

NOTES - A BOOK: Edoardo M. Palma, *From the "animal" to the "spiritual" man. Themes of Pauline anthropology, Assisi 2019*

The Pauline vision of man, fundamental pillar of the whole Christian anthropology, is built on the passage from the "animal" to the "spiritual" man in Christ. The aim of this essay is to describe the main guidelines of the Apostle's anthropological thought. And this following as a trace the Letter to the Romans, to which from time to time some passages from other Pauline texts are integrated (1-2Cor, Gal, Phil, Eph, Col, 1-2Tm).

After a substantial presentation of Christ (Rom 1:1-7), from whose mystery flows salvation for all humanity (cf. Phil 2; Eph 1-2; 2 Cor 4; Col 1-2), and of Paul himself in that as an example of the new humanity in Him (Rom 1: 15-15; cf. 1Cor 9; Phil 3; 1Tm 1; 2Tm 4), the text of the Letter to the Romans presents the dramatic situation of sin in which the world finds itself (1,18 -32).

Of course, the possibility that there are people who do good (2,7,16) cannot be excluded a priori. However, outside of the Christian faith this might never come to pass fully (3,1-18). This leads to the tremendous realization that no one, not even those who know his will by the Law, can be considered right before God (3.19-20).

Therefore, the only way to true salvation for man is Christ and faith in him (3,21-22).

In fact, for it, the transition from the "animal" to "spiritual" man is determined, with the gift of the Spirit and the consequent realization between Jesus and the disciple of an essential bond. In fact, this, touching the ontological level of human existence (Gal 3), makes of the Christian a new creature in him (2Cor 5) and a true son of the Father.

Who then is the baptized? He is the one who every day has to live the grace received in Christ in his personal life, dying to sin (Romans 6: 1-7) and always growing in perfect justice (6: 8-14), to the full conformation to him (6, 15-23). This is what Paul himself calls "sanctification" (6.19). In fact, with the interior helpings of the Spirit (8,1-8.25-30), man succeeds in overcoming the seductions of sin (Gal 5; Eph 6), thus being able to walk in the virtues (Rom 5: 1-5), towards the future glory (8.23).

Then, in the final part of the Letter to the Romans the Apostle indicates how to live all this in the concrete situations of human existence. One begins with the good exercise of his own charisma and ministry (12: 3-8), according to the laws of charity (1Cor 13). And this by obeying the constituted authorities (Rm 13), respecting the freedom and vocation of others (chap. 14). All this always remaining in communion of grace and truth with Christ (chap. 15) and with every other member of his body, which is the Church (chap. 16; 1Ts 2).

For the language adopted - intentionally simplified -, I address these themes of Pauline anthropology not only to theology students, but also to all those who want to dedicate themselves to deepening such important issue for the Christian faith.

The Author

Have not ten been purified?

For every gift the Lord bestows on us, a hymn of blessing, praise, thanksgiving and glory must be raised to him. When a grace is asked and He grants it, as soon as the grace is given, immediately a great prayer of gratitude must rise from our hearts. Everything is from Him and for Him. If then grace is given through the intercession of Christ Jesus, it is right that we thank the Father through his Mediator. The gift was obtained for the Mediator, the prayer of blessing, praise and thanksgiving must be raised for the Mediator. But grace is not only asked, many graces are given directly by the Lord without our request. He must be praised and blessed, celebrated forever and ever also for these graces. His mercy is great, his love is infinite and his charity for the sons of men is eternal.

Today, there is a great sin in which we have fallen. This sin has a name: contempt and waste of the grace of the Lord. Today we despise the sacraments, the Word of the Lord, the Church, Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father of heaven. Every day, our God intervenes with a shower of graces, blessings, support and help, but we do not take a millionth part of all this divine good. We waste all and despise everything with our superficial participation, fruit of our foolishness and ignorance. The Lord grants us a sea of mercy capable of elevating our lives to the summit of holiness and we welcome it not according to truth, we receive it without wisdom and intelligence, nor do we want

to welcome it. We are so satiated with ourselves as to deem that by now we have come to the summit of Christian perfection. In reality we are only dry trees that do not produce any fruit of eternal life, either for ourselves or for others. Infertility in the evangelizing and sanctifying mission is the sign that on our part there is waste of all the grace that the Lord bestows on us day by day.

We participate in the Holy Mass and remain the same as we entered the Church. We receive the Eucharist with lightness, superficiality and sometimes even with grave sin in the soul, without being able to produce a single fruit of conversion. Not only are we distracted, we prevent others from listening with our ongoing disturbance. The sacrament of confession is also received only to have a clear conscience, but not to begin a true path of spiritual renewal. The wasted, despised and frustrated grace makes us responsible before the Lord. No one might justify himself on judgment day tomorrow. The Lord will show him all the graces he granted him and which have been thwarted duly by him. To whom much has been given, much will be asked. The Heavenly Father does not consume the life of his faithful servants for nothing. For every word of light given and not accepted we will give account today and in eternity. Mother of God, convince our hearts so that we welcome every grace, continually raising to the Lord our God a hymn of great praise.

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APOSTLE, WORD AND POWER OF THE SPIRIT TOGETHER

Reflections from the Catechesis on the Acts of the Apostles: 4 of H.H. Francis (26.6.2019)

"They were assiduous in listening to the teaching of the Apostles and in the fraternal union, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers" (Acts 2.42). This icon, on which Pope Francis reflected in the Audience of June 26th, is presented in the vital context of the first Christian community, fruit of the kerygmatic preaching of the Apostle Peter and of the power of the Holy Spirit who, in his freedom and divine wisdom, added to the nascent nucleus of the Church, "those who were saved" (Acts 2,48).

In this short article I intend to highlight some aspects of the biblical pericope in question, which can help us construct our spiritual building.

First of all it follows Peter's great "kerygmatic" discourse on the day of Pentecost, when in the Upper Room the Apostles had been transformed into new men by the power of the Spirit that had descended on them: the ecclesial community was born, and with such power they present themselves to the world announcing the mystery of Christ: Apostle, Word and Power of the Spirit together. When the Apostle of the Lord announces and reminds the Gospel according to truth and walks making himself be animated by the Spirit, the Lord always performs the miracle of aggregating to his Church men and women of every place and condition, since this communion has the strength to "pierce the heart" and to raise the question that starts the path of conversion and faith: "what must we do?"

It is here that the nascent Church grows, is nourished and is characterized in her vital and paradigmatic dimensions, since at the proclamation of the Word conversion, Baptism, the remission of sins and the gift of the

Spirit follow. Therefore, if on the one hand, attention must be placed on the action of the Apostle who announces in the Holy Spirit, on the other there are the members of the community who must listen to the teaching of the Apostles, live the real communion with the other brothers, both spiritual and material, place the Eucharist at the centre of their believing existence and interpret their life as a gift.

Before the Word of the Gospel and the gift of the Spirit we are all called to feel challenged and responsible, each according to his own ministry and the gift of grace received, of the life and mission of the Church. Pope Francis affirms: «The narration of the Acts allows us to look within the walls of the domus where the first Christians gather as the family of God, the space of koinonia, that is, of the communion of love between brothers and sisters in Christ. It can be seen that they live in a quite specific way». What is this quite specific way? A life lived as new men, reborn from water and Spirit, a life lived in obedience to the Gospel and the commandment of charity, in mutual support and solidarity. With an expression dear to St. Gregory the Great, an experience that in turn becomes *praedicatio*. Here then is the other prodigy that the Lord works in hearts: Christians who enjoy the esteem and benevolence of the people, an esteem as an instrument of proclamation, an approach to the Lord and credibility of the Body of Christ.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, help us to be always faithful and credible members, in words and deed, of the Church of the Lord, a community to be loved and served with all the gift of our life.

Father Flavio Placida

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

JESUS, MASTER! HAVE PITY ON US!
(XXVIII SUNDAY O.T. - Year C)

PLUNGED INTO THE JORDAN SEVEN TIMES (2Kings 5,14-17)

Life is from obedience to the Word, whatever it tells us to do. The truth of the Word is not in the one who receives it, but in the one who says it. Elisha commands Naaman the Syro, a leper, to descend seven times into the Jordan River because in those waters was his recovery. In truth, healing was not in the waters, but in obedience to the Word. Naaman does not know that the truth of the Word is in obedience and not in the waters and that is why he refuses to go down. Then, convinced by those who had come with him, he obeys the prophet and his flesh returns as clean as that of a young man. What is the fruit of this obedience? The true faith is born in his heart. He wants to thank the prophet with great gifts. The prophet refuses. The fruit of obedience is not the wealth of the prophet, but the birth of true faith in the God who is the Lord of the whole earth. God must be thanked and blessed. We thank him by choosing him as our own God.

SUCH IS MY GOSPEL (2Tm 2,8-13)

St. Paul often speaks in his letters of "My Gospel". Why does he add "my" to the Gospel? Is it not enough to say: "According to the Gospel"? He adds "my", because the Gospel alone does not exist. There is the Gospel, the Holy Spirit and the Apostle of the Lord. There is the Church, the Apostle, the Holy Spirit and the Gospel. Since the Holy Spirit leads the Apostle Paul from truth to truth, from light to light and from grace to grace, the understanding that He has of Christ Jesus is different than every other understanding. For this reason he always adds: "according to my Gospel", according

to the truth that I have of the Gospel in the Holy Spirit. It is wrong to say: "The Gospel says this". The Gospel does not speak for itself. The Gospel speaks through the mouth of the Apostle. The Apostle speaks by motion, inspiration, conduction and suggestion of the Spirit. Different spirit, different Gospel. The measure of the Spirit in us is the measure of the truth of the Gospel in us.

YOUR FAITH HAS SAVED YOU (Lk 17: 11-19)

Every Word of the Gospel must be correctly interpreted. For this we need a special, always new light of the Holy Spirit. Ten lepers cry out from afar to Jesus, to have mercy on them and heal them. They are sent to present themselves to the priests, whose task was that of verifying the healing and offering the sacrifices prescribed by the Law. If Jesus sends them to the priests, it means that on his part healing has already been given. Along the way they are purified. Nine continue on their way, one goes back because he wants to thank God through Christ Jesus. Through Christ the Lord he had obtained grace, through Christ the Lord he wants to bless and praise God who had purified him. Jesus tells this man: "Your faith has saved you". What salvation does Jesus speak of? Certainly not of salvation from leprosy, but of the salvation of the soul. This man now believes that Jesus is the true Messiah, the true Christ and the true Mediator of salvation. Persevering in this faith, he will obtain eternal salvation. The others are purified in the body, not healed in the soul. In the soul they are still lepers.

*by the theologian,
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