

SPIRITUAL NOTES - Greatness in smallness

We live in a world in which what attracts is the "extraordinary", the "phenomenal", "the striking". It is thought that to be appraised, at all costs, one must be noticed by others; something great, out of the ordinary must be done to get ahead in society. This temptation also has often repercussions on the religious plane. Many go in search of the "extraordinariness" of the supernatural, accentuating the miraculous aspect of faith and, at times, bordering on the limit of exaltation.

When we do not walk in communion with the Church and do not focus our attention on the Word of God, on the sacraments and on the path of holiness, we inevitably deviate from the faith and fall into the search for external aspects, of forms that harness the Christian in a spirituality that we can define of appearance.

The Gospel does not teach all this, because the Gospel is principally pure truth, simplicity and humility. A true Christian, who imitates the thought and style of life of Christ, first of all considers extraordinary the duty for little things,

since they are the ones that affect daily life, history and time.

The Christian is he who lives the ordinary in an extraordinary way. A true Christian does not distinguish himself because he does great works, because he has to amaze at all cost, but he is recognized by the fact that he knows how to value, in simplicity and care, every responsibility, always maintaining a style of discretion and humility, capable of bearing fruit of faith in everyday things. Remember, "seriousness", "humility" and "simplicity" always go together!

This is why it is important to grasp the joy and enthusiasm that derive from sharing, with others, an experience of faith, which has been able to mark, change and excite the life of each one.

However, the truth and authenticity of the faith become evident only when there is the conversion of life, when one understands the value of the formation of the Christian faith, first of all the active participation in the life of one's own parish community.

Lastly, I would like to underline that Jesus also asked his disciples for something extraordinary: the extraordinary nature of charity. An extraordinary love that can shine through every little thing and towards each one, because as the Gospel says: "He who is faithful in little will be faithful in much" (Lk 16, 10). This must be the authenticity of the faith of the true Christian: loving faithfully all that is ordinary with a heart extraordinarily full of the grace and truth of Christ.

Father Felice Raffaele

Sir, leave it for this year also

Our Lord is patient and merciful, he waits for the sinner to be converted and return to his law, commandments and will by listening to his voice and obeying his statutes: "But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook the sins of men that they may repent (Wis 11,23). St. Peter adds: "The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2Pt 3,9). The gospel reveals: "In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost (Mt 18,14). St. Paul's cry echoes this truth: "This is good and pleasing to God our saviour, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all (1Tm 2,3-6). The will of the Lord is the same: yesterday, today and always: "Turn and be converted from all your crimes, that they may be no cause of guilt for you. Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies, says the Lord God. Return and live! (Ez 18,30-32).

What does the gospel parable add to this truth which is most pure revelation that runs through all Sacred Scripture, from the first page to the last of its books? Jesus tells us that the mercy, compassion and patience of his Father alone is not enough. It is also

necessary that man puts his share, that is not secondary but of essence. The vineyard is Lord's. Every tree is the Lord's. But everything is entrusted to the farmer so that he cultivates every tree planted in his vineyard. If the farmer neglects, omits, gets disinterested, does not place all diligence, care, attention, science, wisdom, will and sacrifice, the tree does not produce, but the responsibility is also and above all of the farmer. The Father entrusted his vineyard and trees to Christ Jesus. He gave his life for them. He watered them with his blood, he nurtured them with his flesh, gave them the strength of the Holy Spirit, enlightened them with the sun of his Gospel and warmed them with the power of his love and his great mercy.

The work of Christ Jesus is now the work of all his body, everyone in his part, must take care of all the Lord's vineyard. His apostles, then the prophets, then the doctors and masters and then every one of Christ Jesus' disciples, everyone with his gift of grace, truth and Holy Spirit are responsible of all. If only one avoids his work, the trees go in suffering and start turning yellow in its leaves and not producing. Everyone is necessary to the others. Everyone is from the life of the others and gives life to the others. The strength of the Christian is communion, in the respect of gifts, ministry, charismas, vocations and missions. May the Mother of God teach every disciple of Jesus how the body of Christ must be cultivated so that it bears fruit of eternal life for every man.

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GOING BACK TO THE ORIGINS WITH A GRATEFUL MEMORY

Reflections starting from the Speech of H.H. Francis on the 50° anniversary of the Augustinian Patristic Institute (16.2.2019)

Celebrating the 50° anniversary of the foundation of the Augustinian Patristic Institute in Rome, the Holy Father Francis invited teachers and students to renew the spirit of the institution whose birth was celebrated. The birth of this institution, as St. Paul VI underlined, had a specific end: « The return to the Fathers of the Church - he said - is part of that ascent to Christian origins, without which it would not be possible to implement the biblical renewal, the liturgical reform and the new theological research desired by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council" (4.5.1970)" (Speech).

A Church that always wants to be the sacrament of salvation needs to keep alive the memory of her origins, of her missionary mandate, of the supernatural ends for which she was established, of the means necessary to constantly renew this mission. The Fathers had this awareness alive and helped to develop it, rendering to Christ, to the Church and to salvation a great service in the light of the Holy Spirit concerning the understanding of the mystery of Redemption.

If the institutions, realities, aggregations that the Spirit inspires in the Church, are at the service of the Church, they must live so that the ends entrusted by Christ to the Church are realized. For this reason they are aroused by the Holy Spirit and for this reason, when their anniversaries are celebrated, it is necessary to always return to the origins of their call to remember the supernatural reasons of their existence and to renew the motivations that led to respond to that original call. The reasons for the gift of one's own existence to that original call must always be re-enacted in the spiritual

vigour proper of that moment.

This is why the way suggested by the Pope is wise and can be considered valid for everything that the Spirit of God has raised and raises in the Church: "The present circumstance invites us to go back with grateful memory up to the origins" (Speech). The memory is grateful because it meditates and considers God's benevolence for having looked at us in view of the delivery of a particular mission, but it must also be attentive and vigilant to consider if we remained faithful to the mandate received. For this supernatural light is needed.

The task of every institution is to vivify the today of the Church without ever neglecting the life and the way that the Church has travelled yesterday in order to arrive to today. This is the path of the authentic Tradition or that deposit that the Church received from Christ in the Holy Spirit and always wants to transmit in the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 14: 26). The Fathers represent an irreplaceable part of this Tradition. The Holy Spirit has also used them to increase the understanding of the mystery of Christ and to transmit to future generations a firm, revitalized and heightened faith.

Mother of the Redemption, you also asked us to revive the Church, inserting ourselves into this Tradition and giving it our essential contribution: the remembrance of the Word of your Son Jesus, supported by the witness of life. Ensure that we believe in this mission, especially today that it appears to be more necessary than when you entrusted it to us at its origin, by making us also a grateful and scrupulous memory of that call.

Father Rosario Carrabetta

**The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE**

IT MAY BEAR FRUIT IN THE FUTURE

(III SUNDAY OF LENT - Year C)

I AM WHO I AM (Ex 3,1-8a.13-15)

Moses asks the Lord to reveal his name to him. And the Lord answers him: "I am who I am". We know that the man in the garden of Eden gave the name to every animal and to every other creature made by God. But he did not give the name to God, because only God is God and only God is Lord of himself. Giving the name means superiority, lordship, belonging and dependence. Our God, who is the only living and true God, is: "I am". It means: "I am from eternity for eternity. I am without the before and without the after. I'm not even from myself, because I did not give myself life. I am eternal life, life without beginning and without end. I am the one who makes, by creation, every other creature being. I am the one who makes everything exist. Nothing is above me. Everything is under me for eternal obedience". Now Moses can fulfil his mission. There is no one else above his Lord. Everything is from him and for him.

**THE ROCK WAS THE CHRIST
(1Cor 10.1-6.10-12)**

Saint Paul reminds the Corinthians of the history of the children of Israel when they leave Egypt. Everybody goes out, everyone crosses the sea, everyone feeds on manna and everyone quenches his thirst with the water that flows from the rock. This rock is a figure of Christ Jesus. It is from his side pierced on the cross that today the water of life and of every grace flows, the water of the Holy Spirit that gives life to every man. But if everyone comes out of Egypt and everyone sees the wonders worked by the Lord, if all were covered by the cloud and lit by the pillar of fire, only two entered the

promised land of those who were adults when they came out of Egypt. The Lord was not pleased with most of them, because they murmured against Him, they did not have faith in Him, they came to the point of refusing to obey, even coming to despise the Lord's work. We are all warned. Everyone must make sure that the Lord is pleased with him.

**IF NOT YOU CAN CUT IT DOWN
(Lk 13,1-9)**

The history of salvation must be operated by God and man. This marvellous unity of God and of man is accomplished in Christ. Jesus gives his life for the redemption of humanity. But now Jesus is in heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father. The salvation of the world must be accomplished by God, for his Holy Spirit, through the body of Christ which is his Church. This will happen if every member of the body of Christ, each according to his vocation, mission, consecration, special conformation to Christ Jesus and particular gift of the Holy Spirit, puts all of himself, like Christ Jesus, for the realization of the mystery of salvation. Everyone is called to play his part, if we want the tree of humanity to bear fruits of justice, love, mercy and fidelity for our God and Father. If only one member of the body of Christ subtracts his work from the sanctification of humanity, the tree either does not produce or produces very few fruits. But every member of the body of Christ who has taken himself away from the work of salvation and redemption is responsible of the non-fruiting.

*by the theologian,
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