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## LIVING FRATERNITY

**Theme: « See. Set out. Bring gifts. »**

In the month of January, for the animation of our fraternal meeting, we are sending you the January 6, 2018 homily from Pope Francis. The text invites us like the Magi, who journey to see the star, to journey and to bring gifts.

Good reflection and good sharing.

**Recall:** A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and a good preparation promotes a 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.

## JANUARY 2019 MONTHLY MEETING

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

### Introduction

Three actions of the Magi guide our journey towards the Lord, who today is revealed as light and salvation for all peoples. The Magi *see the star, they set out and bring gifts*.

*Seeing the star.* This is where it starts. But why, we might ask, did the Magi alone see the star? Perhaps because few people raised their eyes to heaven. We often make do with looking at the ground: it's enough to have our health, a little money and a bit of entertainment. I wonder if we still know how to look up at the sky. Do we know how to dream, to long for God, to expect the newness he brings, or do we let ourselves be swept along by life, like the dry branches before the wind? The Magi were not content with just getting by, with keeping afloat. They understood that to truly live, we need a lofty goal and we need to keep looking up.

### Reflection and sharing:

1. Why is « to see » the starting point?
2. What difference is there between seeing and looking? Explain. Give examples.
3. Do we know how to lift our glance towards the sky? Do we look upwards? When and how?

### Continue the reading

Yet we can also ask why, among all those who looked up at the heavens, so many others did not follow that star, “ his “ (Mt 2:2). Perhaps because the star was not eye-catching, did not shine

any brighter than other stars. It was a star – so the Gospel tells us – that the Magi saw “ at its rising” (vv. 2-9). Jesus’ star does not dazzle or overwhelm, but gently invites. We may ask ourselves what star we have chosen to follow in our lives. Some stars may be bright, but they do not point the way. So it is with success, money, career, honours and pleasures when these become our life. \They are meteors: they blaze, momentarily, but then quickly burn out and their brilliance fades. They are shooting stars that mislead rather than lead. The Lord’s star, however may not always overwhelm by its brightness, but it is always there, ever kindly: it takes you by the hand in life and accompanies you. It does not promise material reward, but ensures peace and grants, as it did to the Magi, “exceedingly great joy” (Mt 2:10). But it also tells us to set out.

### **Reflection and sharing:**

1. What (Whom? What?) have been stars for you?
2. How have they guided us?
3. Have we arrived where we wish to be?
4. If yes ... Where are we? If no ... why not?

### **Continue the reading**

*Setting out*, the second thing the Magi do, is essential if we are to find Jesus. His star demands a decision to take up the journey and to advance tirelessly on our way. It demands that we free ourselves from useless burdens and unnecessary extras that only prove a hindrance, and accept unforeseen obstacles along the map of life. Jesus allows himself to be found by those who seek him, but to find him we need to get up and go, not sit around but take risks, not stand still, but set out. Jesus makes demands: he tells those who seek him to leave behind the armchair of worldly comforts and the reassuring warmth of hearth and home. Following Jesus is not a polite etiquette to be observed, but a journey to be undertaken. God, who set his people free in the exodu and called new peoples to follow his star, grants freedom and joy always and only in the course of a journey. In other words, if we want to find Jesus, we have to overcome our fear of taking risks, our self-satisfaction and our indolent refusal to ask anything more of life. We need to take risk simply to meet a Child. Yet those risks are immensely worth the effort, since finding that Child, in discovering his tenderness and love, we rediscover ourselves.

### **Reflection and sharing:**

1. Have we stayed on the beaten paths? In our comfort zone?
2. Have we know how to take risks, regardless of the obstacles?
3. Give examples or speak of an experience which has cause to grow.

### **Continue the reading**

Setting out is not easy. The Gospel shows us this through a cast of characters. There is Herod wild with fear that the birth of a king will threaten his power. So he organizes meetings and sends people out to gather information, yet he himself does not budge; he stays locked up in his palace. Even:”all Jerusalem” (v.3) is afraid: afraid of the new things God is bringing about. They

want everything to remain as it was – that is the way it has always been – no one has the courage to leave. The temptation of the priests and scribes is more subtle: they know the exact place and tell it to Herod, quoting the ancient prophecy. They know, but they themselves make +no move towards

Bethlehem. Theirs can be the temptation of those who are used to being believers: they can talk at length about the faith they know so well, but will not take a *–personal risk* for the Lord. They talk, but do not pray; they complain, but do no good. The Magi, on the other hand, talk little and journey much. Ignorant of the truths of faith, they are filled with longing and set out. So the Gospel tells us: They “came to worship him” (v.2); “they set out; they went in, and fell down and worshiped him; they went back” (vv. 9, 11, 12). They kept moving.

### **Reflection and sharing:**

Share one of the fears you have experienced that seemed impossible to get over. How did you overcome it?

### **Continue the reading**

***Bringing gifts.*** Having come to Jesus after a long journey, the Magi do as he does: they bring gifts. Jesus is there to give his life; they offer him their own costly gifts: gold, incense and myrrh. The Gospel becomes real when the journey of life ends in giving. \to give freely, for the Lord’s sake, without expecting anything in return: this is the sure sign that we have found Jesus. For he says: “ The gift you have received, give freely as a gift” (Mt 10:8). To do good without counting the cost, even when unasked, even when you gain nothing thereby, even if it is unpleasant. That is what God wants. He, who become small for our sake, asks us to offer something for the least of his brothers and sisters. Who are they? They are those who have nothing to give in return, the needy, the hungry, the stranger, the prisoner, the poor (cf. Mt 25:31-46). We give a gift pleasing to Jesus when we care for a sick person, spend time with a difficult person, help someone for the sake of helping, or forgive someone who has hurt us. These are gifts freely given, and they cannot be lacking in the lives of Christians. Jesus reminds us that if we only love those who love us, we do as the pagans do (cf. Mt 5:46-47). Today let us look at our hands, so often empty of love, and let us try to think of some free gift that we can give without expecting anything in return. That will please the Lord. And let us ask him: “Lord, let me rediscover the joy of giving”.

### **Reflection and sharing:**

During a few moments, take the time to look at our 2 hands.

1. What do they hold that we can offer to God?
2. For our close relatives?
3. For someone in need?

The pope says to us, dear brothers and sisters, let us imitate the Magi: looking upwards. Setting out, and freely offering our gifts.

## **Rediscovering the articles of the Rule**

With the help of our Franciscan way of life, together let us find, in fraternity, some of the articles that invite us most particularly

1. to look upwards, to lift our heads.
2. to journey.
3. to give freely.

## **Life Objective:**

In this new year that is beginning and that lends itself for a good look on resolutions so that our daily life is one of deepening of our charism, let us pay special attention to this call from our pope Francis inviting us to see, to journey and to offer gifts. Let us think especially about those persons who hold out their hand to be supported in their approach or to receive what they need to live decently.

## **Events and Information from the Church and the Order**

Remind to mention meetings and local and regional activities.

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

## **At home**

Review this text that we have just reflected on and perform some act of giving to a particular organization or one of the persons in need.

We also take this occasion at the start of the year 2019 to offer to each one of you our best wishes for

***Peace. Joy. Health ...***

But not forgetting the wish for

***Paradise at the end of your days!***