

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Our vision in this Holy Year of Mercy »

In the month of February 2016, we are presenting you with some excerpts from the bull on the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, by our Pope Francis which offer us a vision of active mercy.

Recall: At the monthly meeting, the fraternities are invited to always share together one of the passages from the Holy Scriptures (especially the Gospels of the day, or the one from Sunday or any other chosen for a special occasion) as well as the excerpts, mentioned later, from our Rule of life and our General Constitutions.

Good preparation – Good meeting

FEBRUARY 2016 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening Prayer and Song: (According to the Ritual or chosen by the Fraternity)

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

It is proper to God to exercise mercy ... (*Article 6, from the Bull*)

« *It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way* ». Saint Thomas Aquinas' words show that God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collections, has us pray: " O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness" ... Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, closer, provident, holy and merciful.

Reflection:

Take a few moments to reflect on the last part of the preceding paragraph. Then continue the reading.

Our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze ... (*Article 8, from the Bull*)

With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. John affirms « God is love » (1 John 4:8,16), for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus' entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, specially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.

Sharing:

Which words in this paragraph have touched you, spoken to you?
Afterwards, read the excerpt from the gospel of 1 John 4, 8-16 .
Take the time to share on the text. Continue the reading.

Merciful like the Father (Article 13, from the Bull)

We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord's words: *Merciful like the Father*. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, « Be merciful just as your Father is merciful » (Luke 6:36). It is a programme of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace. Jesus's command is directed to anyone willing to listen to his voice (cf. Luke 6:27). In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God's mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.

Sharing:

Find, in the Gospels, the references mentioned and silently read them. Share your discoveries. Afterwards, continue the reading.

During this Holy Year, open our hearts ... (Article 15, from the Bull)

In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich!

During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism!

Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!

Reflection:

After the reading, take a moment of silence. Reflect on the points mentioned.
What has touched you the most in this text? Share your reflections. (about 15 minutes)

Pope Francis share with us a burning desire ...

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples.

Let us rediscover **these corporal works of mercy;**

to feed the hungry,
give drink to the thirsty,
clothe the naked,
welcome the stranger,
heal the sick,
visit the imprisoned,
and bury the dead.

And let us not forget the *spiritual works of mercy*:

to counsel the doubtful,
instruct the ignorant,
admonish sinners,
forgive offences,
bear patiently those who do us ill,
and pray for the living and the dead.

Sharing:

Take a moment to share your ideas on the list of the works presented above.

Have you experienced any of these works ? Allow the time necessary for this sharing.

Biblical Reflection:

Note: If you prefer sharing on the Gospel of the day, or on Sunday's Gospel, take the time necessary to read and internalize it, then if you wish, share your reflections using one or two of the following questions:

1. What does this gospel teach us?
2. To whom does it speak?
3. How does it reach us personally?
4. Is it as message of hope? Other kind of message? Why and how is it?

In the Footsteps of Francis

(Excerpt from the Admonitions, no. 18 and no. 24, Translation from Critical Latin Edition, by Fr. Kajetan Esser, ofm)

Admonition 18, verse 1

Blessed (is) the man, who supports his neighbor during his frailty to the extent that he would want to be supported by him, if he falls into an exactly similar situation.

Admonition 24

Blessed (is) the servant, who would cherish his own brother as much, when he is infirm to the point that he cannot repay him, as when he is a healthy (brother), who can repay him.

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule

Article 15

Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront of promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

General Constitutions

Article 22

22.1 Secular Franciscans should "be in the forefront ... in the field of public life." They should collaborate as much as possible for the passage of just laws and ordinances.

22.2 The fraternities should engage themselves through courageous initiatives, consistent with their Franciscan vocation and with the directives of the Church, in the field of human development and justice. They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference. They should offer their fraternal service to the victims of injustice.

22.3 The renunciation of the use of violence, characteristic of the followers of Francis, does not mean the renunciation of action. However, the brothers and sisters should take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love.

Life – Objective:

During the month of February, moreover in this Year of mercy, what a beautiful opportunity we have to make our monthly meetings a place of listening to the Gospel

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

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

At home

The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy. How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the week of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father! We can repeat the words of the prophet Micah and make them our own: You, O Lord, are a God who takes away iniquity and pardons sin, who does not hold your anger forever, but are pleased to show mercy. You, Lord, will return to us and have pity on your people. You will trample down our sins and toss them into the depths of the sea (cf. 7:18-19).