell of the Church

### **5.5 Schedule & Length**

Groups generally meet monthly, but the frequency of meetings has to be determined by the local fraternity. The meeting should be a resource for each person, not an additional burden. It is important that members be able to maintain their work and other commitments, such as their activity in other movements and associations. Schedules other than monthly (bimonthly, weekly) are possible choices according to the needs and possibilities of each group.

The length of meetings is also chosen by the local group:

- an evening
- a day
- a weekend

## 5.6 Content

The following elements are only a list of possibilities but there is no obligation to fully comply. Each meeting can have several or all elements enumerated here but one needs to keep an equilibrium among these three different dynamics which come into play: prayer, participation, and conviviality. God does not like “pious activism” but rather the participation of the whole person, soul, mind and body.

### **5.6.1 Suggested content for meetings:**

- Personal exchange of experiences, our interactions, our family life, our undertakings, our work life, our social and political life..
- Listening together to the Word of God (sharing the Gospel)
- Prayer
- “Review of Life”
- Adoration
- Eucharist
- Deepening the spirituality of Brother Charles
- Food sharing, socials, festivity

### **5.6.2 Sharing the life**

of each member is an important element of the local fraternity meeting. In fact, spirituality has an integral part of one’s daily life. The two aspects, action and contemplation, are two sides of the same coin. They enrich one another. This sharing of life is done in an informal way, but it can become the object of a “Review of Life” when it is done in the light of the Gospel and of readings of Brother Charles (See 5.5)

### **5.6.3 Eucharistic Adoration**

is not always accessible, but prayer is always possible. The presence of a priest permits, on certain occasions, the celebration of the **Eucharist**. Adoration can be arranged in the local parish church or chapel. In that way other members of the community can be invited along when the group participates in Eucharistic Adoration.

### **5.6.4 Knowing oneself**

is indispensable thus the importance of sharing together a day of relaxation, or even a weekend, in group gatherings where children or other near relatives are included.

### **5.6.5 The main component is relationship**

relationship with Jesus, relationship with the members of the fraternity and with all that we meet and live with during our daily lives. Fraternity living implies an attitude of attentive listening to all.

## 5.7 Personal Commitments of Lay Fraternity Members

Each member of the Fraternity lives out all his or her own personal commitments according to our own special gifts and talents. These commitments are examined under the light of the Gospel and are renewed and refreshed when shared in local fraternity reflexion. Lived openly with others in the spirit of service, they may express solidarity with the most abandoned of humanity. The variety and contrast of commitments of each member are one of the riches of the Lay Fraternity.

Sometimes, like Brother Charles who did not want to remain a “mute watch dog” on the problem of slavery, the Fraternity takes a public position on the problems of society (for example, illegal immigrants, the pardon of the foreign debts of Third World countries, matters of peace and war, discrimination, human rights.)

## **5.8 Living Fraternity between Meetings**

Scattered geographically, members of some fraternities see one another only on the occasion of meetings but they should stay in contact by telephone, text, mail or e-mail. However, the strongest link of all is prayer, when long after meeting, each one continues to bring before God the concerns, the people, the commitments, the troubles and joys shared together by all. Contacts between meetings, therefore, serve to weave together and reinforce fraternal links of friendship. The local fraternity must be a resource for our daily life. It cannot justify us withdrawing into ourselves, nor simply be a group of friends that turns in upon itself to isolate itself from the world.

## **5.9 Meetings with other groups of the Charles de Foucauld Family**

December 1, the anniversary day for the death of Brother Charles is celebrated by members of all branches of his Spiritual Family. In certain countries and in certain regions, these meetings are the occasion for deepening and sharing the spiritual message of Brother Charles. Each branch witnesses in its own way to a particular expression of Jesus of Nazareth and to a specific aspect of the message of Brother Charles. On these occasions meetings are organised with the participation of the entire Charles de Foucauld Spiritual Family at the national level. Inter branch meetings permit us to more fully appreciate who we are and what we wish to witness in the Church and in society. Materials and information from the different branches are also shared to the enrichment of all.

## **5.10 “Twinning” of Fraternities**

The “twinning” of fraternities provides an excellent opportunity for sharing experiences, meeting one another, cultivating solidarity and friendship between fraternities from different countries and regions. It can become a privileged relationship between local fraternities, an interaction of strong mutual respect through a sharing of news, ideas, literature, so as to mutually grow in Foucauldian spirituality.

In “twinning”, we look neither for patronage nor paternalism but a form of partnership that will enrich us reciprocally as we remind ourselves that in the relationships between fraternities there are no “big” nor no “small” fraternities. We all have something to give and to receive. And one who does not know how to give, does not know how to receive, and vice versa.. We try to safeguard the dignity of the other in our relationship. Let us not lose this guiding line in our “twinning” ! We can then mutually help one another to grow in the respect of the spirit of Brother Charles. The sharing of material resources are completely secondary compared to the positive and constructive values that “twinning” offers to us all.

The “Twinning” of fraternities can be started up between countries on the same Continent or between countries of different Continents. The reinforcement of links between countries of the same Continent are really indispensable. For example, in Europe “twinning” now exist between the fraternities of some countries. It is necessary to inform national and continental responsables about “twinning” arrangements to prevent duplication and to facilitate the free flow of information.

## 5.11 Newsletters and Bulletins

These are an important link and should help members to initiate fraternal exchange and to discover and deepen the spiritual message of Brother Charles. Some regions have national bulletins sometimes written alternatively by different regions within that country as is the case of France.

An International Bulletin for all the fraternities appears twice a year in English, Spanish and French. If necessary the most important articles are afterwards translated into another language at the regional or national level. Each one then has the chance to be informed in his or her own language.

In every region, a responsible is needed to take charge of sending articles (experiences, communications and information) for the International Bulletin and to work with the regional coordinator assisting also in translations and distribution..

## 5.12 Renewing Fraternity Membership

It is important to always open the doors of our fraternities to the world so as to welcome new membership.. The following possibilities are suggestions:

- Invitations to regional, national or local level meetings for those interested so that they may see what the Fraternity is about.
- Adoration can be proposed in a parish church and people invited for communal prayer.
- December 1<sup>st</sup> Celebrations may be opened up to a larger public, encouraging the integration of people into the Lay Fraternity.
- Inviting those already interested to come and participate.

In all cases, time is needed to discover a potentially new member as it can be a risk to enlarge the meeting circle to non-members without any evaluation. Time is needed to discern whether or not God is calling someone to the Lay Fraternity. That period of introduction varies according to each. The local fraternity is like a family; it must be full of life, attentive to the needs of young people, and open to the surrounding world. It may have to accept being divided to make room for new members. Certain members will then be called on to accompany the new fraternity.

## 5.13 The Fraternity -- a Cell of the Church

To be the Church is to render visible the tenderness of God for all. *“Fraternal love comes from God, and is God.”* (Saint Augustine). We are called by God to be the “face” of the Church for all those with whom we come into contact. Our way of life (Nazareth living) is the life of the Church. We believe that we all engage in the building up of a more Gospel-centered Church, more brotherly, more sisterly and more in solidarity with the poor. In the Fraternity we discover the significance of simple gestures (sharing, hospitality, laughter, conversation, openness to others). We are thereby drawn into becoming universal brothers or sisters.

## 5.14 The Role of the Priest

The priest is always another brother who takes part in the life of the group. With simplicity he will need to place his status as a priest at the service of the fraternity in which he participates.

In the national and international Fraternity coordinating teams a priest is mandated to accompany the group so as to be the guarantor of Eucharistic celebration and communion with the Church in its understanding of

the spirituality of Brother Charles. He will act as priest who lives out this spirituality with which he nourishes others, and through which he himself is nourished. The link with the Church is given to every Christian through Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist; but the priest is a personal and official link with the local and universal Church. In each continent/region, the presence of the priest in the fraternities is lived according to customs proper to the differing situations.

## 6 The Practical Side

### 6.1 How to start up a local fraternity

There is no single formula for starting up a fraternity, but it is useful to assess and act considering these situations :

- Those who already live the spirituality of Brother Charles in their lives:
  - o invite them to join the local fraternity
  - o assist them so that they may join with others to form a new fraternity
  
- Those with a developed spiritual life but not knowing Brother Charles:
  - o organize “get-acquainted” days
  - o inform them through the bulletins of the national Fraternity, slide shows, videos, contacts, etc. on the spirituality of Brother Charles
  - o invite them so as to explain the characteristics of the Lay Fraternity
  - o If the occasion arises, propose that they start up a local fraternity, assisted by a member of the Fraternity
  
- For those in search of spirituality:
  - o invite them to days of recollection, Days in the Desert
  - o invite them to retreats
  - o If the occasion arises, propose that they start up a fraternity, assisted by a member of the Fraternity
  
- For groups who ask for the assistance of the Fraternity :
  - o become acquainted with them, then propose that they begin to share their experiences.

The proposals must always be clear and well-defined. In every case it is important :

- o Place the emphasis on the the spirituality of Brother Charles and fraternity living.
- o Plan for assistance and accompaniment over a fixed period of time, to review the path taken and consider the following steps. If a local fraternity is near, it can sponsor the new fraternity and help through its first steps. But if there is no fraternity in the same region, then two or three people may begin with the help of the Little Brothers, the Little Sisters, or of the Lay Fraternity from neighboring regions.

Considering recent experiences in many countries, one can say that what often is a great help toward the growth of a new fraternity is the testimony and encouragement of people from the Spiritual Family of Brother Charles: Little Sisters, Little Brothers, Priests Fraternity “Jesus Caritas”, Lay Fraternity etc.

We are referring here to the case of a group of interested people who wish to become members of the Lay Fraternity. If there is only one interested person, see Chapter 5.12 “Renewing Fraternity Membership” and 5.2 “Isolated Membership”. A contact address should be given provided with all necessary information.

## 6.2 How to conduct a meeting of the local fraternity

In chapter 5.6 the components of a meeting have already been mentioned. Here they will be explained in more detail. It is important to emphasize again the three main points: prayer -- sharing -- conviviality. It also has already been mentioned that the procedures for a successful meeting depend upon the needs and possibilities of the members of the group. The following elements are only suggestions.

Some groups share a meal at the beginning or in the middle of the reunion. Some begin with a time of Adoration; others with an exchange of news and information, others sharing a commentary on a Gospel passage or a text of Brother Charles. Still others work upon a specific theme, others upon a question taken from the exchange of information.

There are two common and complementary sides to this dynamic in the local fraternity meeting:

- Communication among members
- Understanding and living the Gospel

## 6.3 How to share the Gospel

### 6.3.1 *The importance of the Gospel to Brother Charles*

The most important thing is for us is to follow Jesus of Nazareth. We are called to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us. Our influence in the world will depend on this action of the Holy Spirit. In order to live a Christian life that reveals God to others, one must bind oneself to the life of Jesus and to his message in the Gospel. In the *Directory*, Brother Charles says: *"In everything, ask yourself: 'What would Our Lord have done?' and do it; that is your only but absolute rule!"* Which is to say: to live the Gospel, imitate Jesus! *"Our entire life, however silent it may be...must be a preaching of the Gospel, not a preaching of the lips but a preaching by example, not in proclaiming but in living it."*

To imitate Jesus, so as to love him more, is possible only when we know him. And we get to know him from the Gospels. Therefore, the only chance for us ourselves to become a "living Gospel" and to shine forth God's love in our world is to read and reread the Gospel the most often we possibly can. It was above all at Nazareth that Brother Charles meditated on the Gospel every hour, and wrote long meditations on the Gospels. Following him, we ourselves are invited to give great importance to meditating on the Gospel. Because of that, sharing the Gospel is a very important part of our meetings.

### 6.3.2 *A seven step method to Gospel Sharing:*

To share the Bible is to Share the Faith (according to Bishop O. Hirmer LUMKO, South African Institute)

#### **1. We invite the Lord to come to us.**

One person in the group invites Jesus personally by prayer, we open ourselves to the presence of God.

#### **2. We read the proposed text.**

When all in the group have found the biblical reference, one person reads the text.

#### **3. We meditate on the text; we choose some words (a single word or phrases) and we read them as a prayer.**

Which word / phrase is important for me?

Each participant reads his word / his phrase, sometimes several times, with pauses so that this word may penetrate our minds.

**4. We let God speak to us in silence.**

After having read the text once again, we remain in silence during a predetermined time (for example, five minutes) so that God may speak to us.

**5. We exchange among ourselves what our hearts have perceived; we express what has touched us.**

We must avoid preaching or discussion. I tell the others what has been called out to me.

It is possible also to exchange our spiritual experiences, for example, explaining how one has lived this “word of life”.

**6. We discuss a task that is clarified for the group.**

We want to see our life and our work in the light of the Word of God. It is a matter of implementing this “Word” in my actual life every day, and in the life and relationships of the whole group.

**7. We pray spontaneously**

Each in the group, one after another, is invited to speak spontaneously, about what pleased him or her and what is in their hearts. We finish with a prayer or a song known to all.

This is one of the possible ways of sharing the Gospel.

## 6.4 Adoration

### 6.4.1 What is Adoration?

*“Meditation on the Gospel and the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are the two principal acts of faith on which we must base our knowledge of Jesus and our love for him,”* says Brother Charles in the *Directory* of the Fraternity. It is difficult to talk with Jesus if one does not know him. And to know him is to spend time with him just like two lovers on a bench. They can stay a very long time side by side without saying anything but simply looking into one another’s eyes, in silence, a silence full of love for the other. It is a mysterious and intense exchange in the silence of the soul, in the presence of the immense silence of God.

Teresa of Avila says in her autobiography, *“Now, mental prayer is, to my mind, simply an intimate exchange of friendship whereby one converses, often alone, with the God by whom one knows oneself to be loved.”* The Cure of Ars noticed a peasant who spent a lot of time before the tabernacle. He asked him why. And the man answered: *“I look at him and he looks at me.”* He was there in a heart-to-heart conversation with God.

In the prayer of Adoration, we simply open ourselves to the eyes of God and we let ourselves be filled with Divine Love, to be seen and irradiated by God; We welcome in Divine healing and tenderness that transforms us in the way that God wishes to make us.

Jesus present in the Host is the same as Jesus at Nazareth, the same Jesus whom I hear and speak during the proclamation of the Gospel, the same Jesus whose garment the woman in the Gospel wanted to touch so as to be cured. To look at the Body of Christ, to contemplate the Holy Eucharist in faith, permits a kind of

irradiation into us of that force that went forth from Jesus and healed. To contemplate Jesus in the Eucharistic bread is to accept that God is totally different from us, but at the same time, we are trying to bring ourselves into harmony with him.

Adoration of the Lord is directly joined to his presence in the Eucharist. It cannot become an act of individual devotion isolated from the Eucharistic celebration. It is directly knotted to a believing community that celebrates the Eucharist and gives a Eucharistic dimension to its entire life. Vatican II shows us that “transubstantiation” is not a magic and limited act, but that it is situated in the group where the proclamation of the Gospel, the faith of the community, the action of Jesus Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit have a capital role. In regular Eucharistic prayer we adore the Father through and with Jesus. And, following Jesus, we intercede for the world.

We know the importance that Eucharistic Adoration had in the life of Brother Charles. We should live today the time of Adoration linked to the world to which we are committed. Thus we should humbly offer our act of Adoration in the place of, and on behalf of people, who may no longer even pray. We have need of Adoration, of this patient and attentive gaze at Christ to discover his presence, his behavior, his face in our daily life, so as to discover him and understand him in concrete down-to-earth terms. (cf. Mt. 25, 31-46)

“Pray, that you may not enter into temptation!” (Lk 22: 40, 46; 12: 35-38; Mk 14: 37, 38; 13: 32-37). We have the need to be vigilant, perseverant, repetitive and fully conscious so that at no point do we give up on our Fraternity pursuit, and surrender to other responsibilities, occupations, demands or temptations, pressurised perhaps by acts of enmity or even malevolence, and succumb to our own weaknesses and faults.

We have need of Adoration in order to recognize the different ways in which God is revealed in the heart of the world and at the center of our lives. God is present in the world, but is not of the world nor like the world. God cannot be discovered as God except in the attitude of Adoration. “My Lord and my God!” exclaimed Thomas as soon as he recognized the Resurrected One. (Jn 20: 28)

Brother Charles wanted to live Adoration as a heart-to-heart dialogue with God; he wanted to espouse the sentiments of his “Master”, the sentiments of the Incarnation and of abasement. (Phil 2: 7-8); he wanted a life that would be the prolongation of the Eucharist, that is, a Eucharistic life. Jesus was not only man, but he made himself much smaller. He is raised up in a piece of bread and allows himself to be broken and eaten. In the bread, Jesus is exposed to the risk of profanation and indifference and he accepts apparent ineffectiveness. Brother Charles also let himself “be eaten” so as to become smaller and more approachable. Like him we are called to become women and men raised up, handed over and should learn to allow ourselves be “eaten”, that is, to put our charisms and our time at the disposal of people around us.

#### **6.4.2 How to plan a time of Adoration**

1. Set a length of time, determined in advance, and stick to this fixed time.
2. Adopt a good position. The body should be at ease to avoid cramping. It is a matter of praying with the body also. One cannot pray without the body, nor outside of it, but only with and through it.
3. Avoid distractions from outside the room.
4. Look at the Blessed Sacrament; call also on the Holy Spirit and begin by thanking and praising Jesus. All this must help us to be conscious of the Real Presence of Jesus.

5. Give interior distractions to Jesus.
6. Remain in total silence (silent, loving adoration). Neither rosary nor book. Free presence before God.
7. Listen to what the Lord is saying. Perhaps a dialogue will begin. What counts is to be there and to let oneself be irradiated by the rays of God's love.
8. Carry to God all that surrounds one.
9. Finish with a song, a prayer...

## **6.5 "Review of Life"**

### **6.5.1 What is "Review of Life"?**

Brother Charles did not do a "Review of Life" in the strict sense of the word as he lived a solitary and not a community life. Nevertheless one sees him continually seeking the will of God. He wanted always to do more, to better imitate his "Beloved brother and Lord, Jesus Christ", "to cry the Gospel" with his whole life. *"Our entire life", he writes, "however silent it may be, the life of Nazareth, the desert life, as well as the public life, must be a preaching of the Gospel by way of example; Our whole existence, our whole being must cry the Gospel everywhere; Our entire self must breathe Jesus; All our acts, our whole life must present the image of the evangelical life; All of our being must be a living sermon, a reflection of Jesus, a perfume of Jesus, that shines like an image of Jesus."*

It is following this perspective that the "Review of Life" is practiced in the Lay Fraternity. To enter into a "Review of Life", two fundamental conditions should be present in those participating :

- to be motivated by a deep desire to follow Jesus of Nazareth, a deep desire to change oneself, to struggle against the temptation of pride, to desire to be a true disciple of Jesus, to be taken up and be fascinated by him, as St. Paul says.
- to be deeply convinced that we can be helped by the brothers and sisters of our local fraternity whom we trust, and who are engaged in the same search as us.

And some concrete conditions should be met in the group:

- A "Review of Life" presupposes a climate of faith and prayer in the group.
- To attain a true review of one's life, there has to be a sufficient depth of friendship and intimacy so as to allow one to share about one's spiritual life.
- Mutual trust, discretion and great respect for the personal life of each person are indispensable.
- Those participating, or maybe leading the "Review" meeting, should seriously consider the facts brought forth by the brother or sister who is sharing, and help him/her to get to the bottom of his or her "Review" in order to discover the truth even if that causes discomfort.
- A better understanding of one another is desirable so as not to merely recount stories, but to allow more insightful, qualified and more fraternal responses to take place.

The "Review of Life" thus becomes a "communal lesson" of our lives seen in the light of the Word of God in order to be able to discern there the presence and the voice of God. Thanks to our brothers and sisters, Jesus

gives us a signal which we had not expected nor which we had seen nor heard of before. Through the “Review of Life”, we receive, from one another, a new way of understanding what is happening to us.

“Review of Life” is meant to help us encounter Jesus actually present in our existence and, as a result, to welcome his concrete demands. It becomes the means for us to carry out our permanent conversion. Besides that, it appears as a concrete application of the “Prayer of Abandonment” in our life. To sum up, through the “Review of Life” one commits oneself to the path of a total abandoning of oneself to Jesus Christ.

The “Review of Life” is a means of mutual fraternal help that assists us in advancing toward God, and is a true gift from our brothers and sisters. It is demanding as it jostles our ways of doing things. God is present in our questioning of one another. God is at work in each of us. God acts everywhere and always. The “Review of Life” helps us to lift up obstacles that bar the road towards discovering God:

- obstacles that we see and know but that still we may not have the courage to overcome.
- obstacles that our brothers and sisters help us to discover by asking us deep questions about the facts we share.

Like the first disciples of Jesus, we will only discover what God is doing with us, when we look at the past. The search of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is also the road of the “Review of Life”: On the road “they talked about all that had happened”. (Lk 24: 14) And Jesus, the stranger, helped them to look at everything in a new context. Then they discovered the true meaning of the events. *“They said to one another: Was not a fire burning within us when he was speaking to us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?”* (Lk 24: 32)

### **6.5.2 A Plan for “Review of Life”**

For practical reasons, the “Review of life” takes place in a limited group, the local fraternity of about ten members. It is prepared, preferably “as in the desert”, always with prayer and the sharing of the Gospel. It presupposes an atmosphere of listening, of mutual attention and reciprocal trust. Moments of silence should be of no concern or embarrassment.. It takes courage to do mutual questioning, gently but with frankness, without fearing some tension or even perhaps possible offense. Forgiveness, tolerance and discretion are strongly advised, in a climate of true friendship, of true fraternity. In some fraternities, each member prepares his or hers own individual “Review”. And this will be shared at the reunion of the group.

The following is a plan for a “Review of Life” in the sequence: TO SEE – TO DISCERN – TO ACT. (from: *Courrier Jesus Caritas* Vol. XIV no. 1, August 1990, Quebec-Acadie Canada)

#### **TO SEE:**

The goal of this stage is gain a better grasp of the experience of the group. A fact. What happened ? It is not a matter for discussion or debate, but of sharing a lived experience. A precise fact in the lived experience, *“I bring up the aspect as I want to look at again.”* What is it that I want to review?

#### **Similar happenings**

- Each member of the fraternity may report on other facts that he or she has experienced with regard to that aspect that one wants to change.
- Similar facts that each one feels are involved in changing one’s life.

The causes and consequences of these facts:

- One seeks together to understand:

- Why is it like this?
- On what does it depend?
- What influences my belief and behavior?

#### TO DISCERN:

The goal of this stage is to discern the presence and action of God in this experience.

The important aspects: What do I believe? In whom do I believe?

- What do I find the most important and significant for me, and how does it meet my deepest aspirations?
- Does Jesus' plan and his Gospel enlighten me, question and motivate me?
- To what words and deeds of Jesus does the experience lead me?

#### TO ACT:

The aim of this stage is to help ourselves grasp the calling of God and to respond in concrete ways. This stage needs an openness to others in friendly and fraternal trust. Having seen and confronted my experience with my aspirations and my faith in Jesus of Nazareth:

- What have I learned?
- What changes am I called to?
- What am I ready to do personally? With the help of my fraternity? Of my community?

### **6.5.3 How to do a "Review of Life"**

Having too many people present does not allow sufficient space for the listening and the contributions of everyone. Too small a number reduces the possibility of exchanges and openness.

- Plan enough time.
- Create a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.
- Have someone guide the session.
- Begin in a very recollected way, perhaps with a time of prayer because a "Review of Life" is not an ordinary conversation.
- Remember that each one should speak.
- Respect the other person. Let him /her take their time. Consider their point of view. Allow him /her to express themselves and help them with tact and respect.
- Allow also exchanges in silence with no discussion nor debate.
- Allow for moments of silence.
- Do not judge. Let the brother or sister who brings up a happening, who entrusts himself or herself to us, not be judged but treated like a brother or sister.
- Avoid saying "One cannot ever..." , "You realize, in our group, that is not possible..." , "I've already understood your problem..."
- Ponder together so as to ask where the Lord is who cares for each one of us.
- If there is accord, continue in a climate of prayer. Be able to ask mutual pardon.
- Finish the "Review" in a recollected way (as at the start).

### **6.5.4 The fundamental structure of a "Review of Life"**

Because I look at my life in the light of the Gospel, as well as reading the Gospel in the light of my life, there are two paths to making a "Review of Life":

- to start from a Gospel passage and go toward concrete reality, or vice-versa.
- to start from a happening and go toward the Gospel.

The objective therefore is to look at one's life in the light of the Gospel, to try to hear the voice of God and to answer it in daily life.

## 6.6 "Nazareth" Time

### 6.6.1 What does "Nazareth" mean?

"Nazareth" means: *God is always with you in your life!* The "Way of Unity", our spiritual road map, speaks to us of the spirituality of "Nazareth". It is at Nazareth that the mystery of God is revealed. It is there that God is revealed in a human face. Because of that, it is in our daily life that we can best discover God in little signs, happenings and ordinary experiences with those around us.

Brother Charles was always very much captivated by the mystery of Nazareth and by the hidden life that Jesus lived there during the first thirty years of his life. Brother Charles went to Nazareth to imitate Jesus and to be close to him, but he discovered more and more that one could live the life of "Nazareth" anywhere because it is not the extraordinary that is the locus for abandonment to God and to humanity but daily life itself.

"Nazareth", therefore, is not a dogma but a living model that is possible for each person. To explain what "Nazareth" means, one can reply: *"a simple, unassuming life in the midst of the world which can be lived anywhere"*. It is based on the conviction that holiness, which is offered to all, is possible at every moment, in the most common of situations.

"Nazareth" is the choice to love and evangelize by sharing in the living conditions of one's fellow men and women. And by simple prayer, silent and continuous, to incorporate the reality of living with others there where one actually is. It also means living a normal working life, that most natural yet critical human activity. "Nazareth" can be described then as the sanctification of daily life.

"Nazareth" means living relationships in a brotherly and sisterly way in a spirit of service and simplicity, accepting my own limitations as well as those of others. It is to meet people without prejudice, to value each other, and to give a positive self-image to all. It is the choice of a simple and shared life style. Friendship reveals God in our own lives and helps us to become, more and more, universal brothers and sisters.

"Nazareth" also means to be completely at one's right place in life. It permits developing that spiritual sense so as to get to know the will of God for oneself. And then to dedicate oneself always to that option by continually reviewing and redefining that spiritual search.

"Nazareth" is to live events of ordinary life as extraordinary, because God became extraordinarily ordinary at Nazareth. There are other aspects of "Nazareth" living which are not developed here, but can be experienced according to the different circumstances of life.

### 6.6.2 What is a "Nazareth" time or a "Nazareth" week ?

“The Way of Unity”(paragraph 4.2) presents “Nazareth” as an attitude to life by which Fraternity members seek to make fruitful their personal potential in diverse life situations. A “Nazareth” week or “Nazareth” time can become an important help to us along this path as it means working consciously together on this vocation during a certain period of time. Considering that monthly meetings are limited in time, the advantage of a “Nazareth” week is that it makes possible the sharing of everyday life with members coming from diverse states of life (singles, couples, families with children, young people), and with those who do not belong to the same local group of the Fraternity.

Such a week, called “ Nazareth” can be organized for members of a country, a linguistic region (neighboring country), or for a Continent, or even for members united through the “twinning” arrangement. Members of other branches of the Spiritual Family of Brother Charles can also be invited to live this valuable time, above all “isolated” members of the different branches who are in communication with the organisers. These meetings also become the occasion for those interested to get to know the spirituality of Brother Charles.

Community apprenticeship in the spirituality of “Nazareth” takes place during the week by means of a spiritual program, but also in the sharing of daily tasks and organizing together the group’s leisure time. The exact development of the week’s program will always depend on existing conditions, opportunities and the needs of participants at the moment. As to “spiritual food”, the spirituality of Brother Charles, will truly have a central place.

Three essential elements characterize “Nazareth” week:

- Fraternity life
- Introduction to and/or deepening of the message of Brother Charles
- Reviewing together of how we live out the demands of the Fraternity (“Review of Life”, Adoration, Prayer, listening to the Word of God),

A day in the “Week” might be structured as follows:

Morning prayer  
Breakfast  
Talk / conference  
Sharing of Scripture in small groups.  
Lunch  
Free time  
Eucharist/ Adoration  
Dinner  
Free time  
Conclusion of the day together  
Night Prayer

Theme:

Choosing a central theme beforehand may be very useful. And this can be developed day by day. Talks should be linked to life and contain the message of Brother Charles. The speaker could refer to a scripture text (Gospel), prepared in advance, that will serve as a subject for reflection and discussion in small groups (six to eight people). Besides Scripture reading and conferences, reflection on the theme should be continued on the personal life of each participant, and translated wherever possible into concrete proposals for action.

It is good for everyone in the mornings, especially their parents, to involve all children in activities that suit their age group, and to approach the theme with explanations especially chosen for them. A “special children” program should be prepared. In the afternoon, participants choose between an individual activity and a communal one. One may sequester oneself for Eucharist and/or a time of Adoration. The evening can be simply a time for conviviality, or it may be devoted to a question, a problem, or a decision to be made.

A half-day or even an entire day in the “desert” (“Desert” day) is to be reserved for personal reflection, of which results can be shared in the course of Eucharist or during exchanges in the small groups. The retreat week or “Nazareth” represents for many members the only occasion for having an experience of “Desert.” Careful preparation and an overall susceptibility to each one’s needs are therefore desirable.

In places, it is possible to expose the Blessed Sacrament during the entire “Nazareth” week and to practice Adoration continuously. In that case, participants can withdraw to pray according to their own needs, and thereby place their reflections in the hands of God.

## **6.7 A “Desert” Day**

### ***6.7.1 The importance of “Desert” experiences for our spiritual maturing process***

When we speak of a desert, our minds go to the geographical deserts of the world – long stretches of sand with clumps of date trees in oases scattered here and there. But the desert has a beauty of its own. Brother Charles lived in the midst of such a desert among the Tuaregs. But most of us are not blessed with such an experience. Yet all of us can experience the “Desert” in our lives.

“Desert” in Biblical thought is not a goal in itself but a passing stage. You do not go into the desert to stay there, but to cross it. All know the Exodus story was followed by the 40 years passage of the “Chosen People” through the desert. In the Exodus we read about the march of the Israelites from slavery to freedom. That journey took place in the desert. The Israelites in facing many trials and sufferings learned to walk with their God. God led them, protected them, fed them, quenched their thirst and stayed with them until they reached the Promised Land. In the Gospels we read about the “Desert” experience of Jesus. Going to the “Desert” was a period of preparation before He began His ministry. He faced temptations to power, prestige and pleasure (Mk 1,12 – 13. )

For the Israelites as well as for Jesus, the “Desert” was:

- a place to meet God
- a place of powerlessness
- a place of temptation
- a place of rebellion and resistance
- a place of yearning
- a place of silence
- a place of prayer
- a place of hidden sources
- a place of simplicity
- a place of renewal
- a place of Grace

The “Desert” can become all this for us when we allow it into our life. We have to find a “Desert” space in our busy life. We have to create our own “Desert” and remain in silence.

As members of the Lay Fraternity of Brother Charles we are encouraged to spend a “Desert” day with a certain regularity. To move away from all noise with only the Bible to turn to if necessary. To remain so still as to let our minds descend to the heart, and at the same time discover ourselves as well as God. It is the goodness and mercy of God that leads us to the “Desert”. There we learn to pray. “Desert” is a time when we discover that we are weak, poor and little, and that we are a mixture of pride and wickedness, laziness and inconsistency.

This experience is essential for our spiritual growth. We experience our own hunger and thirst and wait on God’s kindness and mercy. (*“Truth will set you free!”* Jn 8,32). Our maturing process happens in the “Desert.”

“Desert” is however not the final stage. It is only one stage of the journey, but a very necessary one. As human beings, we need periods of silence, absence and separation. Being in the “Desert”, strengthens us to move back to the streets, to go back to our brothers and sisters in need, and to carry all people in our hearts.

### **6.7.2 How to spend a “Desert” day**

*(Some useful orientations not only during vacation or weekend meetings)*

Fix the date of the “Desert” day in your diary and keep to it. Remember: A “Desert” day is not a holiday!

Preparations:

- Where do I want to spend my “Desert” day? In the open countryside? In a church? In my room?
- What is the timing of my “Desert” day? How much time is available? Only the morning/afternoon? Possibly fix a certain time for prayer
- Do I spend the “Desert” day alone or together with somebody else? Make arrangements before.
- What do I need? Something to eat ..... writing materials .... a Bible .....raincoat .....
- What is the subject matter I want to reflect upon? Important steps in my life ... preparation for an important decision... to think about a personal, partner or family conflict ... a Gospel reading... “Review of Life” )

The “Desert” day:

- Avoid all distractions.
- Start as soon as possible; do not forget available time is precious.
- A “Desert” day does not mean *“getting away from it all”* nor just *“roaming around”*. It can be helpful to have a walk not to reach some place but to enjoy walking . Try to get some inner peace.
- Become conscious of your body and its signals, and of nature.
- Become aware of the simple things of life (breath, calmness, to be able to smile, to reflect, to dwell on something ...)
- Permit inner questioning and nonconformity.
- Be aware of restlessness but don’t permit it to disturb you.
- Reflect on a Gospel reading, a prayer or some special subject.
- Look at your life before God.

- The sense of a “Desert” day is to visit yourself so as to be able again to meet other people.
- Keep to your resolution concerning times of prayer ... Try to abandon yourself to the presence of God.
- Make an evaluation at the end of the day (What happened to me? What was good, or not so good? Is there anything I would like to do afterwards?). It will probably be helpful to write your thoughts down.
- On reaching home realise that this and not the “Desert” is the place of your vocation.
- Probably you may want to share your experience with somebody else (friend, wife, husband, priest, counselor). If necessary make arrangements for an appointment.

## **6.8 Deepening the Spiritual Message of Brother Charles**

Deepening the spiritual message of Brother Charles is an important challenge; We need to get a more profound insight into his life, his conversion, his spiritual journey, his preferential choice of the poorest, his concern to lead a humble “Nazareth” life. There are many tools for this purpose such as :

- Books (see bibliography)
- “Living the Gospel with Charles de Foucauld” (a special publication) which exists in several languages (see bibliography)
- National and international Lay Fraternity bulletins,
- Charles de Foucauld Spiritual Family publications and bulletins.
- Meetings with other branches of the Spiritual Family
- Videos, slides, DVDs, and other audiovisual material
- Web sites
- Retreats, days of recollection
- Special events: December 1<sup>st</sup> Celebrations, “Nazareth” time
- Local fraternity meetings

## **6.9 Lay Fraternity Commitment/ Making the Promise**

In some regions the question has arisen as to whether an external expression of commitment is necessary in the Lay Fraternity. It was decided many years ago that it does not have to be an obligation, but an external sign (“Promise”) expressing the seriousness of the decision to become a member of the Lay Fraternity can be useful.

For the orientation of a candidate wishing to join the Lay Fraternity, the following aspects are important:

- Acceptance by a local fraternity
- Definition of the expectations of the group and of the candidate
- “Review of Life” and regular evaluation, which allows the candidate to freely decide his or her commitment to the Fraternity. (The personal path of the candidate is to be respected even when because of good rapport with them, she or he asks for a place in the local group).
- If the candidate(s) wishes and local fraternities so decide, an external expression of commitment (Fraternity “Promise”) can be organised, but there is no obligation in this respect.

## 6.10 Sharing Tasks

As much as possible, reunions should take place alternately in the homes of different members. Each one in turn will take charge of running and facilitating the meeting.

## 6.11 Sharing Fraternity service responsibilities

*“The Fraternity must be a place where responsibility is lived together... The service of coordination, entrusted to some, does not dispense the other persons from assuming and living communal responsibilities.”* (Statute No. 30, France)

*“Communication between different groups within the Fraternity is important as a living witness of unity where the life of one becomes food for the whole Fraternity. It is a treasure to be shared; this sharing is done at all levels: group, diocese, region, country, world.”* (Statute No. 32, France)

It is good for each local fraternity to choose from among its members a responsible who will be the person to link with the other fraternities (town, diocese, region, country, world ) according to the Fraternity organization of that country. At all levels, this responsibility should be subjected to a mandate within a time limit.

## 7 Prayers

### 7.1 “Prayer of Abandonment” of Brother Charles

#### 7.1.1 Introduction

What we know as the “Prayer of Abandonment” is not a prayer which Brother Charles wrote for any eventual companions, or even one he prayed himself. Rather it came from an extract of his meditations on the Gospel in relation to the ‘cardinal virtues’. These texts were written by Brother Charles in 1896 towards the end of his time with the Trappists at Akbes (Syria). At that time he was still called by his monastic name Brother Marie-Alberic. In fact it is a prayer which he puts on the lips of Jesus, and which truly cannot be said by anyone else except by Jesus. On its own, this prayer would be too demanding for any of us. If we recite it as part of his Spiritual Family, it is

- a) because we are aware that we can never say it alone, but Jesus recites it with us.
- b) to constantly advance with Jesus’ help in the spirit of abandonment, and to unite ourselves to Him in his trusting abandonment to the Father.

This prayer invites us to unite ourselves to Jesus. It seeks to direct our life before God and before humanity in the direction along which Jesus proceeded us; It encourages us into a confident abandonment to the Father.

#### History of the “Prayer of Abandonment”

*The following ideas are based on an article by Antoine Chatelard, Little Brother of Jesus, who has analysed this prayer as perhaps no one else of the Spiritual Family has ever done.*

For the announcement of the death (1946) of one of the first Little Brothers (Marc Gerin) at El Abiodh, Algeria, the Prayer of Abandonment was printed for the first time in the bulletin of the Association of Charles de Foucauld in the form we know today except that God was addressed in a more formal manner. In this announcement a passage from the letter of a fellow student of Marc Gerin was quoted. Marc had copied the prayer for this friend. He himself had probably received it from Little Sister Madeleine of Jesus who had visited him in hospital in 1945.

At that time there were only about a dozen Little Sisters, but they had already been saying the prayer every day for four years. They started doing so just before the first novitiate in 1940. One of those novices, L.S. Marguerite of Jesus says:

*“I remember very well the day when L.S. Madeleine invited L.S. Annie and I to read the meditation of Brother Charles, where this prayer is found. She told me: ‘Don’t you think it is a beautiful prayer, we can make it ours and pray it everyday?’ We agreed and we also thought that it was necessary for the prayer to be recited aloud, so some repetitions had to be left out. That is how after some deletions and editing, it got its present form that same evening. The only difference was that we added ‘today’ . “Do with me today what you will” . After that we recited it every morning until the day, when – influenced by the Little Brothers - we recited it in the evening, leaving out the word ‘today’.”*

The added word 'today' had already disappeared in 1944, as witnessed by a note in L. S. Madeleine's diary (25/8/42) in which the prayer is quoted in full. Towards 1955, it became customary to say the prayer in the evening, after a short revision of the day.

### **7.1.2 The "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,  
And so need to give myself,  
To surrender myself into your hands  
Without reserve,  
And with boundless confidence,  
For You are my Father.**

## **7.2 Veni Creator – Come Holy Spirit**

### **7.2.1 Introduction**

Brother Charles wrote some 'evangelical counsels' between Easter and Pentecost 1908, which he intended for priests, men and women religious and for married or single lay people, in order to live the life of Nazareth, so that they come to '*a perfect imitation of this life*', and as a help to live evangelisation in their daily milieu. Article XI of the 'evangelical counsels' speaks of prayer. Three times a day, in the morning, at noon and in the evening, the brothers and sisters are called to pray, among other prayers, the Veni Creator. He wrote:

*"The Veni Creator, recited at the three main hours of the day, is the plea of exiled brothers and sisters to their heavenly Father, to ask him to send forth his Holy Spirit, 'daily bread' and 'only thing necessary', on this humanity which He has created, in all the hours he gives us in this 'valley of tears'. The brothers and sisters will put all their heart into this prayer, praying for all men and women without exception."*

In notes of several of his retreats, Brother Charles mentions this prayer, and in a letter of September 19<sup>th</sup> 1911 to Louis Massignon, we can see that in fact he practised it regularly.

### **7.2.2 Come Holy Spirit (Rabanus Maurus 780 – 856, Bishop of Mayence)**

1. Veni, Creator Spiritus,  
mentes quorum visita:  
imple superna gratia,  
quae tu creasti pecora.

2. Que diceris Paraclitus,  
donum Dei altissimi,  
fons vivus, ignis, caritas  
et spiritalis unctio.

3. Tu septiformis munere,  
dextrae Dei tu digitus,  
tu rite promissum Patris  
sermone ditans guttura.

4. Accende lumen sensibus,  
infunde amorem cordibus,  
infirmi nostri corporis  
virtute firmans perpeti.

5. Hostem repellas longius  
pacemque dones protinus;  
ductore sic te previo  
omne noxium.

6. Per te sciamus da Patrem  
noscamus atque Filium,  
te utriusque Spiritum  
credamus omni tempore.

1. Come, Holy Spirit,  
visit the souls of your faithful;  
and fill with heavenly grace  
the hearts which you have created.

2. You are called the Comforter  
gift of the most High God,  
source of living water, fire, love  
and spiritual unction of souls.

3. O You, the Spirit of seven gifts,  
the finger of God's right hand,  
you are the promise of the Father,  
enriching our tongues with speech.

4. Enlighten our minds with your light,  
inflamm our hearts with your love,  
strengthen the weakness of our flesh  
by your abiding power.

5. Drive far from us the wicked enemy,  
and grant us serene peace  
that guided and led by you  
we may avoid all evil.

6. Through you may we come to  
know the Father and the Son,  
and grant that we may ever  
believe in you, the Spirit of them both.

7. Glory be to God the Father,  
and to His Son, arisen from the  
dead, and to the Holy Paraclete,  
both now and forever, Amen.

V. – Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

R. – And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray: O God, who did instruct the hearts of your faithful by the light of your Holy Spirit, grant that by the same Spirit we may know what is right and ever rejoice in his consolation, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

### ***7.2.3 Come Holy Spirit (a simpler version)***

1. Come, creator Spirit,  
You give life,  
You strengthen our faith,  
You sustain our hope.

2. Come, Spirit of love,  
You unite Christians in love,  
You teach them to live in peace,

You put each one at the service of others.

3. Come Spirit of forgiveness,  
You reconcile us,  
You help us to understand one another,  
You remove all barriers.

4. Come Spirit of power,  
You give courage in combat,  
You make us love the truth,  
You invite us to look for God.

5. Come Spirit of light,  
Teach us to know the Father.  
Help us to know who the Son is,  
And make us always believe in you,  
You who unite the Father and the Son  
In a unique love. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

## 7.3 The “Angelus” Prayer

### 7.3.1 Introduction

The Angelus is a prayer practice rich in doctrine and devotion in the Catholic tradition honoring Mary mother of Jesus. The practice commemorates the mystery of the Incarnation by reciting certain responses with three Hail Marys and a special concluding prayer. It used to be recited at morning, noon and evening. While at Nazareth Brother Charles meditated often on both on the Anunciation of the birth of Jesus and the Visitation of Mary to Isabel. He felt he was also silently bearing Jesus in a world that did not recognise him. He recommends the prayer of the Angelus so that we assume the same attitude of responding in faith to God as Mary did in Nazareth.

### 7.3.2 Angelus

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:  
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord: Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail Mary . . .

And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, May by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

## 8 General Information

### 8.1 Internet Sites

International Web sites : [www.charlesdefoucauld.org](http://www.charlesdefoucauld.org) You will find here, among other things:

- data-base of books and materials on Brother Charles de Foucauld and his spirituality in several languages.
- links to other branches of the Spiritual Family of Brother Charles
- current events and news

### 8.2 International Bulletin

The *International Bulletin* is published twice a year in French, English and Spanish. Some extracts are translated into other languages such as Arabic and Korean. To receive the *Bulletin* contact members of the International Team.

### 8.3 Living the Gospel with Charles de Foucauld

This publication is addressed to those who want to know more about the spirituality of Brother Charles, as well as those who already are in the Fraternity but wish to deepen their spirituality and commitment through reading, meditation, and sharing. Essential biblical references, are presented together with texts from Brother Charles and questions for a “Review of Life”. To receive “Living the Gospel...”, contact members of the International Team.

### 8.4 Charles de Foucauld and His Spiritual Family

This is a brochure that presents the 19 branches of the spiritual Family of Brother Charles with their history, their present number of members and the characteristics of each branch (way of life, mission, essential aspects). It also shows the locations of the different branches in the world over. To receive it, contact members of the International Team.

**To receive more copies of the “LITTLE GUIDE” please contact the members of the International Team and /or members of the Lay Fraternity at [www.brothercharlesofjesus.org](http://www.brothercharlesofjesus.org)**