

Thoughts on Gaudete et exsultate - Outlining our figure of holiness

If I had to summarize the Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et exsultate of Pope Francis through a few key words, I would use sensitivity and humility. In fact, the document underlines how the call to be saints is for every man and it concerns the everyday life of every existence, precisely that space in which small details become essential, a discrimination between indifference and charity: in the Gospel, there is the particular of wine that is running out at the wedding of Cana, that of the coins offered by the widow, the particular of the sheep that is no longer in the fold etc. The saint, like Christ, realizes what his brother is missing and worries, he strives to serve him according to truth and justice. The witness of holiness is eloquent, it is a word, a precise message that the Lord communicates to the world, it is the current Word of God that becomes visible body so that the infinite and mysterious beauty of the Father may be manifested. On the other hand, it is He who calls us not to be content with a mediocre, inconsistent life. He urges us to draw in time that figure of holiness which is the image conceived for us by God since he created us. It is our truest being. Perhaps to get to this figure, we must also pass through terrible trials, humiliations, falls, weaknesses, as it happened to the African saint Giuseppina Bakhita who, yes, was sold as a slave and, as such, suffered atrocious pains, but finally she understood that God, and not man, is the true master of every

human being. Therefore, one should not be afraid of holiness or get discouraged by difficulties.

The passage in which Pope Francis states that we must observe the totality of the existence of a saint is very interesting: "In order to recognize what is that word the Lord means to say through a saint, it is not convenient to dwell on details, because there may also be errors and falls. Not everything that a saint says is fully faithful to the Gospel, not everything he does is authentic and perfect. What we need to contemplate is the whole of his life, his whole journey of sanctification, that figure that reflects something of Jesus Christ and that emerges when one succeeds in composing the sense of the totality of his person" (n.22). To us who often stress the defects of others and look at the 'straws' present in the eye of the brother, this piece should make us think. In fact, we are all on a gradual journey in which the stronger must reach out to the weaker. Nobody sanctifies himself alone and sometimes the signs of holiness are found in the most humble people, the ones we would never imagine. Pope Francis cites St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross and the idea for which it is "invisible" holy souls that are the ones to build authentic history, souls belonging to a mystical underground current. Yet, history books do not speak of them. Thinking that these souls are not far from us and can positively influence the decisive events of our personal history fills the heart with hope. One day, when everything is revealed, we will know them.

Then, may each of us be able to realize his peculiar style of holiness, looking with love at Christ and the Virgin Mary, the Mother who does not need so many words to understand what happens to us. Let entrust to Her, a perfect example of human and divine sensitivity, a humble woman, our good intentions.

Anna Guzzi

The seed sprouts and grows

Jesus, the only true Master of visible things, because he is the only Master of invisible things, reassures and gives hope to his disciples. Tomorrow, they will go throughout the world to spread the seed of the divine Word in every heart. They must always be seen as a farmer. He goes to his field, sows the good seed and entrusts it to the earth. It welcomes it into its womb and gradually gives it life, until it is completely ripe. Thus also the disciple. He goes to his land which is the heart of man and entrusts it the good seed of the Gospel. Now something divinely new happens. The good seed that comes out of the sower's heart is not collected only from the heart, but also from the Holy Spirit.

If the disciple wants the Holy Spirit to collect the seed he has scattered in the hearts, he must always be carried with him. It is not the Spirit of God out of the missionary the one that gathers the seed, but the Holy Spirit that is in the missionary. A missionary without the Holy Spirit, spreads his seed in vain. The one that picks it up in his womb and that makes it fruitful of conversion, acceptance of Christ Jesus, willingness to grow and mature and with the desire to transform itself into the Word of eternal life for other hearts is lacking in him. The Holy Spirit will never receive in his womb, will never fertilize with conversion, a word that is not his, that is not of Christ Jesus, that is not of the heavenly Father, that is not of his Gospel and according to the eternal truth set by him in it. If the missionary wants the Spirit of the Lord to welcome the Word into his womb, it must be true Word of God and not of man.

Today we are crying that the pastoral action is in deep crisis. We are complaining that there is a separation from faith, from the Church, from the Gospel, from the liturgy and from the sacraments. Let nobody look for causes outside of himself. Let him deeply examine himself and discover if the Holy Spirit lives in his heart with the power of his truth and light and every other gift. How do we know if the Holy Spirit is in us? It suffices to observe the fruits we produce. If we walk according to the flesh, we are not in the Spirit of God. If we produce the fruits of the Spirit, we are in Him. Another examination is on the Word. Do we say the Word of God whole and pure or do we transform, modify, alter and sweeten it? The Holy Spirit only gathers his Word and fertilizes only it with eternal life. He is faithful to his mission in the same way that Christ Jesus was faithful to his. Jesus said the Word according to the command of the Spirit, the Spirit took the Word and transformed it into eternal life in many hearts. Everything is in the missionary of the Gospel, called to always carry in his heart the true Word and the true Holy Spirit. Without them, it is the failure of his mission. Mother of God, in you with the power of the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Word of the Father became flesh; ensure that also in us the Word of the Gospel is made our flesh so that from the flesh made our flesh, we draw the Word to be spread in the hearts, handing it over to the Holy Spirit so that he makes it fruitful and brings it to full maturity.

Father Costantino Di Bruno

Movimento Apostolico

Non-profit Apostolic Movement Weekly.
Free distribution. Publisher: Apostolic Movement
Responsible Director: Costantino Di Bruno.

With ecclesiastical approval of the
Archbishopric Curia of Catanzaro-Squillace.

Authorization no. 75 of 8-2-1990 of the Court of Lamezia Terme.
Directorate, Editorial, Administration: Via B.Musolino, 23/E, Catanzaro.

Internet: www.movimentoapostolico.it
e-mail: info@movimentoapostolico.it

Printed by the press office of the Apostolic Movement

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD

Reflections starting from the 4th chapter
of the Apostolic Exhortation "Gaudete et Exsultate" of H.H. Francis

In the exhortation Gaudete et exsultate, Pope Francis indicates some virtues that must accompany our journey in holiness. First of all tolerance, patience and meekness.

The path of holiness is not easy. St. Paul compares it to a battle. Temptations always come to us from the outside motives of temptation that can lead us to lose sight of the goal and to make us become angry and take revenge for the evil received. But the Christian is a strong man who does not respond to evil with other evil. He is the one who is "slow to anger and great in love" (Ps 102: 8) and knows how to endure everything for his own and for the salvation of others. He is the patient that entrusts everything to his Lord. He is the meek that has a serene heart, because he knows that his life is guarded by the Almighty, who in spite of adversity "will not let his feet falter" (Ps 120). The Christian is not discouraged by the trials that dot his path, because he knows well that "when there are circumstances that oppress us, we can always resort to the anchor of supplication" (GE 114), which is the source of the wisdom that comes from God and knows how to keep hearts and minds in peace (cf Phil 4,6-7).

Humility is also a necessary virtue. It "makes us look like Jesus", who "suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that we follow his footsteps" (cf. 1Pet 2:21). If we are humble, we are "happy to have been judged worthy to be insulted for the name of Jesus" (cf Acts 5:41), not because we are masochists, but because we want to "grow in union with our Master" that "manifests the humi-

lity of the Father, that humbles himself to walk with his people, that endures his infidelities and murmurings" (GE 118).

The Pope also invites us to rediscover joy as a dimension of personal existence and evangelization. Christian joy is something supernatural, "it is an inner security, a serenity full of hope that offers incomprehensible spiritual satisfaction according to worldly criteria" (GE 121). Even if we cannot always have a smile on our lips, because we are not cold robots programmed by a computer, we must show everyone our faith, in the certainty that the Lord never abandons us and supports us with his grace. It is a task for each of us to employ new energies every day to sow the Word of God in our hearts, in order to imitate the apostles who were tireless announcers of the Gospel in trials and persecutions.

Today, a very hard enemy to defeat is habit: it "seduces and tells us that it makes no sense to try to change things, that we cannot do anything in the face of this situation, which has always been so and yet we have gone on. By habit we no longer face evil and allow things to "go as they go", or as some have decided they should go" (GE 137).

Finally, holiness is a journey that is made in community together. In the Apostolic Movement this recommendation has always been constant: «The stronger takes the weaker by the hand».

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, help us on this journey of holiness. Go through the road with us and step by step lead us to the gates of Paradise.

Father Francesco Cristofaro

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

AS IF A MAN WERE TO SCATTER SEED ON THE LAND
(XI SUNDAY O.T. YEAR B)

BRING LOW THE HIGH TREE, LIFT HIGH THE LOWLY TREE (Eze 17,22-24)

The Lord reveals to Ezekiel, his prophet, that history is firmly in his hands. The Virgin Mary prophesies to us the same truth in her Magnificat: "He has shown the power of his arm, he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their heart; he has overthrown the powerful from the thrones, he has raised the humble; he has filled the hungry with good things, he has sent the rich away empty-handed. He helped Israel, his servant, remembering his mercy, as he had told our fathers, for Abraham and his descendants, forever" (Lk 1: 51-55). Let the proud continue to be proud, the overbearing persevere in his arrogance. They will be humbled for eternity. But let also the humble persevere in his humility and the righteous in his righteousness, they will be lifted up and exalted. Thus the Apocalypse ends: "Let the wicked also continue to be evil and the impure to be unclean and the righteous continue to practice righteousness and the saint still be sanctified" (Rev 22,11).

**WE ASPIRE TO PLEASE HIM
(2Cor 5,6-10)**

The life of every man and also of every apostle of the Lord takes place in a multitude of daily events that are of weeping, joy, suffering, deprivation, abundance, companionship, loneliness, abandonment, health, sickness, persecution and martyrdom. Life is a mystery that we cannot govern. We are like chaff on the wings of a hurricane. We can only do one thing: commit ourselves, strive to be pleasing to the Lord at all times. How is one pleasing to Him? Always remaining in his will, in his Word, in his obe-

dience, always doing good and never evil. We have no power over others. We cannot govern their hearts. Nor are we the masters of the faith of the brothers, but only the collaborators of their joy. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can only remain faithful to the mission entrusted to us and persevere in it until the end. Other possibilities have not been given to us.

**OF ITS OWN ACCORD THE LAND
YIELDS FRUIT (Mk 3: 26-34)**

In the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus wants to reassure all his martyrs, those who confess his name, those who testify and announce his Word. No effort will remain in vain, none will remain fruitless. If they shed their blood for Christ, their blood is the seed of conversion, sanctification and eternal life. If they will proclaim and witness his Word, the Word will also be seed that will make other disciples of Jesus sprout on our earth. When this certainty of faith is in the heart, the disciple does not seek fruit, does not want the exaltation of his work, but he wants instead remain faithful to the mandate received. He wants to shed his blood to make other Christians sprout and will only want to sow the Word so that Christ attracts many other hearts to himself. When the disciple does this, everything else will be done by the Father of heaven, Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. They are the ground in which their blood and their good seed of the Word falls to bear much fruit. This faith is the life of the Christian. He sows, Christ Jesus collects.

by the theologian,
Father Costantino Di Bruno