

Bologna: catechetical meetings of the Apostolic Movement

So many great questions, one big answer: Christ

On 1 July 2018, HE Msgr. Matteo Zuppi, archbishop of Bologna, in his pastoral note wrote: "Next year [...] we want to ask ourselves about the spiritual questions we meet or come to our realities, first step for a journey of revisiting the catechesis for Christian initiation and for adults, so that we are able to make Jesus known to those who in many, sometimes unconscious, indirect and contradictory ways, seek his love, to generate to faith and so that many they feel him close" ("Each one heard them speak in his language" [Acts 2: 6]. All more missionaries, n.19).

Always attentive to the indications of the bishops and the journey of the dioceses in which it offers a catechesis, the Apostolic Movement has accepted the invitation of Msgr. Zuppi, developing an itinerary for the pastoral year 2018-2019 focused on the "big issues" that every man carries with himself. Thus, existential questions, such as "Where do we come from?", "Who are we?", "Where are we going?", have become the starting point for a catechesis on the origin, the sense, the identity, the vocation and the goal of the person, that aims to lead those who participate in the encounter with the living Christ, the only one capable of quenching the need for truth and eternity of the human

heart, with a water that becomes in him a source that gushes for eternal life (Jn 4:14).

The compass for this itinerary from the heart of man to the heart of Christ (and back) is the inspired word of the Holy Scripture, at the centre of each appointment; the staff for the journey, the confrontation with the priest who leads the meeting and who reads and explains the Word according to the faith of the Church. The path - entitled *The big questions*. The depths of man in the light of faith - winds through a series of stages, which from the beginning (creation) reach the fulfilment of human history (eschatology), that at the same time becomes a journey inside man and his call to bear fruit on the basis of the talents received, to become a child of God in Christ, to be perfect as the Father of Heaven.

It is nice to see how, year after year, the catechetical meetings of the Apostolic Movement have become a sure reference point in the personal journey of faith for many in the diocese of Bologna. We are particularly encouraged by the fact that these events are for many young university students orbiting around the parish of Mascarella, an important moment of formation and encounter with the Word of Jesus, which encourages them to take part in a more active and convinced way in the life of the Church. We thank the Lord for this, asking him for the grace to persevere in the mission of proclamation and remembrance of the Gospel and entrusting our apostolic commitment to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, so that - as our bishop wishes - "we are able to make Jesus be known to those who in many ways [...] seek his love, to generate to the faith and so that many feel him close».



He is benevolent towards the ungrateful and the wicked

Who is the Lord our God? The Book of Wisdom and the prophet Isaiah offer us this portrait: "But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook the sins of men that they may repent. For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? But you spare all things, because they are yours, O Lord and lover of souls" (Wis 11: 23-26). "Yet the Lord is waiting to show you favour, and he rises to pity you; For the Lord is a God of justice: blessed are all who wait for him! O people of Zion, who dwell in Jerusalem, no more will you weep; He will be gracious to you when you cry out, as soon as he hears he will answer you" (Is 30.18-19).

The Apostle John completes this truth, bringing it to the peak of its perfection: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). The final touch is offered by Saint Paul: "But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath. Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved

by his life (Romans 5: 8-10). If this is our God, can those who are his sons of adoption, body of Christ Jesus, living temple of the Holy Spirit, act in a different way, denying and betraying the truth of their nature that has been made to share in the divine nature? If the Father is eternal love, even his children are charity by participated nature. Nature will always act according to its truest essence. Nature of charity must produce fruits of charity. Why then do we not produce good, but bad fruits?

We produce fruits of evil, because we return to our old nature of sin. Then, what to do to stay in the new nature which is of charity, love, compassion, mercy, fidelity, justice and holiness? The way is one: always remaining in obedience to the Word of Christ Jesus that is the commandment of very pure universal love. The disciple of the Lord by sanctified nature produces fruits of goodness and mercy towards all. He will abstain from every discrimination, every judgment and every thought. He always loves everyone, friends and enemies, near and far, good and bad, saints and sinners, those who do him good and those who hurt him. In doing so, he will attest that his nature is truly that of God through sacramental participation, perpetually fuelled by him of every grace and truth in the Holy Spirit by obedience. Mother of the Redemption, help us to always stay in the new nature.

Msgr. Costantino Di Bruno

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MAY PRAYER BE INSISTENT AND TRUSTING

Reflections starting from the General audience of H.H. Francis on Our Father (9.1.2019)

Prayer is an essential dimension of the Christian existence that every good disciple of the Lord must cultivate day by day. It has accompanied the life of Jesus and must accompany ours. In prayer Jesus received the Holy Spirit at the Jordan, he was transfigured on the mountain, chose the twelve Apostles, resurrected Lazarus, spent whole nights to overcome the fragility of human nature, prepared himself in Gethsemane to the painful Passion and lived the cross with fortitude and serenity in perfect obedience to the heavenly Father.

With prayer - and only with it - we can obtain all the graces necessary to grow in holiness and build up the kingdom of God with wisdom and love.

But with what attitude do we need to pray to be fulfilled? What is the certainty to have in the heart so as not to pray in vain or leave room for the weariness of the spirit?

Pope Francis answered these questions in a Catechesis on Our Father, taking a hint from chapter 11 of the Gospel according to Luke. He reminds us all that the attitude that must accompany our prayer is insistence, even and especially when we do not seem to be heard: "How many times have we asked and not obtained - we all have experience of it - how many times have we knocked and found a closed door? Jesus urges us, in those moments, to insist and not to give up. Prayer always transforms reality, always" (Audience).

Not infrequently, the Lord does not answer us instantly. Sometimes he makes us wait a long time, as he did for example with Abraham or with Saint Monica, who prayed for eighteen years awaiting the con-

version of his son Augustine. Sometimes he seems to sleep on the boat while the storm rages and the waves of the sea overwhelm our fragile existence (cf Mk 4,35-41). But this must not discourage us or make us fall into crisis. Indeed, it is right in these moments that we must convince ourselves that we are enveloped in a mystery that we cannot fully understand, but that has its reasons in the merciful heart of our heavenly Father. He loves us and, in order to love him more, he allows us to live a history of suffering and waiting, but he never abandons us because "He is a Father and he does not forget his children who suffer" (Audience).

However painful and difficult it may be, in this light, history becomes the propitious time to receive a new heart as a gift and be slowly transformed into the image of the Son of the Most High: "If things around us do not change, at least we change and our heart changes. Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to every man and to every woman that prays" (Audience).

In history, prayer serves to come out of our thoughts to enter into the thoughts of Christ and to surrender ourselves totally to the Holy Spirit, putting aside every little resistance to his divine breath. Therefore, it is our task to insist and know how to wait, entrusting to the Heavenly Father every good purpose and every affliction, trusting in his wisdom that knows times and modalities so that our salvation may be fulfilled today on earth and tomorrow in Heaven, asking the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, to guard us in her maternal embrace and obtain us every grace necessary to persevere till the end.

Father Lucio Bellantoni

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO MISTREAT YOU
(VII Sunday O.T. - Year C)

FOR HIS JUSTICE
(1Sam 26.2.7-9.12-13.22-23)

Saul, driven by a superhuman evil spirit, sought David with his army to kill him. One night the king and his warriors are taken by a torpor sent to them by the Lord. David could have killed his persecutor but he did not do it. As a sign that he could have killed him, he approaches the king and takes his spear. In the morning, keeping at a distance, he asks the king to send someone to withdraw his spear, revealing him that he could have put an end to his life, but he did not do it. Then, David asks God to treat him according to his justice and his fidelity. He was right. He did not kill the consecrated one of the Lord. He was faithful to his law and his commandments. May the Lord in his great mercy want to use his very rule of action. He was merciful and compassionate, the Lord also will have to be full of mercy and pity. It is the divine law. God always rewards good with good.

THE SECOND MAN, FROM HEAVEN
(1Cor 15, 45.49)

When God wanted to make man, he made him in his image and likeness, drawing the material from the dust of the ground and breathing in it his breath of life. The first man comes from the earth, he is of earth. Instead, Jesus comes from Heaven. He is the Son of God who became flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the full of grace. In the new creation, we are made in the image of the celestial man. This image will be perfect in us on the day of the universal judgment, when our body will be called from the dust and transformed into the image of the glorious body of Lord Jesus and made spiri-

tual, incorruptible and immortal. Who will receive this body of glory? Only those who on earth have committed themselves to consecrating their lives to a full obedience to the Word of Jesus. If we will be conformed to Him in obedience and love on earth, we will be conformed to Him in the glory of eternity. Christ Jesus is the person entirely consecrated to love.

BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU
(Lk 6: 27-38)

Jesus wants his disciples to always have Him, the Master, before their eyes, hanging from the wood, Crucified; He, the Just One, who gives his life for the unrighteous; He, the Saint who hands his whole life over for the redemption of humanity. If Jesus has given his body from the wood, might there be anything that his disciple might say to be his own? If he gave his life to Christ the Lord, with his life he gave him everything else, even the soul, the spirit, the feelings, the will, the mouth, the eyes, the hands and the heart. Everything is of Christ Jesus to manifest the love of Christ Jesus. As Jesus reveals all the love of the Father, the disciple must reveal the love of the Master. He will do this by living only to love, help, support, comfort and forgive. The disciple will live knowing only the good, but not on the model of some man, but only on the model of Christ the Lord. The life of Jesus was a gift. The life of the disciple must also be a gift. Who gives life cannot keep things for himself. Even things were given in the initial act of the gift. They must now be donated in the historical concreteness.

by the theologian,
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