

Final message – Bonn 2012

Approximately 60 delegates assembled in Bonn, Germany (August 3-13th 2012) for the 9th International Assembly of the Lay Fraternity Charles de Foucauld. The Fraternity is found in 45 countries from 5 continents. Thirty countries were represented at the Assembly.

Through moments of prayer, celebration, reports and sharing of life, the Assembly evaluated the condition of the Fraternities from around the world in order to reach conclusions on its current state.

1. The reports permitted a better understanding of the social contexts in which Fraternities live.
2. The current global crisis which the world and Fraternities are experiencing has severely increased the gap between the rich and the poor in our society. This situation has become a source of physical and economic hardship in our society, thus contributing to a climate of social instability and insecurity.
3. It is from this background that the Fraternities, despite their strengths and limitations, would like to pursue the prophetic call of Brother Charles' message.
4. The contributions and deliberations of the delegates yielded several compelling revelations such as:
 - a. The birth of new Fraternities and the aging of established ones.
 - b. The concern to deepen the charisma and message of Brother Charles and to develop fraternal relations.
 - c. An important interrogation: does our experience of the message of Brother Charles meet the desires, aspirations and needs of the people of our times?
 - d. The ethical crisis and neoliberalism reinforce each other.
5. Our theme for the International Assembly, 'Daring to Encounter' emerged from our daily lives: joyful encounters, failed encounters, and missed encounters. This theme was first and foremost the fruit of reflexion of all the Fraternities during the past two years. The contributions of other resource individuals, witnesses and visits to various social projects added enrichment to the theme.
6. The biblical perspective of our reflexion enabled us to rediscover, on one hand, the experience of an oppressed people, and on the other, how to convert a relationship based on domination to one based on reciprocity.

7. The various encounters of Brother Charles de Foucauld were marked by the culture of his times, and reveal the different aspects of his character. His abundant correspondence testifies to the fact that his relations were marked by faithfulness, kindness and love of God and humanity.
8. A description of the state of ecumenism in Germany indicated a possible road to travel in order to live in "unity despite fraternal differences". On the other hand the testimony of a working priest brought to light that his daily encounters were characterized by his capacity to live in solidarity with others. This example of encounter is the very essence of that proposed by our spirituality. Lastly, visits to a local parish and mosque were the illustration of the desire to create a social link through different activities.
9. Aspiring to live the love and gentleness of God for all humanity, as Brother Charles did, the continents would like to take up the following challenges:
 - a. To give ourselves the time and means to revisit and live our spirituality. As laity in the world, we wish to confront it with the signs and events of our times.
 - b. To deepen the relations between Fraternities of each country within each continent, and respond to the aspirations of today's youth.
 - c. To surpass our fears and doubts in the face of extremism and foster relations based on mutual reciprocity, respect and solidarity.
 - d. The use of modern communication means (Facebook, Twitter etc) will help us achieve these goals.

We thank the German Fraternities for their hospitality during this Assembly.