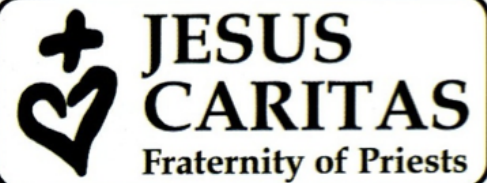


5. Universal Brother



40. The review of life does not stand alone. The review grows as Fraternity life grows. Neither stands alone and both will experience growth in depth given time and effort. For this reason, a fraternity needs to set aside time at each gathering for some simple socializing, whether it be over a meal or some refreshments. Sometimes a day away together can also be very beneficial. Above all, their presence to each other requires mutual and consistent commitment on the part of all the brothers. When a member misses a meeting, he should, if at all possible, give his review of life in writing to the responsible to be shared with his brothers when they gather. Only serious circumstances or unforeseen pastoral obligations (e.g. funeral) should pre-empt being present to share the Day of Review. Over- commitment or busyness does not constitute sufficient cause and should be challenged.

88. Specifically, he (*i.e. Brother Charles*) manifested his own striving for a contemplative approach to ministerial life, a simplifying of life according to the Gospel mandate, a realization of the constant call to live the Paschal Mystery which he expressed in terms of detachment, an emphasis on Jesus' presence in the poor, and a global consciousness of being a universal brother. These particular aspects he accompanied by his strong religious intuitions about the preference for certain perennial Christian emphases, such as solitude, silence, Word of God, spirit of adoration, and a Eucharistic-centeredness. While being a universal brother, he never was a member of a fraternity. While longing to establish a community, he never had a member. He was a human being: attractive and attractive and enigmatic, a product of his time yet classically mysterious.

Jesus Calls:

Then the king will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him and say, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?" And the king will say to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Mt 25:34-40)

Brother Charles' Response

We are all the children of the Most High. All of us: the poorest, the most outcast, a newborn child, a decrepit old man, the least intelligent human being, the most abject, an idiot, a fool, a sometimes sinner, the most ignorant, the last of the last, he who is the most physically and morally repugnant — all are children of God and sons and daughters of the Most High. God

wants his children to love each other in the same way a loving father wants his sons to love each other. Let us love all human beings because they are our brothers and sisters, and God wants us to look at them tenderly, and love loves them just as they are, because each is a child of God who is beloved and adored, and because our Lord paid the price for their love with His blood. They are covered with Our Lord's blood like a coat, for the love of God and Jesus extends to all to the point of his being consumed for them in the sacrifice of Calvary. (OS 88-89) 15 Day of Prayer p. 52

My Response

Do I have difficulty accepting people who are different than me? What is my relationship with family members and others who have offended me? Do I pray for openness towards others? Do I recognize the call of the Gospel to go beyond externals of people and places?

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HOW CHARLES FOUCAULD BECAME AN 'UNIVERSAL BROTHER'

"I want all those who live in this country, Christians, Muslims, Jews and pagans, to think of me as their brother, the universal brother." To be a universal brother became a great desire of Charles de Foucauld. But who is able to be a brother to everyone? None of us would have to search very far before finding someone whom we would not wish to accept as a brother or a sister.

Charles de Foucauld's desire to be the universal brother, especially for the marginalized, didn't fall from heaven; it came about by a progressive evolution. During a pilgrimage to the Holy Land he discovered Nazareth: 'God walked these paths. God became a worker at Nazareth; God became a brother'. Charles de Foucauld valued the need to retire from the world in order to live with "his well loved Brother and Master Jesus." He entered the Trappists.

A visit to neighbors made him discover that these people were poorer than the monks. During times of persecutions, he realized that the walls of a monastery gave security which Christian neighbors of the monastery did not have. Charles expressed a feeling of too much richness, of too much security. A slow maturing made him want to account to God, to bring peace and liberation to the world, to become "brother" by becoming close to those who were marginalized and who were excluded by others.

This discovery caused Charles to make contact with the world, so as to finally be close to his beloved Master Jesus. Charles' monastery would be a hermitage and at the same time a centre of hospitality. Already in November 1901, not long after his arrival in Beni Abbas, 'The little building is called la Khaoua, "the fraternity" because Khaouia Carlo is the universal brother. Pray to God that I will truly be a universal brother to all in this country".

Charles de Foucauld's brotherly life here, as later at Tamanrasset, is very diverse. He distributes food, heals the sick, buys slaves to free them, meet legionnaires, learns the Toureg language, familiarizes himself with their ways and customs, welcomes visitors, etc. Charles was truly their brother because he shared their life. Even more so when, sick and dying, he allowed himself to be cared for by some Toureg women who saved him with goat's milk. He came to understand that friendship and love between brothers and sisters needs to be reciprocal.

Charles experienced the greatness of the Islamic world which respects the enemy, the person, those who are of no nation, no religion, the world where true hospitality is practiced. Even more, he discovered people for whom God represented "all". In contact with the believing Muslims, he began to understand that God alone counts and that the life of a human being is very simple, that it consists of giving oneself

completely to the Almighty. The witness of the Muslim people burned in him like a strong fire.

Charles de Foucauld's desire to become a 'universal brother corresponds to the image he had of God. He knew that the way in which we approach our neighbors mirrors our relationship to God. The love of our neighbor and the love of God are linked. During the course of his constant meditations on the Gospel texts, Charles continually found a humble God who descended so low that all layers of humanity felt drawn to Him. Meditating on the shepherds close to the crib stamped this impression for him: *Jesus himself chose his adorers! First he called the shepherds - simple, poor people. This is the divine wisdom of the goodness of my God! If you first called the rich, the poor wouldn't have dared to approach you. Convinced of the need to stay at a distance because of their poverty, they would have let the rich come close to you, and they would have looked upon you from a distance. By letting the shepherds come first, you called all to come to you. By calling the poor first, you showed them they were important to you, preferred by you until the end of time. At the same time the rich were also called.*

...In Jesus he found a God who excluded no one from his love. This God gave personal dignity to each person. There was no special formula.

Excerpted from a website article UNIVERSAL BROTHER:

BECOMING A UNIVERSAL BROTHER?

1. By the awareness of our own biases and prejudices, and the way we show them. By being mission-conscious and generous in our donations to missionaries.
2. By extending our ministry beyond the members of our congregation who are comfortable and secure.
3. By tailoring our vacations to allow an experience of the "third world" where there is scarcity, and survival is the engine that drives daily life.
4. By living in simplicity, and avoiding what is ostentatious or extravagant in our residence or the car we drive or the dress we choose.
5. By curbing our speech and avoiding such generalizations as "welfare cheats", "black bastards", "scam artists" and "leeches", "illegal immigrants."
6. By treating all people with courtesy and kindness, and developing a blind eye to those who seek to manipulate us in our role as priest.
7. By learning a foreign language which would assist us in our ministry.
8. By tempering our reactions to political statements that would infringe on the basic human rights of others.
9. By informing ourselves of the restrictive ways of immigration and employment.
10. Getting an international perspective on news by deliberately watching BBC or other foreign broadcasts.