

## LIVING FRATERNITY

**Theme: In the Christmas night where shines the light of the birth of Jesus ...**

In this month of December 2022, we propose for your reflection Pope Francis' homily at Midnight mass on December 24<sup>th</sup> 2015, on the coming of Christ. We hope that homily will bring you happy memories to share during your meeting.

**Recall:** Our monthly meeting should favour *an encounter with Christ*. A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and a good preparation promotes communal experience.

### DECEMBER 2022 MONTHLY MEETING

#### Opening of the meeting

The members can offer suggestions for a song. After the chosen song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

#### Introduction

Tonight "a great light" shines forth (Is 9:1); the light of Jesus' birth shines all about us. How true and timely are the words of the prophet Isaiah which we have just heard: "You have brought abundant joy and great rejoicing" (9:2)! Our heart was already joyful in awaiting this moment; now that joy abounds and overflows, for the promise has been at last fulfilled.

Joy and gladness are a sure sign that the message contained in the mystery of this night is truly from God. There is no room for doubt; let us leave that to the skeptics who, by looking to reason alone, never find the truth. There is no room for the indifference which reigns in the hearts of those unable to love for fear of losing something. All sadness has been banished, for the Child Jesus brings true comfort to every heart.

#### Reflection and sharing

Take a moment. So that each member may express their thoughts on the content of the preceding. Afterward, continue the reading.

Today, the Son of God is born, and everything changes. The Saviour of the world comes to partake of our human nature; no longer are we alone and forsaken. The Virgin offers us her Son as the beginning of a new life. The true light has come to illumine our lives so often beset by the darkness of sin. Today we once more discover who we are! Tonight we have been shown the way to reach the journey's end.

Now must we put away all fear and dread, for the light shows us the path to Bethlehem. We must not be laggards; we are not permitted to stand idle. We must set out to see our Saviour lying in a manger. This is the reason for our joy and gladness: this Child has been “born to us”; he was “given to us”, as Isaiah proclaims (cf. 9:5). The people who for two thousand years has traversed all the pathways of the world in order to allow every man and woman to share in this joy is now given the mission of making known “the Prince of peace” and becoming his effective servant in the midst of the nations.

### **Reflection and sharing**

Take a moment and share your thoughts on the previous text. Afterwards, continue the reading.

So when we hear tell of the birth of Christ, let us be silent and let the Child speak. Let us take his words to heart in rapt contemplation of his face. If we take him in our arms and let ourselves be embraced by him, he will bring us unending peace of heart. This Child teaches us what is truly essential in our lives. He was born into the poverty of this world; there was no room in the inn for him and his family. He found shelter and support in a stable and was laid in a manger for animals.

And yet, from this nothingness, the light of God’s glory shines forth. From now on, the way of authentic liberation and perennial redemption is open to every man and woman who is simple of heart. This Child, whose face radiates the goodness, mercy and love of God the Father, trains us, his disciples, as Saint Paul says, “to reject godless ways” and the richness of the world, in order to live “temperately, justly and devoutly” (Tit 2:12).

### **Reflection and sharing**

In the text of the preceding paragraph, was there a word or sentence that touched you particularly? If yes, share them in all simplicity..

In a society so often intoxicated by consumerism and hedonism, wealth and extravagance, appearances and narcissism, this Child calls us to act soberly, in other words, in a way that is simple, balanced, consistent, capable of seeing and doing what is essential. In a world which all often is merciless to the sinner and lenient to the sin, we need to cultivate a strong sense of justice, to discern and to do God’s will. Amid a culture of indifference which not infrequently turns ruthless, our style of life should instead be devout, filled with empathy, compassion and mercy, drawn daily from the wellspring of prayer.

### **Reflection and sharing**

In the previous paragraph, is there a passage that touched to you in particular, a message that speaks especially to you? Share your thoughts.

### **A particular wish from Pope Francis**

Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, may we too, with eyes full of amazement and wonder, gaze upon the Child Jesus, the Son of God. And in his presence may our hearts burst forth in prayer:  
“Show us, Lord, your mercy, and grant us your salvation” (Ps 85:8)

## **Biblical Reflection:**

Read the texts of Sunday or of the preceding or following day, or the Gospel according to Luke 2, 1-30 which is the story of the birth of Jesus.

- \* Take a moment of reflection; then underline words or inspiring phrases ...
- \* Share your thoughts on the text of the gospel of choice ...

## **Links between the proposed text, the Rule and the General Constitutions**

We are proposing to look at article 11, of our Rule, Chapter 11 – the Way of Life and Apostolic Activity and the articles 15.1 and 15,3 of the General Constitutions that have links to the text presented.

### **Rule – Article 11**

Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Thus, in the spirit of "the Beatitudes", and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

## **General Constitutions**

### **Article 15.1**

Secular Franciscans are committed to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and, in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth.

### **Article 15.3**

Secular Franciscans should commit themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values, and which permit the exploitation of the human person.

## **Life- Objective**

During the month of December, let us make a particular effort to live the true meaning of this holiday ... If we can bring a generous contribution to a charitable organization to help families whose financial means are limited or simply making a friendly visit to someone who does have family close.

## **Events and Information from the Church and the Order**

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

## **End of the meeting:** (song or prayer chosen by the fraternity)

Suggestion: a song for Advent time or for Christmas

## **At Home**

Read this excerpt **The Nativity that he prepared for Christmas Day** (from 1 Celano 84)

Also we must recall and honor with a reverent memory what he did, in the third year before the day of glorious death, in the fortified village that is called Greccio the day of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was in this country a man named John, of good reputation, but of even better life. The blessed Francis cherished him in a particular way because, although in his country he was noble and honorable to the highest point, he had tread upon the nobility of the flesh to follow the nobility of the spirit.

The blessed Francis, as he often did, had him come to him about fifteen days before the nativity of the Lord and said to him: « If you wish to celebrate the present birth of the Lord at Greccio, hurry and come in advance and do what I tell you, prepare it with care. Because I want to recall the memory of this child who was born in Bethlehem and observe in detail, as much as possible through my mortal eyes, the annoyances in the needs of the child, as he lay in a crib and how, next to an ox and a donkey, he was laid on the hay. » Hearing this, the good and loyal man ran quickly and prepared in this place everything that the saint had said ...

At last the saint of God came and, finding everything prepared, he saw and was filled with joy. In fact, a crib was prepared, hay was brought, an ox and a donkey were brought in. There simplicity was honoured, poverty exalted, humility praised and this made of the village of Greccio to become a new Bethlehem.

*Please accept our wishes for a Happy and Peaceful Christmas as well as a New Year filled with peace and joy for all our brothers and sisters.*