

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « What is a Holy Year of Mercy? »

In this first month of the new year 2016, we suggest a deepening of certain excerpts from the bull of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy announced by our Pope Francis.

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

JANUARY 2016 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Introduction

Here is an excerpt in which the Pope explains the reason why he chose the date of December 8th as the opening date for this holy year.

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

« I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living design of their Father's love in the world.»

Jesus Christ, face of the Father's mercy (*a first excerpt of the bull, article 1*)

Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and

faithfulness" (Ex 34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the "fullness of time" (Gal4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. John 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.

Sharing:

1. What is the message in this excerpt?
2. Take the Bible and find the inserted texts in the parentheses.
3. Share what has inspired you in these Bible texts.

Allow all the time necessary for this sharing. Afterwards continue the reading.

Contemplate the mystery of mercy (*a 2nd excerpt from the bull, article 2*)

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

Reflection:

Take time to silently read again the preceding paragraph. Afterwards, explain how this text reach you. (About 15 minutes)

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 Letter to the faithful, Chapter 1, verses 13-15. Écrits, Claire et François, Éditions du Cerf, Paris, 2003)

Oh! How he is saintly and how he is dear, very pleasant, humble, peaceable, mild, lovable and above all very desirable to have such a brother and such a son, our Lord Jesus-Christ, who gave his soul for his lambs and prayed to the Father, saying: Holy Father, keep in your name those whom you have given me in the world; they were yours and you gave them to me. And I have given them your words that you had given me, they received them and truly believed that I had come from you, and they recognized that you had sent me..

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions Rule

Article 13

As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the first-born of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.

A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

General Constitutions

Article 18.2

They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.

Article 18.3

They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to "create worthy conditions of life" for all and to work for the freedom of all people.

Our Pope Francis' Wish following the opening of the Holy Door

(Excerpt from the bull)

On the following Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Holy Door was opened in the Cathedral of Rome, that is, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. In the following weeks, the Holy Doors of the other Papal Basilicas were opened. On the same Sunday, I will announce that in every local church, at the cathedral – the mother church of the faithful in any particular area – or, alternatively, at the co-cathedral or another church of special significance, a Door of Mercy will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year. At the discretion of the local ordinary, a similar door may be opened at any shrine frequented by large groups of pilgrims, since visits to these holy sites are so often grace filled moments, as people discover a path to conversion. Every Particular Church, therefore, will be directly involved in living out this Holy Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal. Thus the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and in the Particular Churches as a visible sign of the Church's universal communion.

Sharing:

Share your reactions to the Pope's wish. Afterwards, why not foresee, in this year of mercy, going alone or with someone or in fraternity, to pass through a Holy Door?

Life – Objective:

During the month of January 2016, moreover in this Year of mercy, what a beautiful opportunity we are offered to give our monthly meetings a new breath, a renewed sense to our fraternal life!

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

Reminder: «You have received a request – a task of reflection – on «How to manage our Franciscan Order? » Please send your suggestions/ideas to your Regional Council. The Regional Council will forward them to the National Council who has expressed the need for your answers. Thank you for your collaboration.

End of the meeting:

Together recite the prayer for the Year of the Jubilee of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God!" You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind. We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

At home

Suggestion : Why not take a few minutes to recite it all the days of the Year of Mercy and take time to meditate it? As for us, we take this opportunity to wish, each one of you as well as your families and friends, a Happy and Holy Year, and « Paradise at the end of your days! »