

SPIRITUAL MESSAGE FOR AUGUST 2010

FROM YOUR PROFESSION TO THE GOSPEL LIFE TO THE SERVICE OF YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

“But you, he said, “Who do you say that I am...”(Lk.9.20)

By the time you receive this spiritual message you will have already elected your new National Minister, a new National Executive Council, who will work together with you in the governance of your Order in the Oceania Region. And to state the obvious, for good reason you did not join the Secular Franciscan Order to become a member of goody feeling club. You joined because you came to know and love St Francis and his love for Jesus his Lord. And, you too wanted some share in the way that Francis served his Lord and from this relationship, how Francis served the society in which he was born and raised.

In your General Constitutions, in Title IV, Article 77, no.1, we read, “In the local Fraternity the perpetually professed of the same fraternity have active voice, i.e. can elect, and passive voice, i.e. can be elected. The temporary professed have only active voice.” To that end that is, your Gospel Profession through which you have the privilege of being able to serve your brothers and sisters at the local level of fraternity and also at the highest level through election to the office of National Minister. The Lord Jesus calls and asks all who are baptised into his Body the Church and indeed you Secular Franciscans and all the members of his family, this question, *“But you, who do you say that I am?”* He asks us this question for a good reason because, if we can answer it honestly, it will demand a faith-filled, loving and a sacrificial response. Can you answer it? Later on in Luke’s Gospel the answer and its demands on those who can and do answer it the question will receive the answer from the Lord. In this case the Lord’s question is directed towards you as Secular Franciscans because you have been called, elected to serve your brothers and sisters in Fraternity. And being elected to serve is no easy thing. To serve will demand generosity, faith, love and patience as well as all your skills and talents. However, know this you are not alone in this ministry of service. Service then, is part of being a disciple of Jesus. Jesus calls you to discipleship which means a total commitment to Him and his Gospel and to your brothers and sisters in Fraternity, to serve as he served.

In accepting the election to serve the Fraternity whether it is at the local level or at its highest office, demands that you “...turn your face resolutely towards Jerusalem...” in your love for the Lord and your fraternity. Jesus does not ask his question to the crowds but to you his intimate friends who have celebrated with him. No! The crowds have known Jesus in the same intimate way that you know him, why? Because they have not shared in his ministry, as you do through your specific Gospel way of life.

But dear friends you have made your Profession in a public manner to follow and serve the Lord in the Fraternity and where ever you may be as a Secular Franciscan, because you are not limited by the boundaries of a state or country. By virtue of your Profession you have answered Christ's question correctly and with Peter you have made that same Profession of faith, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God..."* And that act of faith in the Lord will demand an on- going commitment to Jesus.

This commitment to the Gospel and to the fraternity also flows out into your daily lives as you carry the cross the Lord has called you to carry. How will you do this? Carrying this cross will take the shape of prayer, contemplation and your generous contribution on all levels of service in your fraternal life within your Order and outside it. As you carry your cross you emulate what Jesus did and in turn you become sharers in Christ's sufferings, if you don't carry your cross, then you can have nothing in *'...common with the Lord...'* who carried his Cross into his death. And through his Resurrection he continues to call us to *"...feed his sheep..."*

Your Chapter has been like a new Pentecost because the Holy Spirit has spoken in your hearts and you have elected those whom you want to serve you. But now you have to support, pray and love them into their office. As they serve you they will fulfil the same words as did the apostles who awaited the coming of the Spirit that Jesus promised his apostles. In the Acts of the Apostles we read, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and then you will be my witnesses..."* (1. 8)

