

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: The freedom of Saint Joseph ...

For the month of February 2021, we are proposing for reflection and sharing, if it happens, a meditation from Pope Francis given at the moment of the Angelus on December 22, 2013. This homily speaks of Saint Joseph, a just man. It makes us reflect on the example that he gave us.

Good reflection and sharing

Recall: Our monthly meeting should favour an encounter with Christ. A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and a good preparation promotes communal experience. At the meeting, have a copy of the Holy Scriptures, of the Rule and the General Constitutions.

FEBRUARY 2021 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting:

The members can offer suggestions for a song by choosing it according to the theme and the month of the year. After the chosen song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

Introduction

Follows ... A meditation on Saint Joseph, a just man, who is ready to renounce the person who was the dearest for him, Mary, his fiancée, as Abraham, Isaac. But he listens to the voice of God who offers him a life project and a new happiness. Joseph becomes « greater » and « freer », explains the pope, before the Noon Angelus, this Sunday, in Saint-Peter's Square.

Here is the integral translation of the Pope's allocution before the Angelus. *Translation from Zenith, A.B.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Gospel tells us about the events preceding the birth of Jesus, and the Evangelist Matthew presents them from the point of view of St Joseph, the betrothed of the Virgin Mary.

Joseph and Mary were dwelling in Nazareth; they were not yet living together, Joseph and Mary were dwelling in Nazareth; they were not yet living together, because they were not yet married. In the meantime, Mary, after having welcomed the Angel's announcement, came to be with child by the power of the Holy Spirit. When Joseph realized this, he was bewildered. The Gospel does not explain what his thoughts were, but it does tell us the essential: he seeks to do the will of God and is ready for the most radical renunciation. Rather than defending himself and asserting his rights, Joseph chooses what for him is an enormous sacrifice. And

the Gospel tells us: “Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly” (1:19).

Reflection and Sharing:

1. Why Is Joseph so confounded?
2. How are also in this time of pandemic?

Continue the reading:

This brief sentence reveals a true inner drama if we think about the love that Joseph had for Mary! But even in these circumstances, Joseph intends to do the will of God and decides, surely with great sorrow, to send Mary away quietly. We need to meditate on these words in order to understand the great trial that Joseph had to endure in the days preceding Jesus’ birth. It was a trial similar to the sacrifice of Abraham, when God asked him for his son Isaac (cf. Gen 22): to give up what was most precious, the person most beloved.

But as in the case of Abraham, the Lord intervenes: he found the faith he was looking for and he opens up a different path, a path of love and of happiness. “Joseph,” he says, “do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:20).

This Gospel passage reveals to us the greatness of St Joseph’s heart and soul. He was following a good plan for his life, but God was reserving another plan for him, a greater mission. Joseph was a man who always listened to the voice of God, he was deeply sensitive to his secret will, he was a man attentive to the messages that came to him from the depths of his heart and from on high.

Reflection and Sharing:

1. Do you any plans that you had to let fall because of actual circumstances? Which ones?
2. How do we accept to have them postponed, or even totally set aside
3. How do we discern the will of God?
4. Do we accept it, like Saint Joseph’s example?

Continue the reading:

He did not persist in following his own plan for his life, he did not allow bitterness to poison his soul; rather, he was ready to make himself available to the news that, in a such a bewildering way, was being presented to him. And thus, he was a good man. He did not hate, and he did not allow bitterness to poison his soul. Yet how many times does hatred, or even dislike and bitterness poison our souls! And this is harmful. Never allow it: he is an example of this. And Joseph thereby became even freer and greater

Reflection and Sharing:

1. How do we define liberty?

Continue the reading:

By accepting himself according to God's design, Joseph fully finds himself, beyond himself. His freedom to renounce even what is his, the possession of his very life, and his full interior availability to the will of God challenge us and show us the way.

(We have celebrated Christmas by contemplating Mary and Joseph: Mary, the woman full of grace who had the courage to entrust herself totally to the Word of God; Joseph, the faithful and just man who chose to believe the Lord rather than listen to the voices of doubt and human pride. With them, let us walk together toward Bethlehem.

Reflection and Sharing:

The year which we have ended has possibly change our rhythm of life, our daily occupations, our family and fraternal meetings.

1. How have we maintained the links in our families?
2. With our Franciscan Fraternity members?
3. Have we let it « fall » very simply, by weariness? By lack of interest?
4. What can we do for each one, beginning now to keep our fraternity vibrant?

Joseph became « greater » and « freer », Pope Francis said.

1. What do you think of it? How has Joseph become « greater » and « freer »?
2. What would Saint Joseph have done in the actual circumstances in which we live?
3. How can we, in turn, become « greater » and « freer » in this pandemic?

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:

For this month of February 2021, although our meetings are restricted or postponed, let us continue maintaining the links between us through all possible means to assure that our fraternity members do not feel isolated and remain in the peace and joy of the Lord.

Events and information from the Church and the Order

As all the gatherings or meetings are still postponed, let us reserve more time to pray for the Church, the Franciscan Family, the sick, the persons alone and the families.

We also pray for the doctors, nursing personnel and all the people who remain in service. May God give them health and strength. May their devotion inspire thankfulness in us and may we not hesitate in expressing it to them.

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

Suggested song: Joseph's Song by Michael Card

How could it be this baby in my arms
Sleeping now, so peacefully
The Son of God, the angel said
How could it be
Lord I know He's not my own
Not of my flesh, not of my bone
Still Father let this baby be
The son of my love

Father show me where I fit into this plan of yours
How can a man be father to the Son of God
Lord for all my life I've been a simple carpenter
How can I raise a king, How can I raise a king
He looks so small, His face and hands so fair
And when He cries the sun just seems to disappear
But when He laughs it shines again
How could it be.

At home

Recite the prayer from the Apostolic letter on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of St. Joseph being declared Patron of the Universal Church by Pope Francis. Dec. 8th, 2020.

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.