

## LIVING FRATERNITY

### Theme: The desert ... are we living it? ...

In this month of April, we are proposing the following gospel and a commentary given by our Pope Francis (Pope Francis, *Angelus*, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

*Good reflection and good sharing.*

**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. At the meeting, having a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the Rule and General Constitutions, will provide clarity and depth for our edification and experience.

## APRIL 2020 MONTHLY MEETING

**Opening prayer or song** (according to the Ritual or a song chosen by the fraternity)

### Introduction

Firstly, take the time to read the gospel attentively and then meditate on a word or a phrase.

### Gospel (Mt 4, 1-11) Jesus is tested in the wilderness

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, *“If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”*

But he answered, *“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”*

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, *“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written: ‘‘He will give his angels charge of you on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, ‘‘Again it is written: ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’’’*

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, *“All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”* Then Jesus said to him, *“ Begone, Satan! for it is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’”* Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

### Moment of reflection

In this time of retreat and isolation, how can I be more absorbed in the Spirit of Christ who withdrew to the desert. We maybe more tempted to be discouraged, to doubt in the presence of

God in this world and in our lives. Let us unite with Jesus who is preparing for his mission to evangelize and save the world.

### **Time for sharing**

Call up a brother or sister from our fraternity to exchange and encourage him/her if it is the case. Are we not all called to the desert to more intensely meet the Master and conform ourselves to his will that allows this time of isolation and reflection?

### **Commentary of the preceding gospel**

The First Sunday of Lent presents Christ as the Spirit leads him into the desert to be tempted by the devil. The natural surroundings of the desert, inhospitable as they are, and therefore in opposition to Eden, speak very loudly. Certain passages in the Holy Scriptures, give the impression that the Jews believed in some sort of evil spirit of the desert that they called Azazel (cf. Leviticus 16, 10 and Tobit 8, 3). Therefore Jesus was pushed into the domain of the tempter. Also, the desert was a land of ordeal for the chosen people. The Lord goes there to become victorious where Israel had succumbed.

Jesus fasts during “forty days and forty nights”. This fact is what Lent commemorates. This act of the Lord’s penance is loaded with symbols : the punishment of the flood had lasted forty days and forty nights (cf. Genesis 7,4); Moses spent forty days and forty nights, without eating or drinking, in the cloud of the Sinai, praying God for his people (cf. Deuteronomy 9,25), before He gave him the Law (cf. Exodus 24,18); and Elijah also spent forty days and forty nights without drinking or eating, walking toward Mount Horeb to meet the Lord (1Kings 19,8); and Israel remained during 40 years in the desert, in many hardships and temptations, in punishment for the 40 days it had spied out the land without counting on God (Numbers 14,34).

After fasting, Jesus is hungry, apparently without the divine help and material strength. The tempter wants Jesus to fall into overindulgence, one way or another: into avarice or idolatry where he makes humans fall that use God or reject him in order to exalt themselves.

The devil quotes, by diverting the meaning of the Scriptures, that Jesus always follows to do the will of his Father. If you are the son of God, he says, use divine strength to repair the poor human condition that you have assumed.

And, as Pope Francis indicates, the Master, through his example, gives us the solution: “Satan who wants to lead Jesus astray from the road of obedience and humiliation because he knows very well that, on this road, evil would be routed, invites him to take the false route to success and glory. But, Jesus « stops » all the devil’s poisoned arrows, with the shield of the Word of God, (Mt. 3,4.7.10) that expresses the will of the Father. Jesus answers only with the Word of God. And thus, filled with the strength of the Holy Spirit, he achieves victory in the desert”.

We all know, in one way or other, every day, this hardship of the desert, as how Benedict XVI explains it: “ Here clearly is manifested the heart of all temptation : the setting aside of God

who, in faced with everything in our life, appears more urgent, even secondary, as superfluous and embarrassing.” The stress, the pursuit of human efficiency and the daily difficulties lead us to become neglectful, even forgetful and to also reject our relationship with God or to await an extraordinary intervention that would make us react.

On the other hand, when the will of God goes first, He will exalt us afterwards.

Indeed, Matthew reports that all temptation defeated, “ the angels approach him, and serve him.” God grants him with order and measure all that the devil promised him in transgression. Saint José-Maria also loved to comment on the touching end of this scene: “In having meditated these passages of the life of Christ, the Church reminds us that in this period of Lent where we recognized ourselves as sinners, conscious of our miseries, and aware of the need to purify ourselves, joy also has its place. Because Lent is a time of soul searching as well as interior joy: we must have courage, given that the Lord’s grace will not fail, because God will be by our side and will send his angels to be our travel companions, our prudent councilors all along the journey, the collaborators in all our enterprises.”

### **Time for reflection and sharing (by telephone or electronically)**

1. How does the gospel on Jesus’ time in the desert speaks particularly to me in this moment?
2. What can I improve in my daily life to bring me closer to Jesus and my brothers and sisters?
3. How can I avoid falling into depression or discouragement when everything wants us to believe that this time of contagion could prolong itself?
4. Why not reach out by telephone or internet to persons more likely possibly to be isolated or ignored?

### **Life-Objective**

During this month of April, we are in a certain state of isolation, let us take the time to pray so that this pandemic with the grace of God may finally start to go off ...

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

As all the gatherings are cancelled, let us take time to pray longer for the Church, the Franciscan Family, the sick, the persons alone and the families. May this time serve to unite them more. Let us pray for the doctors, nurses and all the persons who remain in service. May God protect them and give them health and strength during this time where their devotion, often heroic, puts them in the first line of fire.

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

### **At home**

Do a reading of the texts for the holy days... Take time to pray one's beads or even a rosary. Follow Mass on the Internet if possible. It is celebrated daily in Lourdes, and by the Pope in the church of St-Martha. Do a spiritual communion during the moment of communion.

### **Recall of the Rule and the General Constitutions**

In 2018, we celebrated 40 years of our way of life, we now suggest doing a review together at this time, of article 14, from **Chapter II, the Way of Life**, as well as article 20 of our General Constitutions that pertain to it. Take time to carefully read the articles, then also meditate them.

#### **Rule**

##### **Article 14**

Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone " who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself ", let them exercise their responsibilities competently in Christian spirit of service.

#### **General Constitutions**

##### **Article 20**

1. Secular Franciscans, committed by their vocation to build the Kingdom of God in temporal situations and activities, live their membership both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality.
2. As the primary and fundamental contribution to building a more just and fraternal world, they should commit themselves both to the generous training that pertains to it. With the same spirit of service, they should assume their social and civil responsibilities.