

**Let us strart anew,
sisters, with faith...
in our spiritual life
in the light
of the Word of God**

Lectio divina

Liturgical Year 2011-2012

lectio divina

2011-2012

Let us start anew, Sisters,
with Faith...
in our spiritual life
in the light of the Word of God

Sources of reference

Bible

Constitutions

Apostolic Exhortation: Verbum Domini (VD)

“Whoever loves me will keep my word,
and my Father will love him, and we will come to him
and make our dwelling with him”.
(Jn. 14: 23)

Dearest sisters,

for many years the *Lectio Divina*, ancient religious practice in the Church, enlightens and sustains our personal and communal spiritual journey.

The chapter sisters, expressing the voices of many missionary sisters in the world, have acknowledged the importance to have this precious spiritual means in the Congregation and they wished the continuity of this method for a unitary on going formation, that has, for all of us, the aim of an authentic conformation to Christ Crucified.

The theme of this year follows the program presented in the Chapter Document and it is expressed in the invitation: *“Let us start anew, Sisters, with faith... in our spiritual life in the light of the Word of God ”*.

The apostolic exhortation reminds us that:

“... consecrated life, ...is born from hearing the word of God and embracing the Gospel as its rule of life”. A life devoted to following Christ in his chastity, poverty and obedience thus becomes “a living ‘exegesis’ of God’s word”. The Holy Spirit, in whom the Bible was written, is the same Spirit who illumines “the word of God with new light for the founders and foundresses. Every charism and every rule springs from it and seeks to be an expression of it”, thus opening up new pathways of Christian living marked by the radicalism of the Gospel” (VD 83).

This teaching moves us, once again, to look at the example of our Founders and of the sisters who have preceded us and, with a more conscious and alive faith, we are provoked to answer to the challenges of every day life through the lights, the indications, the encouragements God is offering with His Word.

In the Scripture passages of this booklet, beside the liturgy of the day, we can find the living signs of the Father’s Providence that gives us clarity in our doubts, strength and courage in our relationships with one another and with others, to become transparent witnesses of His Love.

This *Lectio Divina* wants to help us to reflect on the themes discussed and deepened in the chapter assembly: the biblical passages and the charismatic ‘word’ of our Constitutions are those already indicated in the same chapter Document. These are for our Religious family a lamp to our steps and a light for our journey.

The questions after each passage of the Gospel could be used as personal and communitary evaluation for a common spiritual journey of our Congregation.

I wish to each sister and community to be, as Mary, a dwelling place of the Word. In this time, confused by so many words, we are called together, to be true proclaimers and witnesses of Jesus, Who alone has words of eternal life.

With gratitude and affection,

Sr Paola Dotto
General Superior

Rome, 1st November 2011
Solemnity of all Saints



I

The Word of the Lord: foundation of our faith

May our heart be able to say to God each day: "You are my refuge and my shield; I hope in your word" and, like Saint Peter, may we entrust ourselves in our daily actions to the Lord Jesus: "At your word I will let down the nets (VD 10).

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 5:1-11

While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, *"Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."*

Simon said in reply, *"Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."*

When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.

They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, *"Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."*

For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, *"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."*

When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

Cfr. 2 Tm 3: 14-16

Constitutions 23

Through her duty for continual formation, the sister strives to:

- grow in maturity on both human and religious levels;
- foster peaceful, affective expression within authentic community life so that each sister feels accepted as a gift and supported in her difficulties;
- live fully her chastity for Christ and for the coming of His Kingdom in the typically Franciscan and missionary dimension of candor and kindness towards all creatures.

The Word of God challenges us.

What is my answer of faith to the Lord's challenges?

How can I evaluate my journey of on going formation in the daily situations?





II

The Word of the Lord makes us new creatures in the Spirit

It needs to approach the word with a docile and prayerful heart so that it may deeply penetrate thoughts and feelings and bring about a new outlook – ‘the mind of Christ’. Consequently, words, choices and behaviour must increasingly become a reflection, proclamation and witness of the Gospel. (Cfr. VD 80).

From the Gospel according to St. John

Jn. 3:1-15

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, “*Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him.*”

Jesus answered and said to him, “*Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.*”

Nicodemus said to him, “*How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot re-enter his mother’s womb and be born again, can he?*” Jesus answered, “*Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, ‘You must be born from above. The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’*”

Nicodemus answered and said to him, “*How can this happen?*”

Jesus answered and said to him, “*You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.*”

Cfr. Heb. 4: 12-14

Constitutions 39

In keeping with ecclesial and seraphic traditions, Franciscan prayer cannot be separated from penance.

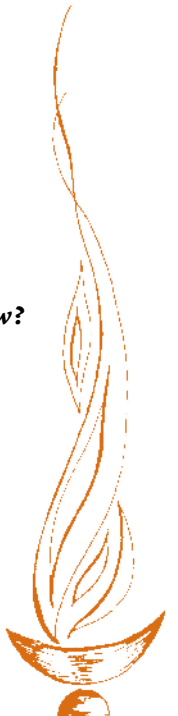
Praise of God and the constant conversion to Him are the sister’s first and principal task.

Following the example of Jesus she lives in profound communion with the Father so that she may be continually transformed into a new creature and become an apostle for the kingdom.

The Word of God challenges us.

Which sentence of this evangelical passage touches deeply my being a consecrated person?

What does “being born again in the Spirit” mean for myself now?





III

The Word of God became flesh in Mary, the listening Virgin

To renew the Church's faith in the word of God". To do so, we need to look to the one in whom the interplay between the word of God and faith was brought to perfection, that is, to the Virgin Mary,...

The human reality created through the word finds its most perfect image in Mary's obedient faith ... (VD 27).

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 1: 26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said, "*Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.*"

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*"

But Mary said to the angel, "*How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?*"

And the angel said to her in reply, "*The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.*"

Mary said, "*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.*"

Then the angel departed from her.

Cfr. Heb 1: 1-4

Constitutions 45

By reading and meditating on holy scriptures each day, the sisters draw the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ in order to conform their lives ever more to the Word and to attain possession of the Spirit of the Lord and His sanctifying action.

Constitutions 48

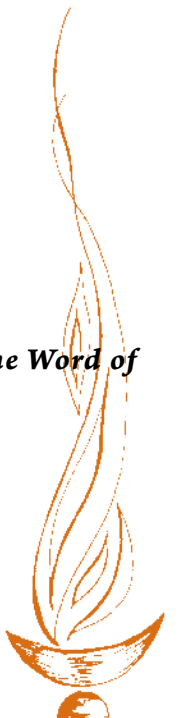
Imitating St. Francis who had a special love for the Virgin Mary and celebrated her as Mother of Christ the Redeemer and Mother of the Church, each sister nurtures a special devotion to Our Lady.

In Mary the sister always seeks help and finds an example for her consecrated and apostolic life.

The Word of God challenges us.

How am I valuing my "capacity of listening"?

Which are my difficulties on listening and accepting the Word of the Lord that is revealed to me in my daily life?





IV

With faith, Joseph welcomes and treasures Jesus,
Word of the Father.

Our whole existence becomes a dialogue with the God who speaks and listens, who calls us and gives direction to our lives.... the word of God reveals that our entire life is under the divine call. (VD 24).

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew Mt. 2: 13-16, 19-21

When they (the Magi) had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, *"Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him."*

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, *"Out of Egypt I called my son."* ... When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, *"Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."*

He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

Cfr. Heb. 11: 1 ss. 12, 1-2

Constitutions 44

Aware that God reveals Himself in silence, the sister reserve moments of solitude in order to establish with Him an intimate relationship of openness, of listening and of dialog. In search for an harmonious balance between contemplation and action, each community promotes and defends this need so that its community prayer, apostolic ministry and entire life become praise and adoration.

The Word of God challenges us.

Which sentence of this Gospel passage is challenging me most?

Am I able to research and to give to myself times of silence, of solitude to treasure my intimate relationship with the Lord?

Which are the impediments?





V

The Word of God: our “nourishment and strength” on the journey

The word of God also inevitably reveals the tragic possibility that human freedom can withdraw from this covenant dialogue with God for which we were created. The divine word also discloses the sin that lurks in the human heart. The radical obedience of Jesus even to his death on the cross completely unmasks this sin. (Cfr. VD 26).

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew

Mt. 4: 1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.”

He said in reply, “It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you and ‘with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus answered him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.’”

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.”

At this, Jesus said to him, “Get away, Satan! It is written: ‘The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

Cfr. Jm 1:2-8

Constitutions 52

The spirit of doing penance is, for the Franciscan Missionary of the Sacred Heart, nothing other than a sharing in the Mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ through:

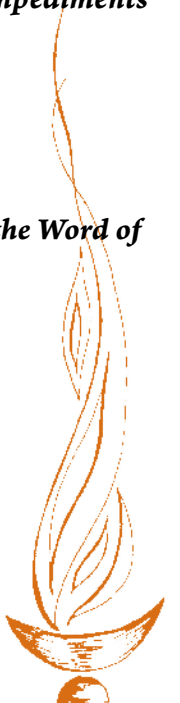
- prayer, self-denial and works of charity;
- a simple and austere life style both personally and communally
- an evangelical response of solidarity with our brothers and sisters tested by suffering, injustice, hunger and poverty;
- all those ways of mortification required by the diverse circumstances of life.

The Word of God challenges us.

Which are the temptations of the world today, that are impediments to accept God’s Word?

Jesus faces his temptations with the strength coming from the Word of the Lord. And I?

Where am I finding my strength?





VI

To build on the solid rock of the Word of the Lord

In building our lives we need solid foundations which will endure when human certainties fail. Truly, since “for ever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens” and the faithfulness of the Lord “endures to all generations”, whoever builds on this word builds the house of his life on rock (Cfr. VD.10).

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk.6: 43-49

“A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit.

For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thorn bushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them.

That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built.

But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed.”

Cfr. Jm 1:22-25

Constitutions 53

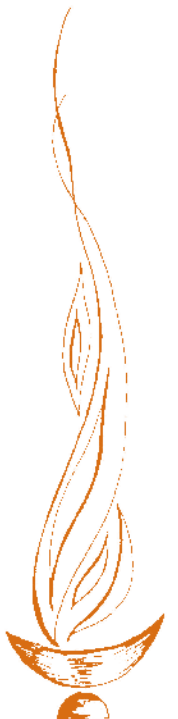
The Franciscan life of penance demands constant metanoia. Consequently, the sister must evaluate herself daily in the light of the Word of God and of the gospel law of love through a daily consciousness examen.

In the Sacramento of Reconciliation received frequently, she renews her fidelity to God and her full communion with all humanity.

The Word of God challenges us.

What invitation is the Holy Spirit giving to me in this passage?

Which are the main values of my being a FMSC sister?





VII

To listen and to interiorize the Lord's Word:
attitudes for bearing fruits

Let us ask the Lord that our own lives may be that "good soil" in which the divine sower plants the word, so that it may bear within us fruits of holiness, "thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold" (VD 49).

From the Gospel according to St. Matthew

Mt. 13: 18-23

Hear then the parable of the sower.

The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart.

The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy.

But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away.

The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit.

But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.

Cfr. 2 Th 3: 1-5

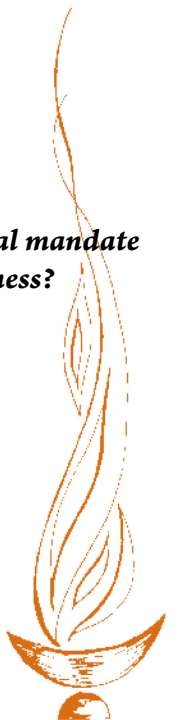
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The missionary spirit of the Franciscan sister is genuinely expressed in the constant and universal promotion of peace and good. Both in community and in the exercise of her gospel mandate, the sister reflects the image of Him who is the God of goodness, so that men and women upon hearing and seeing her glorify and praise the heavenly Father.

The Word of God challenges us.

Which is the soil where I can identify myself?

In my being missionary how am I living out the evangelical mandate to make shining in my life the image of God who is Goodness?





VIII

To believe in Jesus, Word of the Father,
means to remain on the Truth.

To be consecrated "in the truth". Jesus states this clearly with regard to his disciples...

The disciples in a certain sense become "drawn into intimacy with God by being immersed in the word of God. God's word is, so to speak, the purifying bath, the creative power which changes them and makes them belong to God" (Cf. VD 80).

From the Gospel according to St. John

Jn. 17: 17-26

Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth.

As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.

"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me.

I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

Cfr. Col. 3: 16-17

Constitutions 27

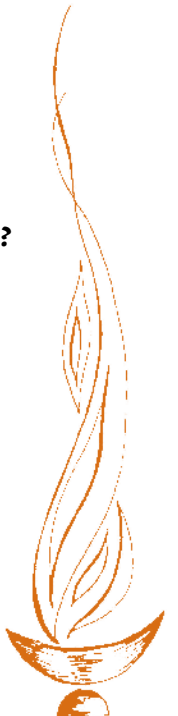
The sisters, sharing the same vocation, following the example of the community life realized by Christ and his disciples and the inspiration of St. Francis:

- accept and live the mandate of unity;
- celebrate the mutual gift of salvation and peace.

The Word of God challenges us.

Which words of Jesus are challenging and encouraging me most in order to live, with my sisters, the fmsc vocation?

How can I answer to the invitation of Jesus in this passage?





IX

To believe and live in Jesus, the Word of the Father,
gives eternal life.

The risen Word is this definitive light to our path. From the beginning, Christians realized that in Christ the word of God is present as a person. The word of God is the true light which men and women need. In the resurrection the Son of God truly emerged as the light of the world. Now, by living with him and in him, we can live in the light. (VD 12).

From the Gospel according to St. John

Jn. 11:17-27

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. (But) even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise."

Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day."

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

Cfr. 2 Tm 2: 6-14

Constitutions 26

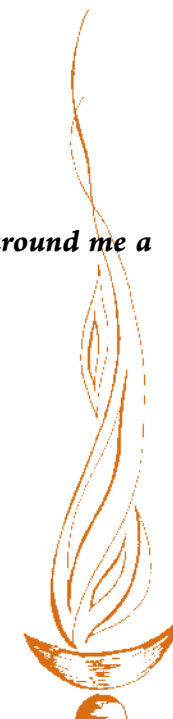
In the community each sister is a gift of the Lord. Sustained by this assurance all contribute to creating an authentic faith reality which finds its basis in:

- the Father's fidelity to his covenant,
- the presence of the Risen Lord,
- the desire to renew themselves and to grow continuously in the bond of love.

The Word of God challenges us.

How can I define my faith?

Which are the difficulties I find on creating in me and around me a reality of faith in the Presence of the Risen Lord?





X

The Word of the Lord: daily “Bread” of the Father’s Providence.

Jesus’ discourse on the bread speaks of the gift of God, which Moses obtained for his people with the manna in the desert, which is really the Torah, the life-giving word of God. In his own person Jesus brings to fulfilment the ancient image: “The bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. “I am the bread of life” Here “the law has become a person. When we encounter Jesus, we feed on the living God himself, so to speak; we truly eat ‘the bread from heaven’”. (Cfr. VD 54).

From the Gospel according to St. John Jn. 6: 48-61; 63, 66-69

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

The Jews quarrelled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?”

Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.

This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?”

Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, “Does this shock you? ...It is the spirit that gives life, while

the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life... As a result of this, many (of) his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?”

Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

Cfr. Rv. 3: 20

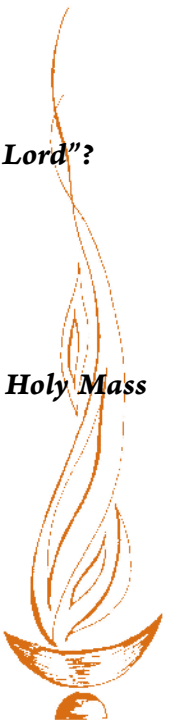
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The Eucharist is the center of religious life and of every action in evangelization. Therefore, the sisters daily participate, and possibly in common, in the Holy Sacrifice and at the Eucharistic Banquet renewing the offering of themselves to the Lord.

The Word of God challenges us.

What is the Spirit suggesting me through “this word of the Lord”?

How am I living the Eucharist in the Celebration of the Holy Mass and in my offering during the day?





XI

Faith in the Lord's Word for a true Obedience

'The obedience of faith' must be our response to God who reveals. By faith one freely commits oneself entirely to God. The whole history of salvation progressively demonstrates this profound bond between the word of God and the faith which arises from an encounter with Christ. Faith thus takes shape as an encounter with a person to whom we entrust our whole life. (VD 25).

From the Gospel according to St. Mark

Mk. 4: 35-41

On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side."

Leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him. A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion.

They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!"

The wind ceased and there was great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?"

They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

Cfr. 1P. 1: 15-25

Constitutions 10

For the fullness of a life of religious obedience, the sister:

- maintains the attitude of attentive listening to the Word of God and is docile to the movements of the Holy Spirit,
- practices self-denial and humility;
- accepts in faith what is asked of her.

The Word of God challenges us.

Which sentence is challenging me most?

How am I able to live my faith in the obedience to the Father's Will?





XII

Poverty, a gift to be treasured
so as to keep the “savour” of our consecrated life.

The word of God is not inimical to us; it does not stifle our authentic desires, but rather illuminates them, purifies them and brings them to fulfilment. How important it is for our time to discover that God alone responds to the yearning present in the heart of every man and woman! (Cfr. VD 23).

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 14: 25-35

“If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish. Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops?

But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms. In the same way, everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.

“Salt is good, but if salt itself loses its taste, with what can its flavor be restored?

It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear.”

Cfr. Ph. 3: 7- 12

Constitutions 14

Following Christ who lived and died poor, the Franciscan Missionary commits herself:

- to make evangelical poverty the basis of her penitential life;
- to choose God as her highest and only good and to seek first His Kingdom and justice;
- to keep her heart free from material goods living fitness to all of the new life of the beatitudes.

The Word of God challenges us.

What is poverty for me?

What is the Lord asking me to live with radically the poverty today?





XIII

The true spiritual fecundity comes forth from listening the Word of God

... Mary's familiarity with the word of God. She speaks and thinks with the word of God; the word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the word of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate".

Every Christian believer, in some way interiorly conceives and gives birth to the word of God. (Cfr. VD 28).

From the Gospel according to St. Luke

Lk. 8: 19-21

Then his mother and his brothers came to him but were unable to join him because of the crowd.

He was told, "*Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you.*"

He said to them in reply, "*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.*"

Cfr. 1 Jn. 2

Constitutions 21

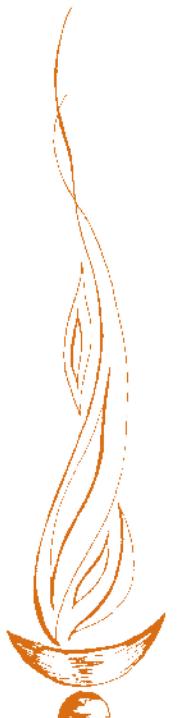
Consecrated chastity is a gift of special love from the Holy Spirit. The sister who accepts it, loves Jesus Christ with an undivided heart and with this vow commits herself to live perfect continence in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom.

Immersed in sentiments of love for the Sacred Heart, she increases her charity and acquires that deep freedom which transforms her life into a source of spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness.

The Word of God challenges us.

How much space do I give to the Word of God in my way of thinking, evaluating, speaking?

Am I living out my chastity as spiritual fecundity?





XIV

Jesus, Word of the Father, is and remains with us always.

May every day of our lives thus be shaped by a renewed encounter with Christ, the Word of the Father made flesh: he stands at the beginning and the end, and "in him all things hold together". Let us be silent in order to hear the Lord's word and to meditate upon it, so that by the working of the Holy Spirit it may remain in our hearts and speak to us all the days of our lives (VD 124).

From the Gospel according to St. Luke Lk. 24:13-21; 26-32

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them, *"What are you discussing as you walk along?"*

They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, *"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"*

And he replied to them, *"What sort of things?"*

They said to him, *"The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel..."*

And he said to them, *"Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"*

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.

But they urged him, *"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over."* So he went in to stay with them.

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, *"Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"*

Cfr. 2Th 1: 11-12

Constitutions 47

Since Franciscan experience is above all centered in Christ, the sister orients her contemplation, spirituality and apostolate towards Jesus Christ.

She expresses the desire to be conformed to Him by her devotion to:

- Jesus Crucified and to His Sacred Heart;
 - the Most Blessed Sacrament,
- so as to acquire an authentic attitude of continuous conversion.

The Word of God challenges us.

Which deep sentiment does dwell in my heart on listening this Gospel passage?

What is helping me to recognize the presence of the Lord in the journey of my life?





Invocation prayers before the Lectio Divina

1. Father, send your Holy Spirit that the fruitless night of our life may be transformed into the radiant dawn that enables us to know your Son Jesus present among us. Let your Spirit breathe on the waters of our sea, as he did at the moment of creation, to open our hearts to the invitation of the Lord's love and that we may share in his Word. May your Spirit burn within us, Father, that we may become witnesses of Jesus, like Peter and John and the other disciples, and that we too may go out every day to become fishermen and women for your kingdom. Amen
2. Lord Jesus, send us the Spirit that we may read your Word free of all prejudice, so that we may meditate your proclamation in its integrity and not selectively, so that we may pray that we may grow in communion with you and with our brothers and sisters, so that we may, finally, act, contemplating the reality that we are living this day with your feelings and with your mercy. You who live with the Father and who grants us Love. Amen
3. Holy Father, through Jesus your Son, the Word made flesh for us, send me your Holy Spirit, that my ears may be opened to hear the "letter of love" that you have written to me and enlighten my mind that I may understand it in depth. Make my heart docile that it may

- receive your will with joy and help me to give witness to it. Amen
4. Merciful Father, in this holy time of prayer and of listening to your Word, send also to me your holy angel that I may receive the proclamation of salvation and that, after opening my heart, I may offer my yes to Love. Let, I beg you, the Holy Spirit overshadow me as an overwhelming power. As from now, Father, I do not wish to express anything other than my "Yes!" and to say to you: "Behold, I am here for you. Do unto me whatever pleases you". Amen
 5. Lord God, our Father, you are not far away from any of us, for in you we live and move and exist and you live in us through your Holy Spirit. Be indeed with us, Lord, send us your Holy Spirit of truth and through him deepen our understanding of the life and message of your Son, that we may accept the full truth and live by it consistently. We ask you this through Christ our Lord. Amen
 6. Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the events of your passion and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection. Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us your Spirit. Amen
 7. Come, Holy Spirit, fill our minds with your light so that we can understand the true sense of your Word.
Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in our hearts the fire of your love to inflame our faith.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill our being with your force to strengthen what is weak in us, in our service to God. Amen

8. Father, Christ your Son is already pleading for us, but through your Word, which is life for us, you also grant us the grace of opening our hearts to you in deep, intense, true and enlightened prayer. Send us the Consoler, the Spirit of truth, not only that he may dwell beside us, but that he may always dwell within our hearts. He is the fire of love that unites you with Jesus. Grant that, through your Word, we too may enter into this love and live by it. Touch our spirit, our mind and all our being that we may welcome the commandments, hidden in these few verses; that we may keep them, that is, live them fully and in truth in your presence and that of our brothers and sisters. Amen
9. Spirit of truth, sent by Jesus to guide us to the whole truth, enlighten our minds so that we may understand the Scriptures. You who overshadowed Mary and made her fruitful ground where the Word of God could germinate, purify our hearts from all obstacles to the Word. Help us to learn like her to listen with good and pure hearts to the Word that God speaks to us in life and in Scripture, so that we may observe the Word and produce good fruit through our perseverance. Amen
10. "Speak, Lord, that your servant is listening. " Speak to us now, Lord! We want to make room for your Word, to allow the words of the Gospel permeate our lives so that you become the light the strength of our way, vivify and transform our attitudes. We all want to mature in the way of listening to your words so that our hearts are transformed.
Let your word to our hearts cannot find any obstacles or resistance, that your word of life does not flow in vain or in the dried desert of our lives. Enter in our empty hearts with the power of your Word, come to take the place among our thoughts and feelings, come to live with us in the light of your truth!



Prayers of thanksgiving.



1. Lord, the meaning of our life is to seek your Word, which came to us in the person of Christ. Make me capable of welcoming what is new in the Gospel, so that I may change my life. I would know nothing about you were it not for the light of the words spoken by your Son Jesus, who came to tell us of your marvels. When I am weak, if I go to Him, the Word of God, then I become strong. He guides me to the paths of life. When I discover some sadness or unhappiness in myself, the thought of Him, my only good, opens the way to joy. Amen
2. Lord, merciful Father, you chose each of your children, that they might become heralds of your love in the world and bring the good fruit of your Presence to all peoples. May our fruit remain, thanks to our communion with You and with your Son, Jesus; help us to gather this fruit, which is our Friend and Teacher, who enters every day into the holy temple of our lives. May he renew his covenant with us daily, through faith and prayer full of trusting abandon. Amen
3. You spoke your Word to me and touched my heart; you made me go with you into the boat and brought me to the deep. Lord, you have done great things! I praise you, I bless you and thank you, in your Word, in your Son Jesus and in the Holy Spirit. Always take me into the deep with you, in you and you in me, so that I may let down many nets of love, friendship, sharing and seeking your face and your kingdom here on earth. Amen
4. Lord our God, to those who trust in you and live the gospel of your Son, you are a dependable rock. In the storms and tensions of our times, may our faith never waver, but give us the courage to live as we believe, consistently, radically, that with your Son we may do your will and live in your love now and for ever. Amen
5. Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us

the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to, but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen

6. I thank you Jesus, my Lord and my God, that you have loved me and called me, made me worthy to be your disciple. You truly are the way, the truth and the life, the dawn without a setting, the sun of justice and peace. Grant that I may dwell in your love, bound to you like a branch to its vine. Grant me your peace so that I may overcome my weaknesses, face my doubts and respond to your call and live fully the mission you entrusted to me, praising you forever. Amen
7. God, who in the compassion of your Son towards us, show us your fatherly goodness, grant that the bread multiplied by your providence may be broken in love, and the communion in the bread come down from heaven open us to dialogue with and service of our brothers and sisters. Amen.
8. Lord, your parable of the sower concerns each one of us, the ways of our lives, the hardness of daily life, the difficulties and the moments of softness that are part of our interior scene. We are all, from time to time, sometimes path, rocks and thorns; but also good, fertile soil. Deliver us from the temptation of negative forces that try to eliminate the force of your Word. Strengthen our will when passing and changing emotions render the seduction of your Word less efficacious. Help us to keep the joy that our meeting with your Word creates in our hearts. Make us good soil, welcoming persons, capable of rendering our service to your Word.
9. Lord God, you have set Jesus, your Son, to be universal king and judge. He will come at the end of time to judge all the nations. He comes to us every day in a thousand ways and asks us to welcome him. We meet him in the Word and in the broken bread. But we also meet him in our broken brothers and sisters, disfigured by hunger, oppression, injustice, sickness and the stigma of our society. Open our hearts that we may welcome him today in our lives so that we may be welcomed by him in the eternity of his realm.. Amen