

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Mary The servant of the Lord ...

In the month of May 2026, after searching former texts, we offer a reflection on a homily by Pope Francis which he gave during a Marian mass held on the occasion of the Year of Faith, in Saint-Peter's Square, in October 13th, 2013.

Good reflection and Sharing

Reminder: May our fraternal meeting be a moment of *privileged encounter with Jesus* who walks among us.

MAY 2026 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting

After the song proposed or chosen by the members of the fraternity, a prayer according to the Ritual or any other, the meeting begins.

Introduction

In the Psalm, we recited: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wonders" (*Ps 97: 1*). Today we are before one of the wonders of the Lord: Mary! A humble and weak creature like us, chosen to be Mother of God, Mother of her Creator.

By looking at Mary precisely, in the light of the readings we have listened to, we would like to reflect with you on three realities: The first, *God surprises us*; the second, *God asks us for fidelity*; the third, *God is our strength*.

Beggin the reading

The first: *God surprises us.*

The episode of Naaman, head of the army of the king of Aram, is singular: to cure leprosy, he addresses the prophet of God, Elisha, who does not perform magic rites, nor asks him extraordinary things, but to have only confidence in God and to plunge into the water of the river; not, however, in the water of the great rivers of Damascus, but of the little river Jordan. It's a request that leaves Naaman puzzled, and even surprised: what God can be the one who asks for something so simple?

He wants to go back, but then he takes the step, he plunges into the Jordan, and he heals immediately (see *2 R 5, 1-14*). Behold, God surprises us; he is really in poverty, in weakness, in

manifest humility and gives us his love which saves us, heals us and gives us strength. He only asks us to follow His word and trust Him.

This is the experience of the Virgin Mary: before the announcement of the Angel, she does not hide her astonishment. It is stupid to see that, to become a man, God really chose her, she, a simple girl from Nazareth, who does not live in the palaces of power and wealth, who has not accomplished exploits, but which is open to God, knows how to trust Him, even if she does not understand everything: "*Behold the servant of the Lord; let everything happen to me according to your word*" (Luke 1:38). That's his answer. God always surprises us, he breaks our schemes, upsets our plans, and tells us: Trust me, do not be afraid, let yourself be surprised, come out of yourself and follow me!

Reflection and Sharing

Today, let us all ask ourselves if we are afraid of what God might ask.

- Do I let myself be surprised by God, as Marie did, or do I lock myself into my security, material security, intellectual security, ideological security, security of my projects?
- Do I really let God enter my life? How do I answer him?

Take the time to answer the questions in the preceding paragraph. When the members have finished sharing their thoughts, go on to the next paragraph.

The second, *God asks us for fidelity*

In the passage of Saint Paul that we listened to, the Apostle addresses his disciple Timothy telling him to remember Jesus Christ, if we persevere with him, with him also we will reign (2 *Tm* 2, 8-13).

Here is the second point: always remembering Christ, the memory of Jesus Christ, and this is persevering in faith: *God* surprises us with his love, but *he asks for fidelity in following him*. We can become "non-faithful", but **he** cannot, he is "the faithful" and he asks us the same fidelity. Think of all those times when we were enthusiastic about something, about an initiative, about a commitment, but then, faced with the first problems, we threw in the towel. And unfortunately, this also happens in fundamental choices. The difficulty of being constant, of being faithful to the decisions made to the commitments made. It is often easy to say "yes", but then, we cannot repeat this "yes" every day. We cannot be faithful.

Mary said her "yes" to God, a "yes" that upset her humble existence of Nazareth, but that "yes" was not the only one, on the contrary it was only the first of many "yes" Pronounced in his heart in his happy moments, as also in the moments of pain, many "yes" which reach their summit in the one said at the foot of the Cross. Today, there are many mothers

here; think how far Mary's fidelity to God has come: to see her only Son on the Cross. The faithful woman, standing, destroyed inside, but faithful and strong.

Reflection and Sharing

After the reading of the preceding texts, share your thoughts on their content.

* Does the text from the preceding paragraphs remind you of a particular event?

Take time for a good sharing.

Continue reading

The last point: *God is our strength*

The last point: *God is our strength*. I think of the ten lepers of the Gospel healed by Jesus: they go to meet him, they stop at a distance and they shout: "Jesus, master, have mercy on us! » (Luke 17, 13). They are sick, they need to be loved; to have strength and they are looking for someone to heal them. And Jesus responds by freeing them all from their sickness. It is impressive, however, to see one person come back to praise God, loudly, and thank him. Jesus himself notices it: ten cried out for healing and only one came back to shout aloud his thanks to God and acknowledge that He is our strength. To know how to thank, how to praise for what the Lord does for us.

Let's look at Mary: after the Annunciation, the first thing she does is a gesture of charity towards her old relative Elizabeth; and the first words which she utters are: "My soul exalts the Lord," that is to say, a song of praise and thanksgiving to God, not only for what he did in it, but also for his action in the whole history of salvation.

Everything is given by him. If we can understand that everything is a gift from God, what happiness in our heart! Everything is given by him. He is our strength! Saying thank you is so easy, yet so difficult! How many times do we say thank you as a family?

It is one of the keywords of life in common. "You allow", "excuse me", "thank you": if in a family we say these three words, the family progresses. "You allow," "excuse me," "thank you." How many times do we say "thank you" as a family? How many times do we say thank you to the one who helps us, is close to us, accompanies us in life? Often, we take everything for granted! And that also happens with God. It's easy to go to the Lord and ask for something but go thank him ... ?

Reflection and Sharing:

What draws your attention in the preceding paragraph?

Share your reflections,

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

In preparing this document, we found that Article 9 of the Rule and Article 16.1 of the General Constitutions are links.

Rule – Article 9

The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

General Constitutions – Article 16.1

Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocation; we, like Francis, see all the gospel virtues realised in her.

The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the Most Holy Virgin, imitation, prayer, and childlike surrender. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.

Biblical reflection and sharing

Read the Gospel from the Sunday before or the Gospel of the day

Share our thoughts on this gospel with the following suggestions:

- Take a moment to reflect; underline inspiring words or expressions...
- Share your thoughts on the chosen Gospel text...

Life-Objective

During the month of May, pray the Virgin Mary with a devotion like our patron saint Francis of Assisi ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Ordre

Remember our meetings and local activities.

Pray for the success of our Regional and Local Fraternity meetings.

End of the fraternal meeting

(a prayer or a song chosen by the fraternity)