

# THE LITTLE BROTHERS OF THE GOSPEL

*(Presentation in East Africa)*



As a Religious Congregation of the Roman Catholic Church, the "Little Brothers of the Gospel" are present in East Africa since 1978.

The Little Brothers of The Gospel have a ministry of presence, which informs all their life and their way of spreading the Good News of Jesus.

In East Africa, they are in Tanzania (Archdiocese of Arusha) and in Kenya (Archdiocese of Nairobi).

## WHERE AND HOW LITTLE BROTHERS OF THE GOSPEL LIVE



**Small communities:** A "fraternity" of the little Brothers of the Gospel is a small group, of three or four brothers living together. These fraternities are often found in the poorest areas of town, in villages or anywhere where ordinary people live.

Once a month we get together to make a "review of life". This is a time when we come together to share our joys and difficulties, the graces that we have received or refused. It is a time when we come to know one another better and to grow together in the Lord and in the love

for one another and with our neighbours. It is together that we seek out the will of God for each one of us and for our fraternity as a whole in the light of the Gospel and of our Constitutions.

**A chapel and the Eucharist:** A room is kept for a place of prayer and for the Celebration of the Eucharist. This chapel is generally arranged in a simple way and according to the customs of the country. The Eucharist is the heart of the prayer of the fraternities. Through the Eucharist we are able to transform everything in our daily lives into a prayer of thanksgiving and of union with the sacrifice of Christ. The Eucharist invites us to solidarity with others.

In the chapel of each fraternity we keep the Blessed Sacrament. Every day, we come into his presence for times of adoration and prayers of praise and petition for ourselves and for others.

**Work:** Most of the brothers do one or another work, for this is a concrete way of imitating Jesus who was an ordinary worker of Nazareth for many years.

Through it we learn to come close to, the people to whom we are sent. Work is also to earn a living, as well as a way of building with people a better future. Some brothers may also be called to be more involved in social activities.



**Solitude and prayer:** Prayer together as a group is important; so also is prayer alone in solitude. From time to time we get up for an hour of adoration during the night, and each month we spend a day or two in the solitude of a hermitage (in a remote place).



**The daily life** of the Little Brothers of the Gospel varies from country to country and from one fraternity to another. It all depends on our desire to share the sort of conditions of the people where we live. Life in a city is obviously going to be different from life in a small village. One of the attitudes that we have to learn is how to adapt the important elements of our lives to the local conditions.

All the fraternities of the Little Brothers of the Gospel however present these elements:

- Celebration of the Eucharist and recitation of the divine Office.
- An hour of prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Professional, apostolic and social activities.
- Time together among brothers: meals, sharing, relaxation, etc...
- Visits and sharing with people.

## ROOTED IN THE IMITATION OF JESUS

Jesus lived in Nazareth for 30 years. During this time no one suspected that he was in any way different from the other people of the village. He was known as "the carpenter, the son of Mary". He had a regular job as a carpenter and was a member of a family and a neighbour to others. As a Jew he observed the law of Moses, so he was like everyone else and lived the same sort of life as the majority of the people of his day.

As Son of God he chooses to live this way of life. He was like us "in everything but sin", and showed us how much God loves us.

By becoming an ordinary person God revealed to us his special love for those who are not considered important in the eyes of the world.

This imitation of Jesus leads us, Little Brothers of the Gospel.

- **To choose a simple way of life:** We share the living and working conditions of ordinary people, with a preference for those who are poor and do not know Christ.

- **To make the Eucharist the centre of our lives:** We are united with all those dear to us through the offering of Jesus to the Father in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. The daily hour of adoration that we make is also seen in the same way.



- **To take Periods of prayer and retreats:** These are the special times of sharing with the Lord. There can be no deep friendship without a deep sharing.

- **To live a strong community life:** It is impossible to live this ideal by our own efforts and we will never be able to say that we can't go no further. We have to ask the help of the Holy Spirit who wants to transform our minds and our hearts, that he may come to our help

through the brothers who share the same call. Therefore fraternal life is so important to us.

## TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS

The love for God and for our neighbours pushes us strongly to become evangelisers.

### We spread the Good News of Jesus:



- **Through our everyday lives:** The life that Jesus led in Nazareth was an ordinary one, a life of labour and suffering, of joys and difficulties. He accepted all this out of love for us. Following Jesus of Nazareth in this way, we are united with him in his work of redemption... And with him, we are invited to live and to spread his Good News.

- **Through apostolic activities:** The Church sends us out to preach the Gospel. So we try, as far as we are able, to promote and collaborate in the formation of the community of the followers of Jesus. This may lead us to be involved in biblical study groups, "small Christian communities", ongoing formation of Christian leaders, catechesis, etc. In some places we are responsible of small parishes.

Our vocation to preach the Gospel is rooted in sharing the life of those to whom we are sent. This means friendship with people and spending time with them; it means simplicity of life and not

seeking to an important role for ourselves.

- **Through our prayer life:** In prayer we find the true source of love for all people. Here we discover the love of the Father for everyone. Our lives are touched by the Word of the Father and we are given strength by the Holy Spirit. So we enter more deeply into the life of the Trinity, and it is this life that we want to share with the people among whom we live. In prayer we come before the Lord bringing with us all the joy and the suffering, the needs and the hopes of our people.

- **Through community life:** It is the love of Jesus that unites us and our unity is a proclamation of the Good News of Jesus.





These are the four elements of our mission of evangelisation of Little Brothers of the Gospel; together they form the silent witness of our lives in community, consecrated to the Lord.

**Some of the brothers are ordained**, but this depends on the needs of the people and on the situation of the local fraternity, as well as on the discernment of the personal vocation of each brother. For us the priesthood given no special position and all the brothers, whether ordained or not, are involved in the same mission of proclaiming the Good News.

For this reason all the brothers are doing biblical and theological studies. So ordination for a Little Brother of the Gospel does not depend on any higher education or different studies

but on a vocation given by the Lord.

## **When and How the Little Brothers of the Gospel started ?**

Our vocation springs out of the message and the example of life of a priest called Charles de Foucauld who was living in Algeria in the middle of the last century.

Charles de Foucauld died on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1916.

In 1933, several years after the death of Charles de Foucauld, a French priest called Rene Voillaume accompanied by a few brothers went to the desert to follow his footsteps. This was the start of the Congregation of the Little Brothers of Jesus, and several years later, in 1956, the Little brothers of the Gospel.



## **HOW TO JOIN THE LITTLE BROTHERS OF THE GOSPEL**

The first to do is to make contact with the nearest fraternity of the Little Brothers of the gospel. It would be good to write a letter introducing yourself, your work experience, your studies, etc... and also to write why you think God is calling you to the Fraternity. Generally our candidates are young men at least 20 years old. They must have an average education (Tanzania: Form VI or Form IV with a complementary training e.g. TTC, Technical studies etc., Kenya: Form IV and possibly a complementary training.) However each person is unique and it is good to get in contact with us if you are interested.

On their part, the brothers will ask you first to visit a fraternity. This is because nothing can replace a personal contact for discovering whether your ideas correspond to the reality.

If you seem to be called to religious life in the Fraternity, you will be invited to spend a year or two sharing in the life of the brothers. This period is called Postulancy.

After this, you will spend up to two years in a fraternity of formation for a stage called Noviciate. It is a time of initiation into the religious life of the Fraternity, and there will also

be some instructions about the religious vocation of the brothers. It is a time for deepening your own vocation and for discovering the vocation of the Little Brothers of the Gospel. At the end of this time, there are the first vows. These are the usual vows of religious life, recognised by the Church, of poverty, chastity and obedience. Then you will spend two or three years in an ordinary fraternity.

This is followed by studies of theology. The aim of these years is to give a better understanding of Who this God is to whom we wish to give our lives, and what the plan for the salvation of mankind holds.

Then comes the time of the final vows, when the studies are over, and at least six years after the temporary vows.

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