

NOTES - THE WOODWORMS OF COMMUNITY LIFE

The woodworm is almost invisible, although its work is extremely visible. This very tiny insect digs imperceptibly, works wood from inside, weakening its structure, making it fragile and brittle.

Just like a valuable piece of furniture, even the Christian community is threatened by some woodworms. It is ordinarily about invisible personal vices that work from within, destroying the spiritual fabric of the community. Among the many spiritual woodworms that damage community life, there are three particularly dangerous, on which we want to briefly recall the attention.

Pride is the vice of vices. It is the desire to be in front of others, before others, above others, whereas instead the fundamental trait of the community is to be together, to feel part of one another, all equally on the way to the Lord, even if someone is called to carry out roles of government or of particular responsibility and visibility. The proud moth eats the community because he does not seek the common good but only the satisfaction of his individual pride, breaking - in himself, before than outside of himself - the fraternal union with others.

Envy. Envy moth eats the community, because it leads to live relationships in a false, hypocritical way, without charity. Envy digs in from within relationships and empties them of truth. It alters the perception of things, making see the other as an evil, an enemy to be destroyed. However, wrongly we would think that envy is a problem of relationship with others. In reality, this is just an effect. The cause is

a false relationship with God. Whoever loves him and seeks his will cannot but rejoice in the gifts with which he enriches the community. In the gift of the other he sees a manifestation of God's love and creativity. Those who want to solve their own problems of envy then must redefine their faith, begin to look at themselves and others from the perspective of the Lord and of the building of his Kingdom.

Sloth. It could be assumed that sloth, radical laziness, the state of spiritual inertia, is a purely individual matter, at most something neutral with respect to the community, because it does not build but at least it does not even work loose. In reality, the sloth of the individual spoils the community, because it deprives it of an essential contribution and of a gift that the Lord has placed for its benefit. The "selfish sloth" (as Pope Francis calls it: see *Evangelii gaudium*, 81-83) paralyzes the vital dynamism of the Church, which is a missionary dynamism. A Church that does not expand towards others in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the accomplishment of works of charity slowly perishes. It is the same thing that happens to a nucleus of people, whose common life slowly dies, not because of particular problems, but because it has not been adequately nourished and sustained by the tension of each one towards the other. The industriousness in the good, the joy, the evangelical exuberance of each one make the community come alive, make the vitality of the gifts of the Spirit circulate in the Body of the Church, vivify the other members of this Body, as it happens when the movement of some arts activates an increased blood circulation throughout the body (let alone when all the limbs move together!).

We referred to three "deadly sins", a category that is usually thought of in a strictly individual key. But we are living members of the community, we are grafted into the relationship with others and personal sin is always reflected in community life. Then, it is up to each of us applying the anti-woodworm of the Gospel and of the Lord's grace to our lives every day.

Father Davide Marino

My sheep hear my voice

Jesus makes a distinction between sheep and sheep, between his sheep and the sheep that do not belong to him. His sheep are those the Father gives him. Never might the ones the Father does not give him, be his sheep. The Son receives everything from the Father. Nothing is from his will. Instead, everything is from the will of the Father. The sheep of the Father hear the voice of Jesus, because they recognize the voice of the Father in the voice of Jesus. That of Jesus is not a dissimilar or different voice. If this were the case, the sheep would remain confused. They are from the Father, but listen to a dissimilar and different voice. They could never follow it. The sheep of the Father know only how to hear the voice of the Father. They do not know other voices.

The same truth must be applied to every pastor to whom Jesus entrusts the care and custody of his sheep. Jesus is heard because He listens to the Father. He is followed, because He follows the Father. He is loved because He loves the Father. He is obeyed because He obeys the Father. If the pastor of Christ Jesus has a different voice, different than that of his Lord, never might the sheep hear him. The flock is dispersed, because it is without any voice to be followed. That of the shepherd is not the voice of Christ. If the shepherd does not love Christ, neither will he be loved by the sheep and they will disperse. They are not linked by the shepherd's love, because the shepherd is not linked to the love of Christ as Christ is linked to the love of the Father. If the pastor does not obey Christ, neither is obedience given to him. A man and not God, to whom all obedience must be given, would be

obeyed. This truth reveals whether we are with Christ or ourselves, whether we love Christ or ourselves and whether we obey Christ or ourselves. One thing must be said firmly in the Holy Spirit: if the sheep do not see Christ in the shepherd, they dissociate themselves, separate from him, go astray and get lost.

The true pastoral care of the pastor is not a pursuit of rules continually to be updated, modified, adjusted and corrected, to declare after a few years that they are ineffective. The true pastoral is lived between the pastor and Christ Jesus. If the pastor listens to Christ, he is listened to by the sheep. If the pastor follows Christ, he will be followed by the sheep. If the shepherd obeys Christ, he will be obeyed by the sheep. If the pastor consecrates himself entirely to Christ, as Christ consecrated himself to the Father, his flock will see him and let itself be led on the way to a full consecration to Christ the Lord. When the sheep do not see the shepherd as a true man of God and Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit, they will never hear his voice. Of course we only speak of the sheep of the Father given to Christ and given by Christ to the pastor. Just as the Father and Christ are one, so also Jesus Christ and his pastors must be one. When one is a single thing in Christ, through Christ and with Christ, even the multiple shepherds will be one among them. The only true communion of the shepherds is in the heart of Christ. Mother of God, help those who are pastors in Christ, through Christ and with Christ, to listen to Christ as Christ listens to the Father.

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CALLED TO BECOME "FISHERS OF MEN" *Reflections starting from the Message of H.H. Francis for the 56th World Day of Prayer for Vocations*

In the encounter with the Lord someone can feel the appeal of a call to the consecrated life or to the ordained priesthood. It is a discovery that excites and at the same time frightens, feeling called to become "fishers of men" in the Church's boat through a total offer of the selves and the commitment of a faithful service to the Gospel and to the brothers" (Speech).

The priestly vocation requires on the part of the chosen one the complete and definitive delivery of his life to the Lord. In imitation of the Master, who in order to fulfil the will of the Father has stripped himself of everything and made himself obedient to death on a cross, the person called to become "fisher of men" abandons desires, plans and programs of life, to achieve in full freedom the following.

The priest is chosen among men to take care of the exclusive interests of God. As a mediator of the grace and truth of Christ, the minister is sent to the brothers so that all may receive the invitation to conversion, believe in the Gospel and be saved.

He administers the sacraments with dignity and holiness, teaches with competence, guides with wisdom, constantly works the discernment between what the will of God is and what instead comes from the earth. This discernment is the essence of the ordained priesthood, but it requires constant growth in wisdom and grace and a life of intense prayer.

In this time of serious crisis of identity of the individual, where it is "medieval" to speak of universally valid values and moral principles, in a time when the only acceptable truth is the personal one, God's

love for this shattered humanity is manifested through the bold choice of many young people who respond positively to the invitation to lay down their lives for the Lord. This is undoubtedly a reason for hope for the future of the Church that, through her priests, might continue to fulfil her saving mission.

Aware that in the face of so many called to priesthood, few are those who decide to receive the sacred order, the Holy Father heartily invites young Christians to open their ears and hearts and to respond courageously to the Lord, trusting of Him: «To you, young people, I wish to say: do not be deaf to the call of the Lord! If He calls you this way, do not pull the oars in the boat and trust Him. Do not let yourself be infected by fear, which paralyzes us before the high peaks that the Lord proposes to us" (Speech).

Cooperation with this singular grace of God is more than ever necessary for every member of the ecclesial community, called, in various ways, to cultivate the vocational seeds present in it. The role of parents is essential, so that they do not hinder their children but support and encourage them to welcome this singular ministry with generosity and gratitude. In this context, the figure of presbyters appears not the least so that they may take to heart the life of the young candidates, manifesting with their virtuous, lovable and just life, the beauty of being a priest of the living God.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, with her maternal intercession obtain from the Father numerous vocations to priesthood in the Church of her Son.

Father Raffaele Feroletto

**The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE**

**MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE
(IV EASTER SUNDAY - Year C)**

THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED
TO SPREAD (Acts 13.14.43-52)

When the word of the missionaries of the Gospel is the true Word of God, of Christ Jesus, announced in the Holy Spirit, it always spreads. What does that the Word spreads mean? It certainly does not mean that it crosses the air and goes from place to place. Instead, it means that it enters the hearts and fertilizes them with God, with Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The Word spreads because many hearts let themselves be grasped by it to give it life with their lives. The field in which the Word must be sown is the heart of man. When it enters a heart, it always produces fruit to be sown in other hearts. If it remains outside the heart, it might never spread. It is not in the heart. It is not in its field. It will remain sterile. Since it does not die, it might not bear fruit. If the Word is not firmly planted in our hearts, we might never plant it in other hearts. Only who plants the Word and gives it life with his life will make it spread.

WILL LEAD THEM TO SPRINGS OF
LIFE-GIVING WATER (Rev 7,9.14b-17)

What good is it to follow Jesus if then you are persecuted, hated, abused, condemned to beasts and wild animals, or you are crucified or burned alive or subjected to any kind of torture on earth? Discouragement could arise in many hearts and in reality it arose and following Jesus was abandoned. John sees a host of martyrs follow Jesus, but to go where? To be led to the sources of the waters of life. They gave Jesus the life of the body. Jesus has gathered their souls, tomorrow in the resurrection of the just, he will also gather their bodies, unite them

with their souls, the human person that had been broken up by death will be reassembled and all will be introduced where there is eternal life, into the Saint Jerusalem of the sky. It is in it that there will be neither death nor pain, nor suffering and nor sadness anymore. A moment of suffering and from Jesus you will be led into the fullness of life and endless bliss.

I KNOW THEM AND THEY FOLLOW
ME (Jn 10, 27-30)

Jesus is led by the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Father entrusted his sheep to him. He leads the sheep, in the Holy Spirit and the sheep follow him. Jesus follows the Father, in the Holy Spirit. The sheep follow Christ, in the Holy Spirit. It is the pastoral rule that every pastor to whom Christ gives the sheep that the Father gave to him so that they may be guided on the path of truth, justice, charity, hope and faith will have to follow. As Jesus attests to the Father that He has not lost any sheep that was given to him, so also every pastor in Christ, with Christ and through Christ, must attest to Christ that he has not lost any sheep. He must also attest to him that he went to seek all the sheep of the Father and led them into the fold of his body which is the Church. Without this double attestation, tomorrow it would be better not to appear before him. He will not welcome anyone in the eternal dwellings that caused his sheep to be dispersed. He shed his blood for the sheep. Even his shepherds for the sheep must shed their blood.

*by the theologian,
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