

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.



Blessed are you among women

Today, through the mouth of Elizabeth, the Holy Spirit reveals who Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth is. He also manifests who the Child that is in her womb is. Mary is the Mother of the Lord of Elizabeth. The Psalm of David is fulfilled in Mary: "The Lord's prayer to my Lord: sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as the footstool of your feet." The Child she carries in her womb is the Lord, it is God. In fact, the Lord of Elizabeth is God. But, yet the distinction between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit has not been revealed. At the due time, the Holy Spirit will be the one to tell us that the Lord, that is in Mary's womb, is the Only Son of the Father, his Eternal Word: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we have contemplated his glory, glory as of the only Son, that comes from the Father, full of grace and truth. We have all received from his fullness: grace upon grace. Because the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. God, no one has ever seen him: the only Son, who is God and is in the bosom of the Father, it is he who has revealed him" (Cf. Jn 1,1-18).

Mary is blessed among all women for having been chosen by the Lord to be the Mother of his eternal Son. Only she has had this privilege. No other woman has ever had it, never might she have it. She is the only one in whose womb God, the Son of God, he by whom all that exists has been made, has become the true Son of man. In her God became flesh and for her he came into the world. She is the true Mother of

God. Christ Jesus is flesh from her flesh, life from her life and bone from her bones. This is the great privilege that has been accomplished in her life. Today, tomorrow and always, this honour must be given to Mary. Who honours, adores and celebrates God as it should be, according to truth, must always confess that He has done great things for Mary. Indeed, in the order of creation there is nothing greater than this. If we admire heaven and earth, we must admire the great miracle worked in Mary infinitely more.

What happened in Mary did not take place without her faith. the Holy Spirit also sings this truth through the lips of Elizabeth: "Blessed is she who believed in the fulfillment of what the Lord said to her." We know that Mary's faith is great. She has surrendered herself entirely to her God: "Behold the servant of the Lord: may come to me according to your word". From this moment Mary is only and all of the Lord, all in the soul, all in the spirit, all in the body, all in the will and all in the desires. Mary is erased for herself. She is annihilated in an obedience that is stronger than that of Abraham. What Abraham was spared, she had to fulfil it. On the Golgotha she really, truly and substantially offered her Son to the Father and in the Son she offered herself. Mother of the Redemption, come to our aid. Ensure that the Holy Spirit also through our mouth, reveals to the world today your truth and what the Lord has done for you.

Msgr. Costantino Di Bruno

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THE CHRISTIAN: A LUMINOUS SIGN OF CHRIST

Reflections starting from the Speech of H.H. Francis
on the occasion of the LXI Giornata *Pro orantibus* (21.11.2018)

The Holy Father Francis addressed his Speech to the religious who follow Christ in the contemplative life, who - the Pope affirms - "participate in the mission of the Church being the praying heart in her". These are the cloistered monks and nuns, who consecrate their whole life to prayer and to the contemplation of God, loved and desired above all.

For the Pontiff, they are like "lighthouses that signal the port to whoever is lost on the high seas, [...] torches that illuminate the dark night we are going through, [...] sentinels who announce the new day when it is still night".

The thought that underlies the Pope's words is clear. The life of these people is different than that of the world and this difference is visible to everyone. Anyone who sees their life must indeed admit that it is different from their own. This visible difference is a sign of an invisible difference, created in man by the grace operating in the sacraments: of the new life of the children of God, a life "hidden with Christ in God!" (Col 3: 3).

The life of the cloistered monks obeys to particular rules of life approved by the Church, which entail also a physical separation from the world, realized through the cloistered life of the monastery. This way is not universal, but particular. It is not a rule for everyone, but only for some.

Instead, it is the universal vocation of every baptized person to show the world the difference that Christ, with his truth and his grace, created in him. With baptism, man is consecrated to Christ. This does not imply a physical separation from the world, but it certainly involves a separation from

all that is sin, it is not the will of God and it is not the desire of Christ.

This evangelical difference, visible to the eyes of the world, is a constitutive feature of the life of the Church. Forms change over the centuries, but the substance remains the same. Every Christian is constituted in Christ the lighthouse that must signal the safe harbour; torch that must illuminate the night; sentinel that must announce the new day: "You are the light of the world. [...] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5,14.16).

While the Christian is in the world, the world must see the difference between the Christian and itself. The Christian is in the world, but he is not of the world (see John 17:16) because he belongs to Christ, who redeemed him at a high price (see 1Pt 1: 18-19). His life, his words, his works cannot conform to those of the world, they must necessarily be different. However, not of an artificial difference, built on a theoretical level, but of that difference which is the result of the new nature of the baptized. It is the Gospel put into practice that makes the difference.

Seeing the difference, the world is led to question its causes, it is almost "forced" to raise its gaze to Christ. The life of the Christian is the luminous sign that questions, attracts and conquers to Christ. Words, without the sign of evangelical life, are of little use, they do not create new life around us.

Mother of the Redemption, ensure that we remind the world of the Word of your Son, speaking from the light of a different, evangelical life.

Father Massimo Cardamone

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

BLESSED ARE YOU WHO BELIEVED
(IV SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR C)

WHOSE ORIGIN IS FROM OF OLD
(Mic 5: 1-4)

The prophet Micah announces to the Lord's people the place in which his Messiah will be born tomorrow. It is a solemn prophecy. The event is highly supernatural. He who is born is not a king like all other kings: "And you, Bethlehem of Ephrath, so small to be among the villages of Judah, from you will come through me the one who must be the ruler in Israel; his origins are from antiquity, from the most remote days. He will rise and graze with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. They will be safe, because he will then be great to the far ends of the earth. He himself will be peace!" The Messiah has divine and not only human origins. Even his government attests to him a divine and not only human force. Even the peace that he will bring to the earth is different than any other peace. He is peace and peace is in him and we live for him. In the Messiah there reigns a mystery that is beyond, infinitely beyond every created mind.

BEHOLD, I COME TO DO YOUR WILL
(Heb 10.5-10)

The Letter to the Hebrews reveals why Christ was able to work human redemption: for the offer of his body to the Father. How was this offer and this holocaust made? Making Jesus himself obedient to the Father until death on the cross. In Christ Jesus obedience is in the gift of his whole life to the Father: life of the soul, of the spirit, of the body and of his will. Jesus kept nothing for himself. Instead, he offered everything to his Father. For this gift of love, because he confessed him the only Father and Lord of

his life, the Father gave him as a gift the multitudes, that is, the whole of humanity. This gift is called objective redemption. This redemption must become subjective. When does it become it? When man hears the Word of Jesus, obeys it and makes of his life a gift to the Father on the model and example of Lord Jesus. One becomes one body, he must become one obedience, one offering and one sacrifice.

BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF YOUR WOMB
(Lk 1,39-45)

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit sang the mystery of Christ Jesus through the prophets. Reading the ancient prophecies, without omitting any of them, you will notice that everything is written of Him. It is written what happens in heaven, before the Incarnation; what happens on earth with his mission and after with his glorious ascension; what happens from heaven for the eternal centuries. Today, through the voice of Elizabeth, the Holy Spirit reveals who the Child that Mary carries in her womb is. It is the Lord of Elizabeth, her God and her Creator. Mary is the Mother of her Lord, of her God and Creator. The Lord, the God of Elizabeth and her Creator is also her Saviour and her Redeemer. Mary is blessed among women. But Jesus is also the blessed fruit. Not only is he the blessed fruit, but also the fruit in which the Father has placed the blessing of every man, every nation and every people. Whoever wants to be blessed might be it in Christ, through Christ and with Christ. Without Christ no blessing, because He is the blessed fruit from which blessing spreads out.

by the theologian,
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