

## LIVING FRATERNITY

**Theme: Let there be peace in families, communities and nations**

For the month of January, we offer you for reflection and sharing a presentation from Doug Hagen, spiritual assistant. He encourages us to look back and accept God's grace and embrace the unknown.

*Good reflection and 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, have a copy of the Holy Scriptures, of the Rule and the General Constitutions.

### JANUARY 2021 MONTHLY MEETING

#### **Opening of the meeting:**

After the chosen song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

#### **Introduction**

Reflect: "Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths; which was the good way? Take it, and you will find rest for yourselves." (Jeremiah 6:16)

Each time another January greets us, we have the opportunity to pause, to see where we have been, how far we have come, and where we are headed. We need only to turn to Scripture to find images for our spiritual journey:

The road of faith that Sarah and Abraham travelled, trusting that even in their old age, God still had some marvelous surprises for them (Gn. 12:1-9)

The crowded road to Bethlehem, vibrant life ready to burst from a young woman's womb (Luke 2:1-20)

The star marked road of the Wise Ones, a road that could be travelled only in darkness (Matthew 2:1-12)

The desert road where Jesus met his own struggles and came back with the power of the Spirit within Him. (Luke 4:1-15)

The road to Emmaus, traveled by two sad and discouraged disciples who, transformed by a blaze of love, retraced their steps, hurrying to tell the good news. (Luke 24 13-35)

## **Sharing:**

After reflecting on the preceding paragraphs, share your thoughts using the following questions.

1. Can we relate to these paths?
2. Can we relate to the faith of Mary: "Be it done unto me according to Your Word."

## **Continue the reading**

When we are faced with the many challenges of 2020 and the unknowns of 2021, we may recall the faith of Abraham and Sarah. But we also know that we will soon be travelling the road to Easter.

In January, we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. The star we follow speaks to the mind and heart of each of us. The work of the Spirit of God overshadows us, transforms us, and breathes into us the gifts that only the Holy Spirit can give.

## **Sharing:**

After the reading, share your answers on the following question.

- What roads have you travelled on your inner journey over the past year?
- Hills, valleys, empty stretches, super highways, etc.?

## **Continue the reading**

Let us pause for a few moments and place ourselves once more in the presence of God. (You may wish to listen to or sing "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman")

Mary is our model in so many ways. She is the first follower of Jesus, the first disciple. What an example she sets. St. Francis was awed by her journey. Article #9 of our Rule states: "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."

Francis could not recall without tears the great want surrounding the little, poor Virgin on that day (Nativity). .... (Thomas de Celano 2C200)

**Reflection:** Can be private or shared ...

- What is your relationship to Mary?
- What are some of titles of Mary that are especially poignant to us as members of the SFO?
- Choose one and try to include it in your daily prayer and meditation.

**Continue the reading**

Franciscan tradition tells of Mary teaching The Crown Rosary to a young postulant. Francis found that Mary truly lived in the Will of God. She prayed with the Apostles, a comforting presence in the community. Francis chose her as protectress of the Order asking her to watch over us always.

**Reflection or Sharing:**

- How do I take time to listen and “ponder in my heart” each day as Mary does?

**Continue the reading**

Article 24 of the General Constitutions adds to the Rule as it relates to family. Many threats present themselves to us and our families over the course of our lifetime. This calls for trust, hard work and commitment.

Jesus spoke of God His Father who heals, consoles, forgives and encourages us to begin again. In your heart, picture a land covered with freshly fallen snow. Imagine God saying: “Look, it’s new. It’s clean. It’s fresh. Let’s walk it together. This new year holds so many surprises if you rely on me instead of just yourself.”

**Reflection:**

Joseph led his young family into a new land to flee death and violence. Let us ask Mary and Joseph to hold those families together who are stepping into the unknown in a new land. Jesus, fill us with your power so we will live our lives in solidarity with you and with our families.

**Biblical Reflection:**

Read the Gospel of Sunday or the Gospel of the day.

Share your thoughts on this gospel, using the following questions:

1. To whom does it speak? What does it teach us?
2. How does it reach us personally?
3. Is it a message of hope? Another kind of message? How and why?

**Articles referred to from the Rule and the General Constitutions****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 24.3:**

The brothers and sisters should collaborate with the efforts undertaken in the Church and in society to affirm both the value of fidelity and respect for life and to provide answers to the social problems of the family.

**Life-Objective:**

A new year but although our meetings are restricted or postponed, let us continue to maintain the links between us through all possible means to assure that our fraternity members remain in the peace and joy of the Lord.

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

As all the gatherings or meetings are still restricted or postponed, let us reserve more time to pray even more for the Church, the Franciscan Family, the sick, the persons alone and the families.

We also pray for the doctors, nursing personnel and all the people who remain in service. May God give them health and strength. May their devotion inspire thankfulness in us and may we not hesitate in expressing it to them.

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

**Suggested Closing Prayer:**

We move so fast, Lord, and sometimes we see so little in our daily travels. Slow us down.

Create in us a desire to pause, to look at, contemplate, and love each member of our family.

Help us to see, and appreciate in a deeper way the treasures we have in our family.  
Teach us to enjoy just “being”.

May we be more fully aware of what we see, taste, touch, hear and smell.

May this awareness sharpen our perception of our everyday treasures and lead us to greater joy and gratitude.

**At home**

**Action:**

- Reach out to new arrivals and help them to settle in our community.
- Refer them to doctors, legal advisors, hospitals, churches, clinics, etc.
- Listen attentively to the voices of people in your life to hear the Word of God speaking through them.