

VISITING THE SICK - A TESTIMONY (SIMERI CRICHI - CZ)

This pastoral year, as members of the Apostolic Movement, we are taking part in the visit of the sick, offering our service in the nursing home Lodging of Hope in Simeri Crichi (Cz). This is for us a positive opportunity for communion both with those in need and in physical and / or spiritual suffering and among us adherents. Furthermore, in this group, coordinated by Fr Francesco Cristofaro, four lay consecrated persons of the secular Institute "Mary, Mother of the Redemption", are inserted.

The idea is that of showing the face of concrete love, not the one that is easily mentioned by words, but the one that knows how to be made close to the neighbour, especially the sick and the 'poor'; that is a necessity to the Church, given that precisely who is in need teaches us something, enriches us against any dominant logic in the current world where, precisely, whoever is fragile is marginalized, trampled without mercy and is considered an obstacle to be eliminated as soon as possible. This is not the logic of Christ: He made himself poor to save us, let himself be wounded for us and was made a sign of contradiction that reveals the futility of all wealth when it is not placed at the service of others or transformed into a work of mercy. Christ sees the other; he is attentive to man's needs. So we too must have these Holy Spirit eyes that, first of all, bring the living presence of the Word of God to the sick person.

Of course, visiting the sick in a nursing home

is a strong experience: it forces one to look inward, to deeply search his soul, to turn his gaze to Crucified Jesus, separating what is really essential in life. Then, you try to give a new dimension to your daily life, a new value to things and people, offering a little of your time to bring a bit of joy and comfort to those who suffer or are alone.

Every second and fourth Thursday of the month the elders of the House of Hope are there, waiting for us ... They look ahead to a smile, a caress, a little company, a cheerful song, a Hail Mary recited together. Their smiles, their tender embraces are a powerful antidote to all sadness and this makes us realize who the sick and needy are! Together with these suffering people we feel closer to Jesus. Then, when it is time to leave, everything becomes sad; they ask when you return or if you will return soon ... and they hug you as if they never wanted to leave you. And you take away these precious moments with you, together with a crumb of melancholy waged immediately by the hope of having left a trace of joy in their hearts.

Here is a small and humble anecdote. In one of our last visits we were moved by a grandmother: we had just finished playing a roundabout with a guitar background, we were at the door, ready to leave, but it was raining. Many of them were next to us accompanying us. Little granny gently recommended us to put the hood on because it was cold... Like a mother recommending her son out of love for him. A simple gesture that reminded that the Lord is merciful to us if we are with our brothers, transforming simple people into his instruments of love.

Let us thank the Lord for this experience that allows us to grow in love. Let us thank the inspirer of the Apostolic Movement, Mrs. Maria Marino, who has always exhorted us to a great love for the suffering, the sick, the needy and the poor. Let entrust all the sick to the Redemption Mother so that she consoles and supports them.

The group of volunteers

They had not yet understood the Scriptures

Truth is the life of man, because man lives by feeding on it. The Holy Spirit has not only placed the whole truth of salvation and redemption in the Scriptures, but also has reserved for himself the mission of explanation, enlightenment and conduction of hearts to the whole truth. Those who let themselves be led by him, He always takes them to help him in this work that must last until the advent of the new heavens and the new earth. It is right for everyone to know that if he wants to be hired by the Holy Spirit as his helper in leading his brothers towards the truth, he must be the first to be led by the Spirit. Never might whoever separates himself from the conduction of the Spirit be his helper and never might he lead. This rule must never be forgotten. Who is led, leads. Who does not let himself be led might never lead. He does not have permanent formation, he might not train others. Unfortunately this rule is often not observed and then the doctrinal, truthful and moral confusion arises in the disciples of Jesus.

What is the first rule to be observed to be led and guided by the Holy Spirit? It is undoubtedly our inhabitation in grace and growth in virtues. The Spirit leads neither from vice nor from sin. Whoever loves to be led must also move away from venial sin and must put every effort to grow in virtues. Never might whoever dwells in spiritual death know the Scriptures. His heart is of stone. His mind is like a stone. Furthermore, in sin there is in us the bad will that prevents us from opening ourselves to the light of the

Spirit. This non-understanding of the Scriptures is guilty. But there is a second non-understanding. That which is the fruit of science not administered by those who are helpers of the Holy Spirit in this very high ministry. We speak of the ministers of the Word. When these turn away from their ministry, which is the one of announcement, the people suffer from lack of knowledge. Non-knowledge leads to idolatry and immorality. They are the real culprits of all evil. They have not formed the people in the truth of Christ the Lord.

There is a third non-understanding of the Scriptures that arises from the depths of its mystery. In order to open ourselves to its truth, it is not enough just to announce it, it is also necessary to show it complete. In the world in which Jesus lived, which was of rigid monotheism, thinking of another God was already blasphemy. Imagining God a true man, was unthinkable. Believing in a person who dies and then rises with a glorious, spiritual, incorruptible and immortal body is really out with the same fantasy. Just as opening oneself to faith in a Crucified Messiah, after so many centuries of waiting for a Messiah shrouded in all glory, clashed with common mentality. Jesus forms the Apostles to believe precisely in this Messiah, in the Crucified Messiah, according to all the truth contained in Holy Scripture. May the Mother of God help us every day to move from the non-understanding of Scripture to an ever clearer and brighter understanding.

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SAVED BY GOD, REDEEMED IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Reflections starting from the Letter *Placuit Deo*
of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (22.2.2018)

Last February 22nd, at the Liturgical Feast of the Chair of St Peter, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a document that "aims to highlight some aspects of Christian salvation that may be difficult to understand today due to recent cultural transformations» (Document). In truth it is a Letter, whose title is *Placuit Deo*, addressed to the Bishops of the Catholic Church, but which cannot be ignored by the Christian who wants to be a witness of Christ in the world.

The Letter in question states that in the contemporary world there are two currents of thought that can be defined as neo-Pelagianism and the other as neo-Gnosticism, with reference to the two known heresies of the early centuries of the Church.

Neo-Pelagianism wants to affirm "individualism centred on the autonomous subject that tends to see man as a being whose realization depends only on his strength" (Document). In practice, in this vision, salvation would not be a gift of God to be accepted in faith or an effective action of the Holy Spirit, but an initiative of the individual who has in himself the means to be able to realize and save himself "without recognizing that he depends, in the deepest of his being, on God and on others" (Document). If this were true, Christ Jesus would not be the Redeemer of man, He who redeems him, heals his nature contaminated by sin, justifies him, regenerates him to new life and elevates him to the highest dignity of the child of God; but a simple "model that inspires generous actions, with his words and his gestures". The death and resurrection of the Son of God would have no meaning and no efficacy in its past, present and future history.

On the other hand, Neo-Gnosticism, carries on a "merely interior salvation, enclosed in subjectivism which consists in raising oneself "with the intellect beyond the flesh of Jesus towards the mysteries of the unknown divinity" (LF 47). It is thus intended to free the person from the body and the material cosmos, in which the traces of the providential hand of the Creator are no longer revealed, but only a nonsensical reality is seen, alien from the person's ultimate identity, and manipulable according to the interests of man" (Document). The devastating danger of this current of thought is that the body is not considered as an essential part with which the believer is sanctified and through which he redeems the world. It is "like a prison from which we should be saved" (Document) and not the body of sacrifice offered in perfect obedience to the heavenly Father with whom Christ - and the Christian in him - sealed the New and Eternal Covenant for salvation to take place (see Hebrews 10).

According to these currents of thought, in short, neither the saving mediation of the Church, nor Baptism and the other Sacraments, nor the proclamation of the Gospel, nor conversion to it, nor all that which is evangelization and pastoral care, are necessary. Christ Jesus would be useless, and with him every Christian. It is the destruction of faith and the total denial of Redemption.

May the Virgin Mary, our Mother and Queen, help us to react with strength of the Holy Spirit in the face of such dangers, so that the Light triumphs over darkness.

Father Lucio Bellantoni

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

THEY HAVE TAKEN THE LORD FROM THE TOMB
(EASTER SUNDAY - YEAR B)

**THIS MAN GOD RAISED (ON) THE
THIRD DAY (Acts 10.34a.37-43)**

The Church lives, grows, is renewed and regenerated only if she announces and sows in the furrows of history the mystery of Christ Jesus, which is a mystery of Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection. However, she must proclaim Christ not as a separate, detached or isolated part from her, but as her own mystery. The Incarnate, Crucified, Dead, Risen Christ, Ascended into heaven, Remained with her, Living in her, with her and through her, lives and works in her. If the Church does not proclaim Christ the Lord in the fullness of his truth, from which is the truth of herself and of all humanity, including creation itself, there is no future for her. Jesus might not attract other hearts to himself and the Church falls into the great depression of vanity, sterility and absolute emptiness. Without the announcement of the mystery of Christ, Christ cannot regenerate himself. He too is condemned to vanity, sterility, the emptiness of his passion, death and resurrection.

IF THEN YOU WERE RAISED WITH CHRIST (Col 3,1-4)

Saint Paul speaks with extreme clarity to the Christians. Faith cannot be for them a sterile philosophy or an abstract truth, placed in the holy skies. Faith is their own life. Life is their faith and faith is their life. If they truly, really believe, that in baptism they died to sin and resurrected with Christ to new life, this faith must be attested with deeds. One cannot believe in the resurrection and lead a life as dead to sin and in transgression. The Christian lives with the body on earth, but his spirit is in the Spirit of Christ, just as his heart is

also in the heart of Christ, today seated at the right hand of the Father. He lives with a strong hope in the soul: reaching Christ even with his resurrected body, when the time comes. If you do not live this dimension as a truly resurrected, there is no difference with the rest of the world. It is the life as risen in Christ that makes the difference, because the Risen One is the Different.

HE SAW AND BELIEVED (Jn 20,1-9)

The Apostle John opens himself to the faith in the resurrection of Jesus not for the empty tomb, but for the order that reigned in it. In an instant his mind opens and confesses that all the words uttered by his Master are very pure truth. However, he recognizes that they still had not understood the Scriptures. The understanding, according to the Gospel of Luke, is Jesus himself the one that gives it; first, to the two disciples of Emmaus, explaining them everything and then to all the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room, opening their minds to the understanding of the Divine Word. A truth must be shouted. Resurrection is not a purely Christological event. If it were so, it could only concern the disciples of Jesus. It is a theological event. It is God's gift to humanity. Christ, the Messiah, is given to every man for his salvation. He is the only light, the only truth, the only grace, the only way for man to be a true man and worshiper of the true God. If the Church does not give Christ to the world, not only does she sin against Christ, but she sins against the gift of God and against humanity, because she deprives it of Christ of his grace, life, truth and way.

by the theologian,
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