

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Easter Vigil ... holy night, of hope ...

For the month of April, we are proposing the Pope Francis' homily dated Holy Saturday March 26th, 2016. The text invites all Christians to reflect on the signification of this favorable night that recalls for us to see the great love the Lord has for us.

Good reflection and good sharing.

Recall: 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 2019 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Introduction

“Peter ran to the tomb” (Lk 24:12). What thoughts crossed Peter’s mind and stirred his heart as he ran to the tomb? The Gospel tells us that the eleven, including Peter, had not believed the testimony of the women, their Easter proclamation. Quite the contrary, “these words seemed to them an idle tale” (v.11). Thus there was doubt in Peter’s heart, together with many other worries: sadness at the death of the beloved Master and disillusionment for having denied him three times during his Passion.

There is, however, something which signals a change in him: after listening to the women and refusing to believe them, “Peter rose” (v.12). He did not remain sedentary, in thought; he did not stay at home as the others did. He did not succumb to the sombre atmosphere of those days, nor was he overwhelmed by his doubts. He was not consumed by remorse, fear or the continuous gossip that leads nowhere. He was looking for Jesus, not himself. He preferred the path of encounter and trust. And so, he got up, just as he was, and ran towards the tomb from where he would return “amazed” (v.12). This marked the beginning of Peter’s resurrection, the resurrection of his heart. Without giving in to sadness or darkness, he made room for hope: he allowed the light of God to enter in to his heart, without smothering it.

Reflection and sharing:

Take time to share your thoughts on the content of the preceding paragraphs

1. What do you think of Peter’s reaction?
2. What would our reaction be?

Continue the reading

The women too, who had gone out early in the morning to perform a work of mercy, taking the perfumed ointments to the tomb, had the same experience. They were “frightened and bowed their face”, and yet they were deeply affected by the words of the angel: “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” (v. 5).

We, like Peter and the women, cannot discover life by being sad, bereft of hope. Let us not stay imprisoned within ourselves, but let us break open our sealed tombs to the Lord – each of us knows what they are – so that he may enter and grant us life. Let us give him the stones of our rancour and the boulders of our past, those heavy burdens of our weaknesses and falls. Christ wants to come and take us by the hand to bring us out of our anguish. This is the first stone to be moved aside this night: the lack of hope which imprisons us within ourselves. May the Lord free us from this trap, from being Christians without hope, who live as if the Lord were not risen, as if our problems were the centre of our lives.

Reflection and sharing:

Silently, listen to the reading and afterwards share what particular part of the text touches you. (About 15 minutes)

Continue the reading

We see and will continue to see problems both within and without. They will always be there. But tonight it is important to shed the light of the Risen Lord upon our problems, and in a certain sense, to “evangelize” them. To evangelize our problems. Let us not allow darkness and fear to Distract us and control us; we must cry out to them: the Lord “is not here, but has risen!” (v.6) He is our greatest joy; he is always at our side and will never let us down.

This is the foundation of our hope, which is not mere optimism, nor a psychological attitude or desire to be courageous. Christian hope is a gift that God gives us if we come out of ourselves and open our hearts to him. This hope does not disappoint us because the Holy Spirit has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5). The Paraclete does not make everything look appealing. He does not remove evil with a magic wand. But he pours into us the vitality of life, which is not the absence of problems, but the certainty of being loved and always forgiven by Christ, who for us has conquered sin, conquered death and conquered fear. Today is the celebration of our hope, the celebration of this truth: nothing and no one will ever be able to separate us from his love (cf. Rom 8:39).

Reflection and sharing:

After the reading of the preceding paragraphs, share your thoughts on their content. Take the necessary time so that each member can express themselves.

Continue the reading

The Lord is alive and wants to be sought among the living. After having found him, each person is sent out by him to announce the Easter message, to *awaken and resurrect hope* in hearts burdened by sadness, in those who struggle to find meaning in life. There is so much need of this today. However, we must not proclaim ourselves. Rather, as *joyful servants of hope*, we must announce the Risen One by our lives and by our love; otherwise we will be only an international organization full of followers and good rules, yet incapable of offering the hope for which the world longs.

How can we strengthen our hope? The liturgy of this night offers some guidance. It teaches us to remember the works of God. The readings describe God's faithfulness, the history of his love towards us. The living word of God is able to involve us in this history of love, nourishing our hope and renewing our joy. The Gospel also reminds us of this: in order to kindle hope in the hearts of the women, the angel tells them: "Remember what He told you" (v.6). Remember the words of Jesus, remember all that he has done in our lives. Let us not forget his words and his works, otherwise we will lose hope and become "hopeless" Christians. Let us instead remember the Lord, his goodness and his life-giving words which have touched us. Let us remember them and make them ours, to be sentinels of the morning who know how to help others see the signs of the Risen Lord.

Reflection and sharing:

Share the feelings you experienced while reading the preceding texts. Take the necessary time.

Dear brothers and sisters, Christ is risen! And we have the possibility of opening our hearts and receiving his gift of hope. Let us open our hearts to hope and go forth. May the memory of his works and his words be the bright star which directs our steps on the ways of faith towards that Easter that will have no end.

Deepening points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule Article 19

Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.

Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.

General Constitutions, Articles 23.1, 26.1, 27.1

Article 23.1 Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:

- they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;

- they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate, individually and as a fraternity, with initiatives of the Pope, the local Churches, and the Franciscan Family;
- they should collaborate with those movements and institutions which promote peace while respecting its authentic foundations.

Article 26.1 Even in suffering, Francis experienced confidence and joy from:

- the experience of the fatherhood of God;
- the invincible faith of rising with Christ to eternal life;
- the experience of being able to meet and praise the Creator in the universal fraternity of all creatures.

Following the Gospel, secular Franciscans therefore affirm their hope and their joy in living. They make a contribution to counter widespread distress and pessimism, preparing a better future.

Article 27.1 The brothers and sisters, progressing in age, should learn to accept illness and increasing difficulties and to give a deeper sense to their life. This should be undertaken with increasing detachment as they set out for the promise Land. They should be firmly convinced that the community of those who believe in Christ and who love one another in him will go forward into eternal life as the "communion of saints".

Biblical Reflection:

Look at one of the Easter Vigil reading or the Gospel according to Luke (24, 1-12) or yet Easter Sunday ´s Gospel according to Luke (24, 13-35).

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?

Life-Objective

In this Easter time, let us be bearers of the Risen Lord´s Good News in our midst ...

Events and information from the Church and the Order

Recall the local and regional meetings and activities.

Pray for the success of our Regional Fraternity meetings.

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

At home

Do a reading of the proposed texts in the Living with Christ, or the New Testament, particularly those that remind us of the life and mission of Christ.