

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Lent ... the time to rediscover the direction of life ...

In this month of March 2025, we present for your reflection the text from Pope Francis' y homily presented during Ash Wednesday service on March 6th 2019 at the Basilica of Santa Sabina.

Good reflection and sharing.

Recall: Our monthly meeting should favour an encounter with Christ. A spirit of prayer will ensure a meeting that will promote a good experience for all the members

MARCH 2025 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting

Following the hymn, a prayer from the Ritual or another, chosen by the fraternity, starts the meeting.

Introduction

“Blow the trumpet [...] sanctify a fast” (Joel 2:15), says the prophet. Lent opens with a piercing sound, that of a trumpet that does not please the ears but instead proclaims a fast. It is a loud sound that seeks to slow down our life, which is so fast paced, yet often directionless. It is a summons to stop – a “halt!” –, to focus on what is essential, to fast from the unnecessary things that distract us. It is a wake-up call for the soul

A message for transmission

This wake-up call is accompanied by the message that the Lord proclaims through the lips of the prophet, a short and heartfelt message: “Return to me” (v 12). To return. If we have to return, it means that we have wandered off. *Lent is the time to rediscover the direction of life.* Because in life's journey, as in every journey, what really matters is not to lose sight of the goal. If what interests us as we travel, however, is looking at the scenery or stopping to eat, we will not get far.

We should ask ourselves: On the journey of life, do I seek the way forward? Or am I satisfied with living in the moment and thinking only of feeling good, solving some problems and having fun? What is the path? Is it the search for health, which many today say comes first but which eventually passes? Could it be possessions and wellbeing? But we are not in the world for this. Return to me, says the Lord. To me. The Lord is the goal of our journey in this world. The direction must lead to him

Reflection and sharing:

After the reading of these two paragraphs, share what you have retained of the questions presented in the second paragraph. Take the time to allow a good sharing.

Continue reading

Today we have been offered a sign that will help us find our direction: the ashes on the head. It is a sign that causes us to consider what occupies our mind. Our thoughts often focus on transient things, which come and go. The small mark of ash, which we will receive, is a subtle yet real reminder that of the many things occupying our thoughts, that we chase after and worry about every day, nothing will remain. No matter how hard we work, we will take no wealth with us from this life. Earthly realities fade away like dust in the wind. Possessions are temporary, power passes, success wanes. The culture of appearance prevalent today, which persuades us to live for passing things, is a great deception. It is like a blaze: once ended, only ash remains.

Lent is the time to free ourselves from the illusion of chasing after dust. Lent is for rediscovering that we are created for the inextinguishable flame, not for ashes that immediately disappear; for God, not for the world; for the eternity of heaven, not for earthly deceit; for the freedom of the children of God, not for slavery to things.

We should ask ourselves today: Where do I stand? Do I live for fire or for ash?

Reflection and sharing:

After the reading of these paragraphs, share what you particularly retained.. Take the time to allow the members to share their thoughts.

Continue reading

On this Lenten journey, back to what is essential, the Gospel proposes three steps which the Lord invites us to undertake without hypocrisy and pretence: almsgiving, prayer, fasting. What are they for? Almsgiving, prayer and fasting bring us back to the three realities that do not fade away. Prayer reunites us to God; charity, to our neighbour; fasting, to ourselves. God, my neighbour, my life: these are the realities that do not fade away and in which we must invest.

Lent, therefore, invites us to focus, first on the Almighty, in prayer, which frees us from that horizontal and mundane life where we find time for self but forget God. It then invites us to focus on others, with the charity that frees us from the vanity of acquiring and of thinking that things are only good if they are good for me. Finally, Lent invites us to look inside our heart, with fasting, which frees us from attachment to things and from the worldliness that numbs the heart. Prayer, charity, fasting: three investments for a treasure that endures.

Reflection and sharing:

Share your thoughts on the content of the se paragraph.

Take time to allow for a good sharing.

Continue the reading

Jesus said: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt 6:21). Our heart always points in some direction: it is like a compass seeking its bearings. We can also compare it to a magnet: it needs to attach itself to something. But if it only attaches itself to earthly things, sooner or later it becomes a slave to them: things to be used become things we serve. Outward appearance, money, a career or hobby: if we live for them, they will become idols that enslave us, sirens that charm us and then cast us adrift.

Whereas if our heart is attached to what does not pass away, we rediscover ourselves and are set free. Lent is the time of grace that liberates the heart from vanity. It is a time of healing from addictions that seduce us. It is a time to fix our gaze on what abides.

Reflection and sharing:

Share your thoughts on the content of these paragraphs. What have you especially retained?
Take time to have a good sharing.

Continue the reading

Where can we fix our gaze, then, throughout this Lenten journey? It is simple: upon the Crucified one. Jesus on the cross is life’s compass, which directs us to heaven. The poverty of the wood, the silence of the Lord, his loving self-emptying show us the necessity of a simpler life, free from anxiety about things. From the cross, Jesus teaches us the great courage involved in renunciation. We will never move forward if we are heavily weighed down. We need to free ourselves from the clutches of consumerism and the snares of selfishness, from always wanting more, from never being satisfied, and from a heart closed to the needs of the poor.

Jesus on the wood of the cross burns with love, and calls us to a life that is passionate for him, which is not lost amid the ashes of the world; to a life that burns with charity and is not extinguished in mediocrity. Is it difficult to live as he asks? Yes, it is difficult, but it leads us to our goal. Lent shows us this. It begins with the ashes but eventually leads us to the fire of Easter night; to the discovery that, in the tomb, the body of Jesus does not turn to ashes, but rises gloriously. This is true also for us, who are dust. If we, with our weaknesses, return to the Lord, if we take the path of love, then we will embrace the life that never ends. And surely, we will be full of joy

Reflection:

Share your ideas on the content of this last paragraph.
Take time to allow for a good sharing.

Links with the Rule and the Constitutions

Rule Article 6

They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words. Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.

General Constitutions Article 17.1

Called to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made "witnesses and instruments of her mission", secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate is personal witness in the environment in which they live and service for building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.

Biblical Reflection and Sharing:

Chose among the texts for Lent or from the day preceding the meeting.
Share your thoughts on this Gospel using the following questions:

- * Take a moment of reflection; underline the words or inspiring phrases ...
- *- Share your thoughts on the Gospel text chosen ...

Life Objective

In this month of March , make your monthly meeting as a place of preparation for living the time of Lent as a journey toward Easter ...

Events et Information from the Church and from the Order

Remind everyone of their meeting and local and regional activities.

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

At home

Read a text propose in the New Testament, specially those recalling the life and mission of the Christ.