

Summary

Father Jerome's Presentation Preparation

The meeting began with technical difficulties as participants joined, with Ellen noting some issues with screen sharing and audio. The group welcomed Father Jerome, who was the main speaker for the evening, and discussed the format of his presentation. Ellen made some announcements, including the distribution of the Fall Communio and the need for ministers to update the NAFRA database with member preferences for receiving communications. She also mentioned that the year-end letter would be sent out on November 29th, with reports due on January 25th. The conversation ended with a prayer led by Father Bob and a reminder for participants to mute their microphones to avoid background noise.

Social Justice in Franciscan Life

Jerome delivered a presentation on the importance of social justice in Franciscan life, emphasizing that social justice is an inherent part of living the gospel and cannot be dismissed as too political. He explained that even within the secular Franciscan order, there are political dimensions, including the distribution of resources and the promotion of values. Jerome highlighted the need for connection and cooperation in politics, citing the U.S. Constitution's Third Amendment to underscore the importance of religious freedom and the right to assemble and petition the government. He concluded by discussing Pope Leo's Apostolic Exhortation on St. Francis, reinforcing the idea that Franciscans should engage with the world through a gospel-colored lens.

St. Francis's Legacy of Love

Jerome discussed the life and legacy of St. Francis, emphasizing his experience with poverty, imprisonment, and exclusion, particularly through his contact with lepers. He highlighted the importance of prayer as attention to God and neighbor, and the need for secular Franciscans to engage in social justice while balancing it with spiritual devotion. Jerome also addressed the significance of dialogue in resolving disagreements, encouraging trust in the divine seed within everyone and the transforming power of love and pardon.

Dialogue and Documentation in Disputes

Father Jerome discussed the importance of dialogue and documentation in addressing disputes, emphasizing the need to record non-responses or negative reactions for future

reference. He addressed the concept of "too political" comments, explaining that such statements might indicate a desire to avoid certain topics rather than an inherent issue with political discussion. Jerome encouraged regional fraternities to consider how they respond to criticism and to effectively explain how activities align with their gospel life. He concluded by inviting participants to share their thoughts on living the Franciscan charism and making the gospel visible in the world.

Strategies for Effective Dialogue

The meeting focused on strategies for effective dialogue and finding common ground, with Mary emphasizing the importance of starting discussions from shared values, such as care for creation. Jerome suggested that JPIC coordinators adopt a similar approach by focusing on common interests and exploring how different perspectives can benefit all parties involved. David raised a question about engaging in dialogue with someone who prioritizes their family over broader concerns, to which Jerome responded by suggesting identifying shared benefits and exploring how addressing broader concerns could also benefit the individual.

Balancing Social Justice and Prayer

The group discussed concerns about the perceived political nature of their meetings, particularly at the recent ARG. Margi emphasized the importance of balancing social justice topics with prayer, specifically the Liturgy of the Hours, which she noted as a distinctive feature of secular Franciscan meetings. Laura, who missed the ARG, requested more information about the political concerns raised in the evaluations, which Ellen explained were vague but shared in the Excel spreadsheet. The discussion aimed to encourage open dialogue and address any underlying issues in their approach to social justice and prayer.

Respectful Dialogue in Franciscan Fraternity

The meeting focused on discussing a previous ARG event where a speaker presented opinions as facts, which caused discomfort among attendees. Father Jerome advised addressing such situations by challenging the speaker respectfully and encouraging open discussions. Jenny shared her experience with prayer's role in Franciscan vocation and emphasized the importance of providing a safe space for dialogue within the fraternity. The discussion highlighted the need for respectful communication and understanding among fraternity members, with a focus on listening to and valuing each other's perspectives.

Social Justice and Gospel Values

The meeting focused on discussing social justice and comfort levels within the fraternity context. Father Jerome emphasized the importance of balancing comfort and discomfort, while also highlighting the need to engage with those on the margins. Allison Salerno spoke about the importance of prayer and action in social justice work. Laura Clary raised questions about immigration and how to navigate complex issues as a Christian. The group discussed the need to be prudent and have a preferential option for the poor, while also addressing social hierarchies. The conversation ended with a reflection on the need for spiritual maturity and reliance on each other in promoting the gospel values.