

# "Wasting time" with God and with our brothers and sisters

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Dear brothers and sisters:

On 26 November 2022, the superior generals gathered in Rome for the last day of their annual assembly. On this day there was time to meet and dialogue with Pope Francis. Some two hours were spent discussing some of the questions and concerns shared by those of us who share in the exercise of authority.

One question was about the future of religious life. I was struck by Pope Francis' insistence that in order to move towards the future of religious life, it is necessary to dedicate time to prayer and to the brothers: "Know how to spend time in prayer and with the brothers". As I listened to him, I thought about how much time I "waste" with God and with my brothers and sisters. I confess that I don't really like to waste time or to make others waste time or to be made to waste time. But I do like the idea of "wasting" time in service of friendship, in shared generosity, in the time that gets us ready for the unforeseeable and unplanned. Furthermore, "wasting" time is part of that paradoxical way of preparing to receive the life of Jesus, which involves losing our life for Him and for His Gospel. It is not a question of falling into the logic of the losers. It is rather a matter of assuming an art of living whereby in order to receive one must lose, in order to be more one must let go and let be.

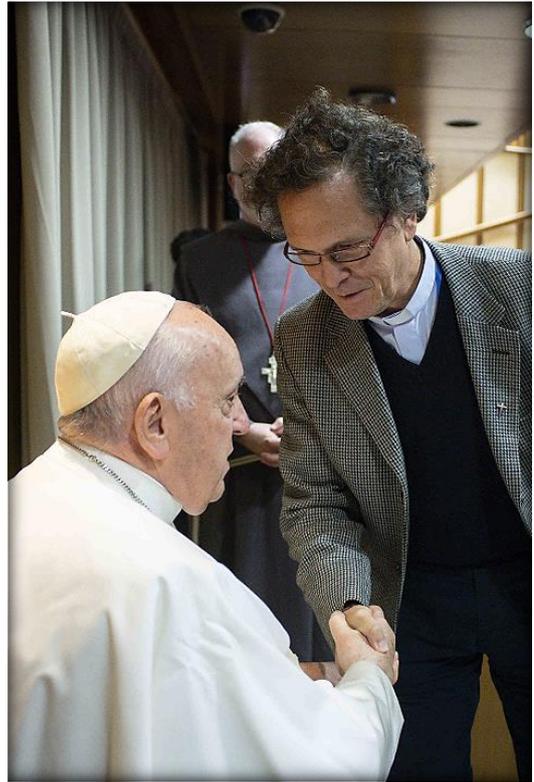
## **What if we spent more time with God?**

I know that our schedules are often overloaded. We are available to people when they need us. And I am glad. However, I wonder what would happen to us if we spent more time with God: savouring his word, unhurriedly celebrating the liturgy and the daily Eucharist, or simply being alone with Him in our chapels? This is about being present and available for an encounter so that when the Lord comes and knocks at our door, we can let him in simply to be with us. In this "lost" time we allow our friendship with the Lord to grow and be renewed. Perhaps He Himself will surprise us again as we come to understand that He knows very well what is going on in us, that He rejoices in our joys and fights in our battles. He even knows our inconsistencies and fears and is counting on them. Spending time with Him

would lead to the way we speak and act to increasingly resemble the way Jesus speaks and acts with us.

### What if we spent more time with our brothers and sisters?

In our communities we have timetables for daily prayer and table fellowship and it is good for us to be faithful to those moments. What would happen if we understood and lived these meetings as an opportunity to gift ourselves to each other? When we go to a friend's house we often think about what kind of gift we can bring. Likewise, when I am present with my brothers at these times of encounter, I could ask myself what is it that I want to give to my brothers and sisters: an encounter, the fruits of something that I am reading, news from my family, some concern for the Church or the Congregation, etc? Just as we can receive with openness a question that a brother may ask us about ourselves or about something in our lives, so we can share what is ours with simplicity and gratitude.



"To give well is an art and the ultimate and most refined mastery of goodness" said Zarathustra after having met St. Francis of Assisi. Spending time with God and with our brothers and sisters is an art in giving and receiving, of being present. In this time of Advent, let us give well that precious gift of "wasting" more time with God and with our brothers and sisters.

Faternally,

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*Superior General*