

Spiritual Reflection - April 2014

It is for freedom that Christ set us free

(Gal 5:1)

Since the sixties, the Church in Brazil has been holding the "Campanha da Fraternidade", (Fraternity Campaign) an ecclesial and social initiative that calls everyone to participate in Christ's life present in our brothers and sisters who are suffering. As I was reflecting on St. Paul's words to the Galatians, the connection with the congregational commitment of working against human trafficking as a Franciscan witness for evangelization came spontaneously to my mind.

Since her youth, Mother Frances tried to respond to Christ's call with inner freedom and to constantly grow this attitude in all the choices she made in her personal and communal life. When she interpreted her experience regarding the vision of two mountains she said: "*Prayer and work must go hand in hand and like twin sisters, strive to remedy the spiritual and social misery of mankind ...*" (**Mary Frances of the Cross Amalia Streitl, Letters to Father John Francis Jordan 1883-1885, 39[86], 8**). She also developed a plan of life for herself and the sisters who would be entrusted to her.

Throughout her life, in her labors, travels, beginning of new ministries in unknown countries, Mother Frances always sought the good and the freedom for all, especially for those who had been trapped by moral slavery and misery. She saw unmet needs in all the places where she went. Being aware of the many challenges, she tried to respond to them with generosity, regardless of fatigue and the lack of economic means. She was aware that "*Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society.*" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 187). Mother Frances made every effort to put this into practice through prayer, actions, education, and raising awareness of it to the members of her new community. She wrote: "*May the poor always enjoy the friendship of our Sisters; and if they cannot always be helped as their situation requires, oh, then, may a friendly glance, a sympathetic expression on the part of the Sisters help them to forget their hard lot for a few moments.*" (Norms 1883. 109)

May we too, be guided by Mother Frances' example; her desire for inner freedom, her constant search for God's will and genuine love of neighbor. This is the way for us to participate in the mission of Jesus in bringing fuller life to others and revealing God's love for all, especially the poor. Let us hear and respond to Pope Francis' strong words regarding the victims of various kinds of human trafficking: "*Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved?*" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 211).

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