

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Mary's gaze, a symbol of the myopia of the world ...

For the month of May, we are proposing some excerpts from Pope Francis' homily given last January 1st. The text invites us to see the Virgin's view of our world.

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.

MAY 2019 MONTHLY MEETING

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

Cherish the amazement

« Today is also a day to be amazed by the Mother of God. God appears as a little child, held in the arms of a woman who feeds her Creator ». By this mystery, God has « become one with humanity forever », affirms Francis, stating that God is no « distant lord, dwelling in splendid isolation above the heavens », but the representative of « Love incarnate, born like us of a mother, in order to be a brother to each of us ».

... Apart from the grace of amazement « at the God of surprises », Pope Francis invited the entire Church to renew its « amazement when faith was first born in us » so as not resemble a beautiful museum of the past. In order to achieve this, the Holy Father noted three attitudes to adopt towards Mary, Mother of God. « Let us allow ourselves to be gazed upon by her, let us be embraced, let us be taken by the hand ».

The eyes of Our Lady brighten the darkness

« Let us allow ourselves to be gazed upon, especially in times of need », but also let us be gazed upon « by Our Lady », recommends the Pope. It is said that the eyes are the mirror of the soul; the eyes of Mary, full of grace, reflect the beauty of God, they show a reflection of heaven. Jesus himself said that the eye is “ the lamp of the body ” (Mt. 6:22): the eyes of Our Lady are able to bring light to every dark corner; everywhere they rekindle hope. Therefore for the bishop of Rome, this maternal gaze « gives confidence and help us grow in faith », because the strength of Our Lady is great.

Tenderness as a remedy against becoming lukewarm

« Our Lady keeps us rooted in the Church, where unity counts more than diversity. Mary's gaze reminds us that faith recalls a tenderness that can save us from becoming lukewarm. When faith makes a place for the Mother of God, we never lose sight of the centre », Francis develops this

idea before affirming that: « A world that looks to the future without a mother's gaze is shortsighted». It may well « increase its profits, but it will longer see others as children. It will make money, but not for everyone», argues the Pope, insisting on the fact that «the human family is built upon mothers ». « A world in which maternal tenderness is dismissed as mere sentiment may be rich materially, but poor where the future is concerned » as the Pope adds. So this word «tenderness» is a word that today many want to remove from the dictionary, denounces the Pope.

Mary as the remedy for solitude

Follows the fact that we « let ourselves be embraced ». After Mary's gaze, we now turn to her heart. « In today's fragmented world, where we risk losing our bearings, a Mother's embrace is essential», as Peter's Successor says, mentioning contemporary sufferings.

«How much dispersion and solitude there is all around us! The world is completely connected, yet seems increasingly disjointed. We need to entrust ourselves to our Mother. In the Scriptures, Our Lady embraces any number of concrete situations; she is present wherever she is needed. She visits her cousin Elizabeth; she comes to the aid of the newlyweds in Cana; she encourages the disciples in the Upper Room ...» so Francis enumerates. As such Mary becomes «a cure for solitude and dispersion». She is the Mother of con-solation; she stands “with” those who are “alone”.

The heroine of giving

And lastly, « let us ourselves be taken by the hand». Mothers take their children by the hand and lovingly introduce them to life, as the Pope continues. « But how many children today wander off on their own and lose their way. Thinking they are strong, they get lost; thinking they are free, they become slaves. How many, forgetting a mother's affection, live in anger with themselves and indifference to everything! How many, sad to say, react to everything and everyone with bitterness and malice! In fact, the Pope encourages all of us learn from « mothers that heroism is shown in self-giving, strength in compassion, wisdom in meekness ».

Queen of peace

Because «God himself needed a Mother: » how much more so do we! « She is the Queen of peace, who triumphs over evil and leads us along paths of goodness, who restores unity to her children, who teaches us compassion», concludes the Pope before invoking her «Gather us beneath your mantle, in the tenderness of true love, where the human family is reborn; “ we fly to thy protection, O Holy Mother of God”. Let us together pray these words to Our Lady: “ we fly to thy protection, O Holy Mother of God”.

Reflection and Sharing:

1. What attitudes should we retain towards Mary as presented in this text?
2. In silence, retrace, in your life, one or more experiences related to Mary.
3. Next, take time, in fraternity, to share one or two of them.
4. This is the month of Mary... it is the most beautiful. Why is it?

Deepening points taken from the Rule and the General Constitutions

Rule Article 9

The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

General Constitutions, Article 16

1. Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocation; we, like Francis, see all the gospel virtues realized in her.

The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the most holy virgin, imitation, prayer, and filial abandonment. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.

2. Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community.

Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love.

Biblical Reflection:

Read the Gospel of Sunday or the Gospel of the day.

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 beautiful month of May, let us be artisans of peace and praise the Creator for all of his deeds ...

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 to Mary: the Ave Maria or another chosen by the fraternity.)

At home

Recite the following prayer composed by our patron saint Francis of Assisi

The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Hail, O Lady, holy Queen.

Mary, holy Mother of God:

you are the virgin made church

and the one chosen by the most holy Father in heaven,

whom He consecrated with His most holy beloved Son

and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,

in whom there was and is

all fullness of grace and every good.

Hail His Palace!

Hail, His Tabernacle!

Hail, His Home!

Hail, His Robe!

Hail, His Servant!

Hail, His Mother!

And (hail) all you holy virtues which through the grace and light of the Holy Spirit

Are poured into the hearts of the faithful so that their faithless state

You may make them faithful to God.