

The young protagonists of the 10° International Congress of the Apostolic Movement

"I am listening to you. The young, protagonists in the Church and in society". This is the theme of the 10th International Congress of the Apostolic Movement, celebrated on November 26 in Catanzaro in the presence of over 1300 participants coming also from Italian and foreign dioceses. An event dedicated to the protagonists of tomorrow, at the conclusion also of the Synod dedicated to young people, strongly willed by Pope Francis.

The reading of the message sent by the president of the association, Cesare Rotundo, introduced the works, moderated by young Maria Nocchi. Referring to the itineraries covered by the Conventions of the Apostolic Movement, she recalled that in every session young people played an evident role, sometimes also including in their programs the musicals of Cettina Marraffa".

It was followed by the intervention of the metropolitan Archbishop of Catanzaro-Squillace, Monsignor Vincenzo Bertolone, president of CEC, who in greeting the founder, Maria Marino, the speakers and all the people present, proposed a reading key on the theme of the evening. "This people - Msgr. Bertolone said - ensures young people listening, because it considers them to be the protagonists of society". The prelate, also accessing the sphere of scientific research, highlighted how "listening comes from a lived mercy". This is why "we must plan initiatives with young people and

not for young people. Making them credible witnesses of the beauty of the Gospel" because "we exist only if someone listens to us and listens to us with the heart".

The first speaker, prof. Antonio Cerasa, a neuroscientist of the CNR, through some samples of answers of about 200 questionnaires in preparation for the convention, has focused on the expression "I am listening to you". Young people and adults have formulated almost the same answers on issues concerning the family, friendship, the future, work and the church, helped by a fundamental note that prof. Cerasa highlighted, pointing to the passage that there must be between "me" and "you" to improve listening.

Monsignor Domenico Battaglia, Bishop of Cerreto Sannita - Telesse - Sant'Agata de 'Goti, who led the Calabrian Center for Solidarity for 20 years, a community dedicated to the treatment and recovery of people affected by drug addiction; focused on the theme "Young people: a prophetic voice in an outgoing Church".

"The young - Bishop Battaglia said - are the perennial resource in the Church, the strength of our hope, the breath of our joy, fragile revolutionaries and precarious builders of presence and future".

For Monsignor Battaglia, the Church must increasingly acquire the role of disciple of frailty, of compassion church, that becomes sister and servant. A Church that knows how to "stand by, welcome, accompany and discern, in order to share the path of the least and to take up proximity, with a witness of coherence and responsibility".

The celebratory event of the tenth convention was also characterized by the hymn "I am Listening to you", sung by young people and by the awarding of a photographic contest, in preparation for the convention, looked after by Fr. Davide Marino; he also read the wishing and encouragement message of the founder and inspirer Maria Marino.



He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire

Let's try to imagine being taken and thrown into a burning furnace. Nothing remains of us in a few moments. Everything of us is reduced to ashes. Now let us think we are immersed in the eternal fire of the Holy Spirit, fire of love, truth, justice, mercy, piety, compassion, holiness, communion and joy. The new creature is born. From a nature according to the flesh, one becomes a nature according to the Spirit. The creature that has to produce fruits according to the new spiritual nature received is born. But there is a great difference between our immersion in a furnace of natural fire and in the furnace of the supernatural fire of the Holy Spirit. In the former furnace the act is immediate and irreversible. In the divine and eternal fire of the Holy Spirit the new creature is born, but it is entirely entrusted to the will of man to make it grow so that it can produce every good work. The Spirit gives us the new nature. But we have the mission to make it grow to its fullness. This obligation lasts for all our days lived on earth. With death there is no more growth.

How does the new nature or spiritual nature born of water and the Holy Spirit grow? Before anything else to grow, it must observe some rules also coming from the Holy Spirit. We grow by obeying every Word of Jesus, however not according to our interpretation or understanding, but according to all the truth to which the Spirit leads. Without a link with the Gospel, the new nature first decreases and then dies. The Word of Jesus must be our one and only law of life. For the

spiritual nature there cannot exist other laws of life. Only Jesus has Words of eternal life. After baptism the formation of the new nature is completed with the other sacraments. Every celebrated sacrament confers a particular participation and conformation to Christ the Lord. But every grace received in every sacrament is kept alive by being nourished the disciple with the body and blood of Jesus. If one keeps oneself away from the Eucharist or takes it in an unworthy manner, he lacks the necessary nourishment and the new nature goes out.

Never might the Word, Sacraments, Eucharist, Christ Jesus, Church and Holy Spirit be separated. Every separation is a mortal blow inflicted on the new nature. Christ cannot be taken away, because the new nature is the body of Christ and not even the Holy Spirit because the new man lives of grace and truth which are the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The Word cannot even be taken away because the new creature lives in obedience to the Father and true obedience is only to the Word of Jesus the Lord. Not even the Church can be removed, because Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Sacraments and the Eucharist, are a gift to the new man of the Church and in a special way of the ministers of the Word and of grace. The source of the new life is in this unity. The unity is crumbled, the new life dies. Mother of the Redemption, help the disciples of Jesus to believe in this unity, but also to defend it with the gift of their life.

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Let us be provoked by the saints

Reflections starting from the words of the Holy Father in the Angelus on the Solemnity of all Saints 2018

On the Solemnity of all the saints, Pope Francis spoke of holiness as a choice of life, affirming with determination that it is possible to realize it, because it is God's will attested by the Holy Scriptures. This divine will is proclaimed in the Letter to the Thessalonians in a clear way: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (4,3). The Pope shows this effective possibility when he quotes the passage of the Apocalypse: "After this, there appeared an immense multitude, which no one could count, of every nation, race, people and language. All stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wrapped in white robes and wielding palms in their hands" (Rev 7: 9).

Possible holiness does not automatically mean realized holiness. This attests to the earthly life of the saints, who have conquered the world and eternally enjoy the happiness of participating "to the fate of the saints in the light" (Col 1:12), according to the fruit of matured charity. They want everyone to walk the path that they have travelled before. It is this "before" that makes them close to us. Pope Francis affirms: «Saints are close to us, indeed they are our truest brothers and sisters. They understand us, they love us, they know what our real good is, they help us and they wait for us. They are happy and they want us happy with them in paradise».

The believer may be tempted to consider Saints as unattainable and exceptional realities. The Pope affirms against this that holiness is a condition made possible to all. It is a universal vocation. Or you may be tempted to consider the evangelical way as a way for weak and losing people, unable to enjoy the pleasures of this world. Instead, Pope Francis shows how Saints that lived in the love of God, have made their will strong and

capable of obeying the divine will in every situation.

Therefore, the life of the saints represents a clear provocation to choose on which side one wants to be: on the side of God or on the side of the world. Choosing the world, the arrogant wealth, the overpowering force, the enjoyable momentary pleasures, building life on the sand of the nothingness of the world, with the bitter surprise in death of discovering being losers. Or choosing the sanctity of the holy God, not being content to be half-Christians, and, following the example of the saints, not having "half-measures" in loving God and neighbour and walking the path of the Beatitudes to the end. Pope Francis exhorts: "It is good for us to let ourselves be provoked by the Saints, who have not had half measures here and from there "they cheer" for us, so that we choose God, humility, meekness, mercy and purity, so that we are passionate about heaven rather than the earth".

Then, the Holy Father offers the criterion that verifies the authenticity of holiness: putting the Gospel into practice and walking on the path of the Beatitudes. Holiness does not consist in "doing extraordinary things", but in living daily in following Christ, discovering that God not only created us, but desires to make us share in his divine life: "we were born to enjoy the happiness of God" in eternity.

All that remains is to raise our trusting prayer with Pope Francis so that "the Holy Mother of God, Queen of Saints, may help us to walk resolutely on the path of holiness; she, who is the Gate of Heaven», she who introduces «into the celestial family».

Father Massimo Cardamone

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

ONE MIGHTIER THAN I IS COMING
(III SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR C)

THE KING OF ISRAEL, THE LORD (Zeph 3,14-18a)

Jerusalem is invited to rejoice, celebrate and exult. But not for reasons of pure immanence. The reason for joy is supernatural and eternal. The Lord has decided to live among his people as a powerful saviour. He comes to renew it with his love. The kings of the earth, even if they live each one in the midst of his people, can do nothing for their subjects. The subjects are often the ones that do for their kings. Instead God does not come to receive anything. He needs nothing. He comes to work the new creation, to create the new humanity, to renew with his love all of man: body, soul and spirit. Yet the Lord, though he wants to make the new man, never might he do it if man does not let himself be renewed, recreated and regenerated through faith in all his Word. Obedience to his voice is the way so that man can be renewed and do new things and show his brothers what the Lord has done for him.

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS (Phil 4,4-7)

St. Paul exhorts the Christians of Philippi to be happy in the Lord. He invites them to be lovable to everyone. Everyone will have to admire them for their friendliness. On what foundation of truth, hope and charity might the Christian be happy in all sadness, anguish and martyrdom? On the certainty of faith that the Lord is near. The sadness, anguish, grief, difficulties, trials and bitterness of the present moment last only for a moment. Instead, the joy that will be given to us, will be eternal. In addition, every suffering, if lived in holiness and offered with

great love to the Lord, produces fruits of redemption for the world. If this principle of very pure faith fails or is little nourished, it is easy to fall into despair and often even from the very faith. Without faith, one is always a house built on sand. At the first difficulties it collapses because it was built on a fragile foundation. The Lord is near. The Lord comes. The Lord is.

I AM BAPTIZING YOU WITH WATER (Lk 3,10-18)

The true greatness of a man is his humility. But what is true humility? It is respect for the will of God on oneself so that we can never attribute to ourselves a will not manifested by him. It is respect for the divine will in others, so that they can fulfil the ministry entrusted to them. All the evils of men are born from our being placed out of the will of God. We stand out with disobedience to the Commandments, with the transgression of the Gospel, with the overcoming of every limit placed on our vocation and mission. Pride makes us overcome every boundary. Humility makes us respect them all. John the Baptist is not the Messiah. He is only the voice of one crying in the desert. He was sent to prepare the way for the Lord. But He is not the Lord. If he is not the Lord he might not even do his works. He baptizes with water. His is a baptism of penance for the forgiveness of sins. On the contrary, Christ Jesus and the work that He will have to do are different. In his Person He is the Only Son of the Father. His baptism is different. He will baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire.

by the theologian,
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