

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: « Christmas calls us to peace, to welcome our differences ...»

In the month of December, during our fraternal meetings, we are proposing a reflection on a theme presented in December 2010, *Christmas calls us to peace, to welcome our differences*. This time of preparation – Advent – is offered for us to find together the true joys that we are given during this period of feasts. Good reflection and good sharing.

Recall: *Our monthly meeting should favor a meeting with Christ.* A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and good preparation promotes a communal experience. At the meeting, having a copy of the Holy Scriptures, the Rule and the General Constitutions, will provide clarity and depth for our edification and experience .

Good preparation – Good meeting

DECEMBER 2017 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Introduction

« Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you “I go away, and I will come to you.”

Biblical Reflection:

Read the Gospel according to Luke 2, 1-20.

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?

Christmas calls us to peace, and to welcome our differences

Welcoming diversity in today's world is a more complex reality than in the past. So the source of our problems does not perhaps reside in our differences but in the manner in which we apprehend them. Rather on our point of view.

What do you think of it and accordingly why?

As Christians – born and members of the OFS

As much as from the humanitarian and moral point of view, the question cannot leave us indifferent. But for us, this goes much further. Disciples of Jesus, as baptized, sent to be witnesses to the Gospel, our responsibility is committed.

Reflection

1. Read the preceding text again in silence and share what is the meaning for you in the following phrase: *Disciples of Jesus, as baptized, sent to be witnesses to the Gospel, our responsibility is committed.* (About 15 minutes)
2. How is our responsibility committed?
3. Are we happy or sad witnesses?
4. Do we have the look of the dead or of the resurrected?
5. How does our look demonstrated itself?

The Old Testament makes many mentions of the stranger. Abraham, at God's calling, leaves his country. He is presented as much as « stranger » in a country that he does not know. Jacob and his sons descended into Egypt to escape a famine. We read in Deuteronomy (26, 5) « *And you shall make response before the Lord your God, : « "A wandering Arame'an was my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there "»* In Leviticus (19, 34) : « *The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*» The widow, the orphan and the stranger are jointly mentioned as being the subject of a particular attention: they are part of the poor, the lowly, of those that need to be protected.

The New Testament has us meditating on the condition of the Holy Family when Jesus is born during an imposed journey by the political authority and must flee Herod's violence and exiled themselves. Later, through parables calling out to those who listened to him and some symbolic actions, Jesus will interrogate the Jewish conscience convinced that the stranger is excluded from messianic salvation. Let us think about the story of the good Samaritan, the Syrian woman and the centurion.

Sharing

Take the time to answer the following question :

- Today, who are the persons who call out to us or who disturb us?

Jesus said: « Love one another as I loved you ».

Reflection

Learning to love as He loved us is that not the opposite to a disembodied spirituality and a love that satisfies itself in loving only those who love us? Is it not, according to our possibilities, to know to go toward a personal and social commitment so that human dignity is respected? Thus, we would join the citizen Jesus who speaks up, denounces injustices and becomes the defender of the oppressed.

Reflection

Silently read over the preceding text and afterwards speak of our members' implications in the community. (About 15 minutes)

Sharing and reflection

Now, we suggest that you take a moment together to consider a few questions that can keep our reflection going on our world today.

1. Now, as Christian men and women, how are we called upon by the world in which we live today?
2. How can we develop and apply attitudes of dialogue for peace, joy and love in our respective environments?

In the Footprints of Francis

(Excerpt from the 2nd Rule, Article 3, verses 10, 11, 13, Écrits de Claire et François d'Assise, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2003)

How the brothers must go in the world.

I counsel, advise and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus-Christ : when they go into the world, that they not quarrel among themselves, that they not quarrel in words and that they not judge others but that they be mild, peaceable and modest, lovable and humble, speaking honestly to all, as agreed. In whatever house they enter, that they shall first say Peace to this house.

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.

Life-Objective:

Especially in this month of December where we remember the events related to the feast and call of Christmas apply ourselves to spreading peace in ourselves as well as around us by very specific actions most particularly toward the most impoverished and abandoned.

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

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

Suggestion – a Christmas carol – or one that the fraternity prefers

A home

Here, in Mathew 25, 40, a reference that can further our reflection.

And the king will answer them, : « Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me! »

Also, look in the New Testament – Gospels or Epistles – and find examples of dialogue that can help in the reflection and sharing during the next fraternal meeting.

Dear brothers and sisters here and everywhere

Please accept our most sincere and heart warming wishes for a Christmas filled with peace and joy as we;; as a New Year filled with blessings from our Father.

May his very holy and adorable will always be all loving and benevolent happen in everything and everywhere on the earth as in heaven!