

ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS

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To every Sister and Brother in the Secular Franciscan Order

For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control.¹

My dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the Lord give you his peace!

We still hear the announcement of Easter “He is not here, he is risen!” in our ears, and we have read in the Gospel, that Jesus said: “if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”² For already more than a whole year we have been waiting for the things to be changed. Yet, it looks if life were going on, day by day without changing anything. But if we do not see something, it does not mean that it doesn’t exist or doesn’t happen.

I see, I hear and I feel, my dear sisters and brothers, how many difficulties we have to face, how many times we have to struggle in our life, both in a spiritual sense, but also in its very concrete meaning on a daily base. Many of us had to experience the illness that this virus can cause, how dangerous, sometimes mortal it is. All of us have someone around us, in the family, in the fraternity, who suffered, had hardships, or even, passed away. During this pandemic many times we feel helpless and it fills us with tempers. But are we really helpless? Are these tempers really necessary? Aren’t we too much apathetic? Do not worry, we are not worse than the disciples who were going fishing, but did not catch anything³. It seemed to be a total failure. Later, the disciples gathered behind the locked doors, because in spite of getting rid of the Romans, they had to experience the fear from the Jews.

In the Gospel for the Sunday of Pentecost we can read, that Jesus knows our fears, our cowardice, he is aware of the walls and locks of our fears, but steps beyond these to meet us. Our fears are not an obstacle for him, and he is giving us his peace, right behind the walls of our fears, where we hide. He has promised, several times, that the Holy Spirit will come to fill us and thus change us. This is our hope and this is what we can be sure of experiencing when we are in the greatest need. What an

¹ 2Tim 1:7

² Jn 16:7

³ Jn 21:3

encouragement it is, that neither the walls, nor the locks can stop Jesus to enter and to encourage us: Peace be with you!

What Saint Paul wrote to Timothy sounds like he had written to us, to encourage us in these times. God gave us the Spirit of power, of love and of self-control.

The Spirit of power

In a time when we often feel that we are weak, it is very much encouraging that the Holy Spirit wants to fill us with power. Don't we feel too often that we are weak, without determination? We should be firm and decisive, but we feel uncertain and having lost our power, don't we? Nowadays we live in a situation when we must take decisions, but to take different decisions and in a different way than usually. Before the pandemic we had to take decisions in familiar situations, now we are facing a completely new situation, that needs a new approach and new decisions. We have to change our way of thinking, the way of our life, and this is called conversion. The most of the power of the Spirit is needed to change ourselves.

The Spirit does not give us power to be superior to others but to guide us to all truth⁴, to see who we really are and what we have to do. The greatest power we need is to change, to serve others, to take decisions in favor of our sisters and brothers, our neighbors and find the proper ways – individually and also in different communities, institutions – to do the best for them. “Everything, then, depends on our ability to see the need for a change of heart, attitudes and lifestyles⁵.” This kind of conversion is the way to live obedience in our Secular Franciscan manner, in a good understanding that the Holy Spirit gives us the greatest power: the power over ourselves.

The Spirit of self-control

There is a whole new situation in the world around us that we have to face. But not only that. Also, in our personal, individual lives we face situations we never had to before. It is a good opportunity to review what is really necessary from all those things that we are missing now. We used to be pleased that so many wishes could be fulfilled, so many things we could have and we could live, and now we miss them. It is time to keep penance and think about it in silence, whether we really need all those things that we are longing for. Surely, there are many that we really need, but surely not all of them. This is a good moment that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we have a look at ourselves and see, how do we, Secular Franciscans live our special kind of poverty. How much do we need (in terms of material things and in terms of spiritual things, too), and for which it is unnecessary to long? How many things do we still have that we could share with our sisters and brothers, who are in a greater need, who are in a more difficult situation than I am? Let us listen to the Holy Spirit, how to practice our self-control!

The Spirit of love

It is impossible to love if there isn't someone to love. “*It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.*”⁶ We are created and destined to live together with others, to be in community, to love and to be loved. The heart of our Secular Franciscan spirituality is the fraternity, where we experience the love of God and the love of one another. And now this second one is missing, at least in parts. We miss the personal encounters, the family gatherings, the fraternity meetings, sometimes the Holy Mass itself, too. But the love of God never ceases. Let us think about how good it will be to meet again! How good it will be to meet God in the Eucharist, to meet the family members, the brothers and sisters, to give hugs to each other, to take each other's hands. We are yearning, because God has set love into the deepest point of our heart, so that nothing could tear it away from there. Love is not something theoretical, we want to express it, to show it, and to feel it. The Holy Spirit gives us

⁴ cf. Jn 16:13.

⁵ pp Francis: Fratelli Tutti, 166

⁶ Gen 2:18

this experience of love. Our pure desires are inspired and fulfilled by the Spirit, and time is close when we can rejoice over it again. “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁷

The Holy Spirit is consoling us and encouraging us, let us listen to Him! We are asked to say *no* to fear, *no* to hopelessness, *no* to frustration, *no* to despair, but *yes* to a brave new initiative, *yes* to a hope for the future, *yes* to discover the good, *yes* to find the right path instead. He lives and works in us, but does not act instead of us. We have to discover what is our part to be done. Do not be afraid, when you meet temptations. The Spirit will strengthen you to see with your eyes, to hear with your ears and to feel with your hearts. This is the way how we will bring the fruits of the Spirit. Fruits cannot be manufactured. It is not a matter of our boldness, of our skills, but of being opened to the Spirit. Fruits are growing, by the grace and goodness of God. Let us be opened and free to bring the fruits of the Spirit!

Being deeply convinced, that on this Pentecost the Holy Spirit will abundantly grant each and all of you a spirit of power and love and self-control, I wish you a very blessed and joyful Pentecost! May this be the time of renewal, a springtime when all those seeds that we have been taking care of during this more than a whole year, in the individual prayers, in the silence, in the isolation, having offered our difficulties, our sufferings, will become flowers and fruits to feed and delight us and those around us!

Lord, let us be the water of your river, so that we may bring life from the spring to those who need it so much.

Lord, let us be your soil, so that we may accept your seeds and bring fruits, thus offering your food for those who hunger your words and your spirituality.

Lord, let us be your fire, so that we may enlighten the darkness in the world and heat up the soul of those who feel the cold of suffering, isolation, hardships.

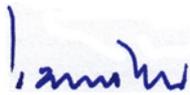
Lord, let us be your wind so that we may bring fresh air, so that we may swipe off the dust of the bad thoughts and ideas, and we may inspire people to open the windows and doors, letting in your Spirit, and that we may help them take deep breathes, feeling the freedom of the children of God.

Lord, let us be the clay in your hands, form us into a pot as you wish, so that being unique pieces of your loving handwork we may bring that gift of yours to others that fits into us the best.

Lord, let us be your fruit tree, so that we may bring lots of your fruits and may we be like the one which gives home for the bird on its branches and the children are eager to climb onto.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Your brother and your minister,



Tibor Kauser
CIOFS Minister General



⁷ Rm 8:38-39