

Notes: anesthetized faith

The faith of the Christian is always exposed to the risk of being anesthetized by all those factors, internal and external, which somehow tend to condition it: fear of the judgment of others, insecurities, laziness, derision, persecution, results that are slow to be felt in the pastoral, misunderstandings even with close people and close collaborators, inopportune thoughts and endless other things like that.

But an anesthetized faith cannot save us nor can it help us save anyone! It is a sterile faith, which cannot fertilize the hearts of those who are far from God and spoil their existence by running after nothingness. If we who are Christians have an anesthetized faith, that is incapable of taking the initiative and totally divorced from what are the spiritual and existential problems of man to be saved, how might the world be convinced that it is worth choosing Christ Jesus as the only Master and Lord?

Mind you, anesthesia is more than the drowsiness of the heart. Who is sleepy if he hears a sudden noise, wakes up. And this - at least usually - also applies to those with a heavy sleep. Instead, those who are anesthetized, for example in an operating room, do not even wake up with cannon

fire!

Beyond this image, which perhaps also makes one smile a little, the serious fact remains that salvation depends on our faith. Not on that of others. On ours. A living faith, awake, dynamic, proactive, enthusiastic and willing to work hard for the building up of the Kingdom of God is the balm of life for the whole world. History teaches that even a single person with such faith suffices and in a short time we see very abundant fruit of conversion.

Then, what is the solution, the antidote, so that our faith does not let itself be anesthetized? The antidote is only one: the Love that flows directly from the heart of Christ. We need this love. All of us. None excluded. Priests, laity and consecrated people. Either we "procure" this Love or we will fail our mission. There will always be a thousand reasons to withdraw, to prefer the "operating room" to apostolic work. We will always feel unsuitable, we will delegate to others our primary law, we will let ourselves be overcome by those who do not want, rebellious angels and unfair men, that the Holy Spirit works through us his marvels.

Then, take courage! Let us look with faith at the heart of Jesus and ask him without delay to pour his Love into our hearts. Let us eat the Eucharist with the faith and never forget that we have a solicitous Mother, the Virgin Mary, who knows how to intercede for us so that the exquisite wine of the love of her divine Son is not be lacking in our jars.

May she help us, sustain us and guard us from the ever-latent danger of an anesthetized faith that saves no one.

Father Lucio Bellantoni

Is not this Joseph's son?

Holy Scripture is the revelation of every modality through which the Lord enters our history. They are many and varied. He speaks and acts many times and in different ways. But there is a constant that remains unchanged. He acts from nil, from nothing, from the infinitely small, so that it is always revealed that He is the one that works through man and never man without the Lord, Creator and God. The first revelation that Scripture offers us in its first page is the story of creation that comes to light from nothing. No matter existed. God calls it and it comes to light for his divine omnipotence. Then, if we proceed with the reading, we will notice that the Lord from a sterile woman and a man advanced in years draws a lineage in which tomorrow he will have to bless all the tribes of the earth, every people and nation. He also took the great king David from nothing. He was a shepherd of sheep, ignored by his father and not even considered worthy of being presented to Samuel.

This is the testimony of Scripture: God works his wonders of salvation, liberation, redemption and gift of eternal life, through humble, small, poor and miserable people. There is no human greatness in them. On the contrary, the smaller and more humble these people are and the more he might manifest his omnipotence. Did not Jesus call Twelve Apostles to renew the world and free it from spiritual and eternal death? Who are these twelve Apostles? Simple, small, humble and poor people. He chose neither kings nor emperors to overturn the fate of the whole earth. Jesus enters the sy-

nagogue of his city. He announces that in him the prophecy read is fulfilled and people are scandalized for his humble origins. Is not this the son of Joseph? Where is his noble origin? Where is his greatness? Nobility is his humility. His greatness is poverty. His strength is his nothingness. Humility, poverty, human nothing are the perfect tool so that the Lord can carry out his work. But anyway, Jesus had read it well: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. The Spirit of the Lord is a gift from God. It is not a merit of man. Nor does it come from the earth, because it comes down from heaven. The Lord can send his Spirit on any person and it is the Spirit that makes the person capable of the mission.

Jesus does not answer the insipid words with theological arguments. He responds with Scripture. Who is Elijah sent during the years of famine to work a miracle to? To a stranger, a widow. Who does Elisha heal from leprosy? A foreigner, Naaman the Syrian. True prophets are not sent to perform miracles, but to proclaim the Word of the Lord, to manifest the will of their God that invites every man to conversion. The prophet is not for signs, but for the Word. Signs are ordered to the Word and not the Word to signs. Jesus is the true prophet, true sent because the Spirit has settled on him and not because he works this or that other sign. He is a prophet because he is constituted by God and not because he was born of a noble descent. Mother of God, arrange that we never forget that Scripture is the Teacher of unchanging truth over the centuries.

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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
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Printed by the press office of the Apostolic Movement

AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT CREATES AMAZEMENT

Reflections from the homily of H.H. Francis on the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God (1.1.2019)

"Being amazed: to this we are called today, at the end of the Christmas Octave, with the gaze still placed on the Child born for us, poor in everything and rich in love. Amazement: it is the attitude to have at the beginning of the year, because life is a gift that gives us the possibility to always start again, even from the lowest condition» (Homily).

Let us ask ourselves: when can our announcement be able to amaze those who listen to it, as it happened at the grotto of Bethlehem for the testimony given by the pastors?

The announcement that creates true wonder is an announcement that starts from Heaven and not from the earth. It is an announcement that does not concern an immanent but a transcendent fact: "ecce enim evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum, quoderit omni populo, quia natus est vobis hodie Salvator, qui est Christus Dominus, in civitate David" (I announce you a great joy which is for all peoples, today the Saviour that is Christ the Lord, was born in the city of David). The amazement of which we speak is not a human amazement before a child who was born, but it is the amazement that comes from the knowledge of a Revelation, from an epiphany of the Lord. It is the amazement that invades man when he comes to meet with the only God who always keeps his promises of redemption, who is faithful to his Word. The angel also gives the shepherds a sign to recognize, among those born, the Saviour: "Et hoc vobis signum: invenietis infantem pannis involutum et positum in praesepio"». No child comes and was placed in a manger, here is why this is the sure sign, offered to the pastors, about the identity of the child. The shepherds go to Bethlehem and, once the historical truth of the received message

has been ascertained, they are transformed into true evangelizers, taking the place of the Angel: «videntes autem notum fecerunt verbum, quod dictum erat illis de puero hoc» (when they saw they had others know about what was told them of the child).

Therefore, the announcement that creates a real amazement is only that which starts from Heaven, involves man through the work of the Holy Spirit and transforms him, making him participate in the mystery to be announced.

In his homily, the Holy Father sees this passage admirably accomplished in Mary. Mary becomes Mother of God following an announcement to which she gave herself entirely, becoming part of it in an admirable way. In turn, Mary, having become part of the mystery, she becomes its bearer. So much has Mary become part of this mystery as to become one and indissoluble mystery with it. Mary is the true Mother of God. Really, before the Mystery of the Mother of God, there is amazement!

Not only is Mary the Mother of God, she is also our Mother. The Pontiff expresses his amazement by contemplating the gaze of Mary, a gaze that prevents the real needs of her children: "The gaze of the Mother, who is not at all short-sighted" (Homily). The gaze of the Mother sees the world in its real and primary need of Christ and always intervenes as at Cana.

Therefore, with the words of the Pontiff we can conclude: "Our Lady is not an option: she must be welcomed in life [...]. Take us by the hand, Maria. Held on onto you we will overcome the most narrow bends in history. [...]. Gather us together under your mantle, in the tenderness of true love" (Homily).

Father Antonio Cazzolino

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

NOT ONE OF THEM WAS CLEANSED
(IV Sunday O.T. - Year C)

A prophet to the nations I appointed you (Jer 1.4-5.17-19)

The motivations of a choice on the part of the Lord are hidden in the mystery of his science and eternal wisdom. There is no merit and consequently no pride on the part of the one who is chosen. Jeremiah is called by God and established as a prophet of the nations when he was still in his mother's womb. What merit can he boast of this choice before God? None. Another truth that must be put in great light reveals to us that the called one is not the agent of the Word, but only the instrument through which the Lord will make his voice heard to the nations. The agent of everything is the Lord. It is He who puts his Word on the lips of the prophet and it is always He who orders where, when and to whom the Word is to be announced. The instrument owes only obedience, submission and listening to his Lord. The instrument obeys and the Word reaches the hearts to which it is destined. This means: "I will triumph, if you have faith". If you will obey.

Charity is magnanimous (1Cor 12.31-13.13)

Saint Paul teaches the Corinthians that if they want to give true life to every charisma of the Holy Spirit, they must be true field always fertilized with the fertilizer of the great virtue of charity. This fertilizer has quite fifteen qualities: "Charity is magnanimous, benevolent is charity; it is not envious, does not boast, does not swell with pride, does not lack respect, does not seek its own interest, does not get angry, does not take into account the evil received, does not enjoy injustice but rejoices in the truth. It excuses it all, believes everything, hopes

everything and endures everything". If only one of this qualities comes to be lacking, the field is in suffering and does not produce according to the wealth of the gifts received. For this reason it is the obligation of every single member to verify if the part of the field that is his life is in the fullness of charity. If he is lacking even in a single quality or it is little developed, immediately he must commit himself so that the defect is eliminated.

Isn't this the son of Joseph? (Lk 4: 21-30)

The inhabitants of Nazareth are closed in their earthly thoughts. Between them and Lord Jesus there is total incommunicability, because total lack of communication reigns between them and their God. When we are not in communion of truth and light with the Lord, we are always not in communion of truth and light with men. Communion is born of perfect science and knowledge of the Scriptures. When a man cuts off contact with the Scriptures, he cuts off all contact with his Lord. This becomes a birth of his mind and a fruit of his heart. We are in total falsehood. Those of Nazareth want a prophet conceived by their heart, generated by their thoughts, born of their will. Instead, Jesus is generated by the Father in the beginning and sent into the world to reveal to us the truth, holiness, charity, love and mercy of the Father. But do not we want today a God, a Christ, a Church, her ministers, her theologians, her prophets ruled by our hearts, our minds and our thoughts? But this is anti-religion, because it is a total denial of the truth of God and his prophets.

by the theologian,
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