

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Christmas, this time of peace and joyhow do we welcome it? »

In December, we offer you a time of sharing on the Gospel according to Luke 2, 1-20 - the story of the birth of Jesus – and to deepen together a text taken from the Franciscan writings - Noel at Greccio – and also to see how our patron saint Francis celebrated the birth of the Lord.

Recall: At the monthly meeting, the fraternities are invited to always deepen together a passage from the Holy Scriptures (especially the Gospels) as well as one or many excerpts from our Rule of life and our General Constitutions.

Good preparation --- Good meeting

DECEMBER 2015 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Reading: (choose a person who reads calmly)

The Birth of Jesus

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment, when Quirin'ius was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered.

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.

And the angel said to them, " Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; and all who heard wondered at what the shepherds told them.

But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Sharing:

Considering together this passage of the Gospel according to Saint Luke

1. What is the profound message in this gospel?
2. Who are the principal personages? Secondary?
3. What do I notice about them?
4. Am I questioned by the choice of the place where the birth has occurred?
5. What has touched me in this text?
6. Why do we speak of the « mystery » of Incarnation?
7. How is this a « mystery »?
8. What new ways of looking can we now have on this gospel and on our life as a « Christian»? As a father or a mother? Or as one called?
- 9.

For this period of sharing on these many questions, allow all the time necessary.

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 Legenda Major by Bonaventure, 10, 7, François, d'Assise, Écrits, Vies, Témoignages Édition du VIIIe Centenaire, Paris, 2010)

The Nativity in Greccio

It happened that, three years before his death, he decided to do a memory of the nativity of the child Jesus in order to awake his devotion to the village of Greccio, with the greatest possible solemnity. Having asked and obtained the permission on the part of the holy pontiff so that this would not be put as a novelty, he had a manger prepared, bring some hay and bring a steer and a donkey to the area. (Friars' hermitage).

The brothers are convoked, the inhabitants arrive, the forest reverberates with voices and this night, venerable by its clear and abundant lights, its harmonious and resonant praises, becomes splendid and solemn. The man of God stood before the crib, filled with piety, inundated in tears and unbounded by the joy.

The formalities of the mass were celebrated on the manger, while Francis, minister of Christ, sang the Holy Gospel. Afterwards, he preached on the birth of the poor King as he called him to the people present, when he wished to name him, « the child of Bethlehem » because of the tenderness of his love. On the other hand, the lord John of Greccio, a virtuous and true knight who, having abandoned the militia for the love of Christ, was united to the man of God by a great friendship, asserts having seen a quite beautiful small child sleeping in the manger, that the blessed father Francis, surrounding by his arms, seemed to wake from his sleep.,

Indeed not only, does the holiness of the witness make the devout knight's vision credible, but it also brings the proof, the truth that was indicated and brought the confirmation of the miracles that followed. In fact, in the eyes of the world, Francis' example awoke the hearts of those who had fallen asleep in their faith in Christ : and kept by the people, the hay from the crib marvellously healed the suffering beasts and prevented them from many other diseases : God glorified his servant in all things and demonstrated the evident prodigies of his miracles through the efficiency of his holy prayer.

Reflection:

Read the text for one self and then answer the questions:

1. What is surprising in this text?
2. What concrete action can I do that could imitate our patron saint's example?

Deepening of points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule

Article 10

United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions.

General Constitutions

Article 10

"Christ, poor and crucified", victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the "book" in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering. They discover in Him the value of contradictions for the sake of justice and the meaning of the difficulties and the crosses of daily life. With Him they can accept the will of the Father even under the most difficult circumstances and live the Franciscan spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity.

Article 12.2

With Jesus, obedient even to death, they should seek to know and do the will of the Father.

They should give thanks to God for the gift of freedom and for the revelation of the law of love. In order to carry out the will of the Father, they should accept the help which is offered to them through the mediation of the Church by those who are constituted as authority in her and by their confreres. They should take on the risk of courageous choices in their life in society with decisiveness and serenity.

Life – Objective:

During the month of December, let us make a particular effort to live the true meaning of this holiday ... If we can, and who really cannot, bring a generous contribution to a charitable organization, or for the preparation of baskets for persons in need, or a gift for a family whose financial means are limited. Or again by simply offering a gift to less fortunate person or a less visited one in a residence or hospital. Or by simply making a friendly visit to someone who does have family close. The inspirations will not be lacking if we only want to realize the true meaning of Christmas.

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

So that our true reason for celebrating Christmas can be very evident, why not install a nativity scene where it can be well viewed, whether inside or outside our home. It would help recall it and explain it to the members of our families, children and grandchildren, friends and visitors!

We take advantage of the holy period of Christmas to wish everyone among you as well as your families a marvellous feast of Christmas 2015, as well as a Happy and Holy New Year 2016.