

## Tuscany: Meeting of the Regional council of lay aggregations

**On** November 16, at the Florence Charterhouse, all the representatives of the Regional Lay Associations of Tuscany were summoned for a confrontation, in dialogue with the Bishops of the region. Some adherents of the Grosseto Apostolic Movement also willingly accepted the invitation to participate, to gather around the Pastors and be available to follow every indispensable directive to strengthen its charisma, favouring the opportunity to know many other associative realities.

At the beginning of the work, H.E. Msgr. Fausto Tardelli, Bishop of Pistoia and delegate for the laity of the CEI, noted how the associated apostolate happily corresponds to the human and Christian needs of the faithful and shows itself as a sign of communion and of the unity of the Church in Christ.

Quoting the Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" of Pope Francis, he focused mainly on n. 102, which highlights the growth of the awareness of the identity and mission of the laity, a deep-rooted sense of community, a great fidelity to the commitment of the charity of catechesis and of the celebration of faith.

Then, the Prelate pointed out that time changes has led to the crisis of associative realities that were once "flourishing and glorious", with an insistent decline of adherents. This could lead to consider them "a residue of other times", while, on the contrary, they make an effective contribution to community discernment, provided they feel fully part of the Christian community. Finally, they can con-

tribute, in a significant way, to revitalize parish and diocesan communities, in the name of communion, recognizing and welcoming each other as a mutual gift.

Some members of the C.R.A.L.T. have alternated each other, to offer a testimony of their being Church with the expectations, needs and problems, emerging from the service provided in the various parishes to which they belong.

HE Card. Giuseppe Betori, after having reaffirmed the principle of communion "in itinere" constitutive of the Church and re-proposed by the Second Vatican Council, indicated three fundamental modalities of aggregation and precisely: to aggregate, to be formed; to come together to express oneself in a pastoral witness; to join together for a witness in the world.

Then referring to the interventions of the Aggregations, despite having highlighted the beauty of the language, he nevertheless invited "to understand and comprehend each other". In this sense, the consultation is crucial for a better knowledge and interpretation of the language.

He urged a more conscious reciprocity between Aggregations and Bishops, respecting the knowledge of common needs and expressive forms, so as to be of help to the Pastors, when it is necessary to express oneself on the position of the Catholic world.

We would like to warmly thank the Tuscan Bishops and the presidency of the C.R.A.L.T., for having favoured an appointment of considerable importance, opportune to share what was given and allow us to acquire an increased awareness of our mission. We are aware that only a path based on unity, on sharing and on communion, will allow us to be a lively and productive leaven for a world that, today more than ever, needs mature, trained lay people, rooted in the solid and firm foundations of the House of God and on the daily nourishment and obedience of His edifying and regenerating Word.

Silvana Grande

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## Don't be afraid to take Mary with you

Virgin Mary finds herself pregnant through the work of the Holy Spirit. A unique and unrepeatable event. Through a miracle, that never happened in the history of salvation, a woman could conceive without the help of man. But never any other woman could conceive the Only Begotten Son of the Father, who is Light from Light, true God from true God, generated and not created, of the same substance as the Father. Not only is Mary a virgin and a mother, not only is she a mother and a virgin, she is the Virgin who conceived the Word of life in her bosom. In her the Eternal Son of the eternal God became flesh, he became a true man. What he was not he assumed and did not abandon what he was. He remained what he was, God and Son of God, he assumed what he was not: true humanity, becoming true Son of God and true Son of man. True Son of the Father and true Son of Abraham and of David.

As every man who comes into this world needs by divine and eternal law a true father and a true mother, so also Jesus needs a true father as well as a true mother. How can Joseph become the true father of Jesus? Taking the Virgin Mary in marriage, always respecting her virginity, because in her body, in her soul and in her spirit, Mary is entirely and only of the Lord and adopting the Son that will be born from her. However, it is not just a matter of legal adoption. Instead, it is a matter of spiritual adoption. Through the work of the Holy Spirit the Virgin Mary conceived the Son of God in her womb, through the work of the Holy Spirit Joseph conceives the Son of

God in his heart and he makes him really and truly his son. Does not the Holy Spirit in the waters of Baptism conceive the new creature that is born of the waters in the heart of the Father and the Father welcomes us as his true son? We are children of God by adoption, but not by legal adoption, but by adoption which is true conception in the heart of the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit. Joseph who knows nothing of the great mystery thinks of withdrawing from the life of Mary, without causing her any harm.

The Lord who created the mystery in Mary is the same that creates it in Joseph. He sends him his angel. This reveals him what God has done in Mary and what he wants to do in him. He asks Joseph to take the Virgin Mary with him as his true bride and to take the child as his true son. As soon as he wakes from sleep, Joseph readily obeys and does what the Lord has shown him. Immediate and perfect obedience. Thus Joseph enters the mystery of salvation and redemption. Through his spiritual paternity, of his heart and not of the Law, Jesus is the true Son of Abraham, true Son of David, true Messiah of the Lord and the true Redeemer and Saviour of the world. He will save his people, that is, the whole world from its sins. Everything is from the obedience of Mary but also from the obedience of Joseph. Mother of the Redemption, help us, disciples of Jesus, to enter into the great mystery of Christ and to give it full life in our hearts. Make us obedient to his every Word so that we too can be inserted into the true mystery of salvation.

Mgr. Costantino Di Bruno

## WISE CUSTODIANS OF SOULS AND OF THE CHURCH

### Reflections from the Homily of H.H. Francis on the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (09.11.2019)

The words that the Holy Father addressed to presbyters present in the Basilica of St. John in Laterano on last November 9 are a program of life for every presbyter of all times: "To you presbyters I want to dedicate a verse from the second reading, from the First Letter to Corinthians: "No one can lay a foundation other than that which is already there, which is Jesus Christ" (3.11). This is your task, the heart of your ministry: helping the community to always be at the feet of the Lord to listen to his Word; keeping it away from all worldliness, from bad compromises; guarding the foundation and the holy root of the spiritual building; defending it from rapacious wolves, from those who would like to make it deviate from the way of the Gospel. Like Paul, you too are "wise architects" (cf. 3:10), wise because you are well aware that any other idea or reality we wanted to put at the foundation of the Church in place of the Gospel, could perhaps guarantee us more success, perhaps immediate gratifications, but it would inevitably lead to the collapse, the collapse of the whole spiritual edifice!» (Homily).

The mission of the Priest in the Church is truly delicate, and extremely essential! He has a great responsibility before God and men. First and foremost, he must ensure that every soul entrusted to him learns "to stand at the feet of the Lord to hear his Word". Jesus must be chosen by each one as the only Master and his Word placed as the sole foundation of his own existence and of the life of the Church.

The priest must watch and work zealously for this to happen. He cannot doze off, because he is placed as a sentinel of souls

and of the whole Church. If the enemy attacks and he does not give the alarm, the massacre will be great, but of every soul that is lost the guilt it will be charged to the Priest (cf. Ez 3,16-19). Not only must he give the alarm; before that he must form consciences with all the wisdom of the Holy Spirit so that the falsity of Satan does not enter the hearts.

There are many "rapacious wolves", thousands of them are born in every age and their voracity drives them to devour anyone, without any mercy. Therefore, the Priest must in all be in conformity with Jesus the Good Shepherd, who defends the sheep and prevents "worldliness and bad compromises with the thought of the world" from conquering them. The weapon that he must use is not the iron sword, but the sword of the Word of God, which, always read in the faith of the Church, must teach everyone to separate good from evil with surgical precision. If this distinction is not made, one inevitably falls into the trap, the house collapses and the ruin is great (cf. Mt 7: 21-27).

But the Priest must know that he too is constantly tempted. The immediate gratifications, human glory, pride and sin that knocks violently at the doors of his heart, drive him to deny the Lord and to debase his ministry, so much as to turn him into a ministry of darkness. This is why the Priest must pray without getting tired so as not to enter into temptation and take care of his spiritual life every day, walking in communion with his confreres, the Bishop and the Holy Father.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, keep all the presbyters in the truth of their ministry and make them wise guardians of souls and of the whole Church.

Sac. Lucio Bellantoni

### The Lord's Day *ROMAN RITE*

### DO NOT BE AFRAID TO TAKE MARY YOUR WIFE INTO YOUR HOME (IV SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR A)

#### THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD (Is 7,10-14)

In Holy Scripture some signs given by God to his people go well beyond the immediate, historical moment, they become prophecy and a proclamation of salvation that will be fulfilled in the distant future. Isaiah says to Ahaz, a wicked king and without any faith in God, that if the Lord brings the people into his covenant, will not allow any foreign people to bother it. He will intervene and free from any attack by the enemy. The king can ask the Lord for any sign as proof of the truth that is in his words, but the king refuses, saying that he does not want to tempt the Lord. Now it is the Lord who gives the sign: "Behold the virgin will conceive and bear a son". Then, there are many inferences how these words were fulfilled. Through the mouth of the Evangelist Matthew the Holy Spirit reveals that the Virgin of whom the prophet speaks is Mary of Nazareth. In her, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Only Begotten Son of the Father was made flesh.

#### DESCENDED FROM DAVID ACCORDING TO THE FLESH (Rm 1,1-7)

Jesus is the only person with a dual birth. He was born in eternity, generated by God before all ages. He is Light from Light, true God from true God, of the same substance as the Father. He is also the true Son of Abraham and true Son of David. He is true God and true man. He, the eternal Word, made true Son of man, so that in Him every other man became, by generation in the Holy Spirit, a true son of God, but always in Him, with Him and for Him. We become children of the new covenant, children of salvation and redemption, if we are clothed

with the double birth. The Word was born in eternity from God and then in time from the seed of David, in Mary, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Every man must be called to become a true son of God, in his Son Christ Jesus, being born from water and the Holy Spirit. We are not in the new covenant, we are not the Church, if this double birth is not fulfilled. Whoever denies the truth of baptism does not love man.

#### HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS (Mt 1,18-24)

Why did Jesus come, was born, died and has risen? To free his people from their sins. Who is the people of Jesus? Every man. Every man belongs to Christ by creation. Everything was made for the Word in view of the Word. But every man must also belong to him for redemption. Everything was redeemed by Him in view of Him. What is the ministry today of every disciple of Jesus? Becoming in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in hierarchical communion with the Pastors of the Church in truth and grace, saviours of their brothers. How is salvation from sin worked today? Preaching the Gospel, calling for conversion, urging them to let themselves be reconciled with God, to become his children by the work of the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism. The announced Word is the beginning of salvation, but it is not yet salvation. This begins its journey towards eternal salvation in the moment of conversion and generation in the waters of baptism. Therefore, they are in great error those who say a word, do not say the Word and do not invite to conversion.

by the theologian,  
Msgr. Costantino Di Bruno