

NOTES - GOING TO MEET YOUNG PEOPLE

Not a day passes that, among the many things that are part of my ministry as a parish priest, my thoughts do not dwell on young people. I often wonder if their resistance to topics such as faith, God, the Church and morality, does not depend on the fact that the world, compared to the times when I was young, has changed enormously and, consequently, they look and perceive all reality in a different way.

Of course, I have never missed the opportunity to stop and observe and try to understand them, especially when they are gathered together in the square in front of the church: when they compete for whoever says the better joke. When in the car, with the radio turned on very high, they live the thrill of feeling sufficiently independent and do not think the least about the problem of neighbour harassment. When they want to feel important in front of some girls and put on exhilarating performances. When they do play soccer and identify themselves with their favourite idol. When they feel big enough to smoke a cigarette and hold a beer or a soda can in their hands. When on the steps of the church, they do not say a word and together, in the most anomalous silence, they are there glued in front of a small screen, chatting each one on his own. I could go on and on...

One afternoon, leaving the parsonage, I got across a small group of them. They were chatting together. A greeting... an exchange of jokes... then, I do not even know how, the

right "situation" was created: I found myself sitting on the steps of the church talking calmly with them. At first a small number, then others, who were intrigued and came closer. From the funny initial lines I found myself, in a short time, with about twenty young people, answering to their many questions.

It was as if their world invaded mine and gave me the opportunity to know them more deeply than how, until then, I had hastily considered them. That day I was confirmed out of the facts that "out there" many people live that are eager to talk, know and be met. It is not true that young people preclude their possibility of dialogue. It is true, I perceived much vulnerability in them but also a lot of wealth, desire to know and understand many things about God, about life, about evil and about love.

The day after that meeting, I asked myself two questions. The first: is not that, in certain contexts, we must, at times, intercept the right alphabet and use less complex languages and forms, to be able to get, more easily, into the world of young people? The second: is not that for the principle of waiting for someone to enter the church, perhaps we are losing so many opportunities to go, we, meeting many who, at the moment, probably do not feel the strong motivations to take the so-called first step? Today, many of those young people have approached the church, regularly attend Sunday mass and the course of preparation for confirmation. With many others a nice friendship has been established. I keep on meeting with them, outside the church, and I find myself talking about many question around the faith. With patience and in prayer I await the right time for the Lord to move the hearts of all to follow the path of faith with constancy and to see the parish community as the place where one grows in spirit of faith, communion and true fraternity.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, watch over their path and enlighten the one of whoever is in quest for faith.

Father Alessandro Carioti

This is my beloved Son: listen to him!

When the Lord sends his messenger among men, he always attests to him. He does so in an indirect and direct way, with the Word and with signs; with his Word that he gives to his prophet and also with the Word that he himself makes his people hear directly. The other sees and notices that God is with his envoy. History guarantees for him and even the Lord intervenes personally to give him testimony.

Jesus is from the Father. John the Baptist testifies it. The signs that He works show it. But is this sufficient for Him to be believed and welcomed in his purest truth of humiliated Messiah, delivered, nailed to a cross and hung on the stake as a cursed one? Might he who sees him placed on the hardwood believe that that Crucifix is his Messiah? On the Mount Jesus shows his eternal essence to his disciples. He shows himself in his purest deity. Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, attest that the Crucifix is the true Messiah of God. The Father in person intervenes from heaven, makes his voice heard, proclaims that Jesus is his Son, the beloved and his true Messiah. He asks the disciples to listen to him. His every word is most pure truth. The true Messiah is the Crucifix that will be the Risen One.

What is said for the send by God, also applies to the sent by Christ Jesus. They too must be recognized as having been sent by the Crucified and Risen Lord. How will they be recognized? Through the Word which is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit that is in their

heart. They say the Word, the Spirit that is in it, enters hearts, pierces them so that they open to faith, letting themselves be made the true body of Christ, the holy temple of our God and his home on earth. To the Word they will have to add the signs. Which ones? The first is the transformation of their life: from a life according to the world to a life according to Christ Jesus, from a life of vice to a life of virtue, from a life of sin to a life of great obedience to the Law, the Gospel, the Word, from a life of egoism to a life of charity and from a life of evil and a life of good. The Christian transformed into Christ is the first sign that he is from Jesus and he is of Jesus.

But are the Word and sign enough for the world to believe that the disciples are sent by Christ? Sometimes it also happens that Jesus intervenes directly from heaven to witness to their truth. In the Acts of the Apostles the Lord often acts to accredit them, testifying for them, guaranteeing them and opening many hearts to welcome their message. Life according to the Word proclaimed by them is the first indispensable sign of their truth. If this conformation to the life of the Crucifix is not accomplished, God might never intervene directly from heaven to attest in their favour. He will certify, if there will be the way of the indirect witness that is the sanctity of the disciple, his purest obedience to the One who sent him. May the Mother of God help us so that we are credible witnesses of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Father Costantino Di Bruno

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THE PROMOTION OF FAITH

Reflections from the Speech of H.H. Francis to the members
of the Pontifical Academy of Theology, 26.01.2018

2018 marks the third centenary of the Pontifical Theological Academy, founded in Rome on 23 April 1718 by Pope Clement XI, with the mission of promoting dialogue between faith and reason and the deepening of Christian doctrine.

On the occasion, the anniversary the IX International Forum of the Pontifical Academy of Theology was held in Rome, entitled "I believe in God the Father, the Omnipotent Creator of Heaven and Earth".

On that occasion, in the Concistoro Room, Pope Francis addressed the members of the Pontifical Theological Academy gathered for the Forum, a very interesting speech in which he particularly urged to "be at the service of the Church with the aim of promoting, soliciting and supporting in its various forms the intelligence of faith in the God that was revealed in Christ".

More specifically, the Holy Father has solicited the link with the university institutions and encouraged the Academy in its vocation to be "promoter of an encounter between theology, philosophy and the human sciences, so that the good seed of the Gospel bears fruit in the vast field of knowledge".

The Pope emphasized that "the Academy is called [...] to grasp its identity not in a self-referential perspective", but rather as a constructive dialogue based on the bimillennial life of the Church. This underlining is symptomatic of how in teaching there is a serious risk of disengaging

from Tradition and the Magisterium, driven to the search for unbridled theological speculation that risks not maintaining firmly the roots of our creed.

Conveying theological knowledge in the world is a very important mission within the Church. Whoever with teaching in the various Faculties and Universities also provide this service, in fact realize a true work of mercy teaching and promoting faith in the world that is increasingly being detached from the Word of God.

In this time when the works of mercy are too often reduced only to those of a material nature (to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to dress the naked, to lodge the pilgrims, to visit the sick, visit the prisoners and bury the dead), it is good to remember that works of mercy are also the spiritual ones (advising doubters, teaching the ignorant, admonishing sinners, consoling the afflicted, forgiving offenses, patiently enduring the harassing people and praying to God for the living and the dead) and among these, that of teaching takes on precisely a great value.

Teachers who commit their lives to search the depths of Scripture for the dogmatic, christological, moral truths... are those who daily spend themselves so that theology can enter into dialogue with all the sciences (even the empirical ones), in order to convey the Word of God that the world is now increasingly forgetting.

Father Nicola Rotundo

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM
(II Sunday of Lent - Year B)

TAKE YOUR SON, YOUR ONLY ONE (Gen 22,1-18)

The God who gives all of himself asks his worshipers for the gift of all of themselves. A gift for a gift. Everything for everything. Fullness for fullness. God spares himself in nothing in love and not even man has to spare himself in anything. The future of life and blessing, salvation and redemption, peace and prosperity, is in this gift that man makes of himself to his God. The Lord asks Abraham to leave his past, all his past, including his earth and his lineage. Abraham obeys. God constitutes him a blessing for all peoples in his descent. Then, He asks that the descent in which he had promised the blessing be sacrificed to him. Abraham obeys. He sacrifices him his beloved son, his only begotten. The spiritual sacrifice, that of the heart, is enough to the Lord with Abraham. With his own Son, God goes beyond the spiritual sacrifice, He also lives the material sacrifice. He gave his Only Son from the cross.

HE DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON (Rom 8.31b-34)

Saint Paul wants to reassure the disciples of Jesus, exposed to martyrdom every day, called that is to offer their life to Christ the Lord. Before anything, asking for their sacrifice, Jesus does not want anything extraordinary and special. He just wants them to fit into the wisdom of his Crucified love. The Father loves from his love pierced in the flesh of his Son. Throughout the time of history he will always have to love from the heart pierced in every other son of adoption, which is the body of his Only Son. When the disciple immerses himself in this wisdom of

the cross, the God, to whom he gives everything, becomes a total gift for him. All of God gives himself to him who gives all of himself to his God. The sacrifice lived in the wisdom of the cross becomes nothing but the way for the Lord to give himself to him who has given himself to Him, as eternal life, mercy, light, truth, justice, holiness, Holy Spirit and every other divine gift.

THIS IS MY BELOVED SON (Mk 9,2-10)

Jesus is about to be delivered. He will be crucified. A Crucified Messiah is a scandal for the Jews, for the Apostles and for every son of Abraham. But it is also folly for the Greeks, who find no wisdom in the cross of the Son of God. Jesus wants to help the disciples to overcome the scandal of the cross. It could prove to be devastating for his mission of salvation. For this to never be able to happen, he brings three of his Apostles to the mountain and first helps them by showing them the glory of his divinity. Then he makes Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets act as his witnesses. The science, truth, wisdom and light of Jesus on himself is true. The Messiah they foretold is the Crucifix, the Hanged from the wood. To this testimony that comes from his being and from Scripture, the voice of the Father is added directly, who proclaims Jesus his Son, the beloved, from the cloud, inviting the disciples to listen to him. Jesus must be heard because He is the truth of every Word of the Law and of the Prophets. They must abandon all the words of the world and listen only to his, because only his is true.

*by the theologian,
Frater Costantino Di Bruno*