

THE EXPERIENCE OF FR FRANCESCO CRISTOFARO / 1

TV, radio, social media are powerful channels for conveying news and messages. The right and responsible use of these means can bear many fruits of good. On the other side of the media channel there can always be someone you don't see and don't know but who needs that word, that testimony, that image and that prayer. «Since I started my television experience - first on Father Pius Tv with the broadcasts "In the faith of the Church" and today with "Made for Heaven" and then on Tv2000 collaborating with the broadcast "Solar Hour"- I have always intended to give the other person a message of hope, of the Gospel and of light. The feedback from the people who follow me is wonderful. Letters arrive in the editorial office, telephone calls to say simply that those words were needed in a moment of darkness, loss and suffering. One day a lady wrote to me in an email: "Please father, always give us Christ. We need it."

Today, Fr. Francesco Cristofaro is aired weekly with the heading "Made for Heaven". He designed this program with a dual purpose: to remind man, whoever he is, that he is made for heaven. His eternal homeland is Heaven, paradise. You

have to get there by walking day by day on the roads of the Gospel, in observance of the laws of the Lord. "Today, man has locked himself only in an earthly dimension. He lives as if he were never to die. He does not think about the spirit anymore. He has lost all reference to holy morality". Then, here is the second aim of the program: to examine and deepen the truths of the faith as a concrete help in the daily spiritual journey.

Fr. Francesco Cristofaro is a parish priest in the Catanzaro-Squillace diocese. On Radio Mater he leads the column "In the light of faith" and is invited in several Italian parishes and cities to bring his testimony of life. To the always attentive and numerous audience, the priest speaks with simplicity and touches on strong subjects such as acceptance and integration, disability and abortion, the value and dignity of life and much more.

«First of all I am a parish priest – Fr. Francesco says. Healing souls is very demanding. We priests have a serious responsibility. Here is why also through this new program of 32 episodes we are going to deal with topics that will help everyone to question himself on the degree of his faith, examine himself thoroughly and enthusiastically resume his journey».

Fr. Francesco has an important pastoral activity also on social media. Here are the days and times of the broadcast.

"Made for Heaven" on Father Pius Tv  
 Sunday 8:40 am; Monday 10 am; Tuesday 1:45 pm; Friday at 12:45; Saturday 10:15 am. Ch 145 of digital, 852 Sky, 445 of TvSat.



You are the light of the world

The Apostle John reveals two truths that must be kept in the heart by every man who wants to be a true disciple of Jesus: "Now this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say, "We have fellowship with him," while we continue to walk in darkness, we lie and do not act in truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn 1,5-7). God is eternal light. The Son is eternal Light by generation from the Father: God from God, Light from Light, generated, not created, of the same substance as the Father. The Holy Spirit is also eternal Light, through his procession from the Father and the Son. Any other light, if it is natural, is by creation of the Word. If it is spiritual it is by participation of the eternal Light which is God and which is received in Christ Jesus, becoming, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the waters of baptism, partakers of the divine nature. By new generation we become new creatures, partakers of the divine Light.

We can compare the participation of the divine Light to the iron which, put in the fire, becomes impregnated with the nature of the fire, however without being transformed into fire. It always remains iron, but it also takes the nature of fire. When the iron comes out of the fire, the cooling process begins and after a short time it becomes iron again. This is the case for those who are baptized in Christ Jesus. In order for them to remain light and grow in the participation of divine light until they become very intense light, it is necessary

to grow in obedience to the Word. The more one obeys the Gospel, the more he lives it and the more nature becomes light in the Lord, it becomes impregnated with ever more shining light. While the less we obey, the less we live the Gospel, and the more we return to the darkness from which we had been freed by the powerful action of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of salvation. The participation of the eternal light is by no means static: one receives and remains stable forever. Instead one grows in it, but he also decreases until the light goes out, returning to darkness. It is a truth that must always be remembered.

From what do we know that we are in the light? From the works we have done. If we produce the works of the flesh, we returned on being darkness. The world sees our darkness and will never be converted to the Gospel. It will never glorify our Father who is in heaven. Instead, if we produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit, that is, the fruits of the light that always grows and never decreases, then for us many hearts will see God, Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit and will welcome Christ as their Redeemer and Saviour, the Father as the source of true love, the Holy Spirit as the eternal and divine principle of every communion of man with God and man with man. The conversion of many hearts is the great miracle of our light which grows and becomes more and more shining. Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints, arrange that every Christian grows from light to light for all the days of his life, without ever returning to being darkness.

Msgr. Costantino Di Bruno

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## STEPHEN AND PAUL, TRUE ANNOUNCERS OF CHRIST

### Reflections from the words of H.H. Francis during the 26 December 2019 Angelus, Feast of St. Stephen

**D**uring the Angelus of December 26, Pope Francis said that the first martyr Stephen "knew how to narrate Jesus with words, and above all with his life", because he "became similar to his Master both in life and in death".

We are used to believing that the first time that Paul saw the risen Christ with his own eyes was on the road to Damascus, when the Lord appeared to him in the splendour of his glory: "Saul, why do you persecute me?" [...] "I am Jesus, that you persecute!" (Acts 9, 4-5). It is necessary we pay attention to the words of Jesus: He identifies himself, his "I", with that same Church which he ferociously persecuted. Therefore, we can say that the future Apostle had already had "vision" of Christ in the testimony of his disciples. However, he had not yet been able to recognize him. In fact, the evangelist Luke reported of the presence of Paul at the time of the martyrdom of Stephen, who was killed in a state of such an intimate union with Christ, as to make him truly be present and alive in himself: «And they stoned Stephen, who prayed and it said: "Lord Jesus, welcome my spirit." Then he bent his knees and shouted in a loud voice: "Lord, do not impute this sin on them." Having said this, he died" (Acts 7,59-60).

It was on this occasion that Paul "saw" the living Christ for the first time, but since he was still devoid of faith, he could not recognize him in his mystical, ecclesial, martyred and crucified Body. Nevertheless, in the weakness of Stephen's flesh, the power of Christ's passion truly was manifested. It is no coincidence that Luke describes Stephen's death by making precise references to the narrative of the crucifixion: "Jesus said:"

Father, forgive them because they don't know what they are doing" [...]. Jesus, shouting out loud, said: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit". Having said this, he expired" (Lk 23,33-34.46). The announcement of the Crucifix made in Stephen's death was preparatory to the conversion of Paul, which will come to development, however, only at the moment of the "Christophany" on the road to Damascus.

In defending the one and only God of the Fathers, Paul believed to serve and worship God in a dignified way, but the Lord, also through the experience of Stephen's testimony, led him to understand that the only holy and pleasing cult to God can be celebrated by recognizing the divine lordship of the Son Jesus, exercised in intimate and personal unity with the Church. Paul will become the Apostle of the Lord, he too will be called to proclaim the Gospel. But, first of all, to proclaim Christ and testify him it was necessary for him to recognize him alive and personally present and active in his ecclesial Body, hierarchically ordained by the will of Jesus himself. Only later, once he became that Body himself, having been united with Christ through the Church, he was able to announce him effectively, growing in the mystical identification with him, until when, like Stephen, also in Paul's own "I", Christ's very "I" (cf. Gal 2:20) was manifested, the power of his cross and resurrection.

Mother of the Redemption, give us eyes to recognize that your Son is by now existing only united to the Church and give us humility to understand that one cannot serve him if not united to him, in his Body.

**Father Emmanuele Rotundo**

The  
Lord's Day  
ROMAN RITE

JUST SO, YOUR LIGHT MUST SHINE BEFORE OTHERS  
(V SUNDAY O.T. - YEAR A)

THEN YOUR LIGHT SHALL BREAK FORTH LIKE THE DAWN (Is 58,7-10)

What makes the difference between a son of Israel and every other man on earth is not his religious practices. Every people and nation have their cult works. Religion itself does not reveal the real difference. This is created by obedience to the Word of the true God who governs both justice and charity, mercy and compassion. Our religious practices are useless without obedience to the Word, indeed all worship has the purpose of predisposing the heart to an ever fuller and perfect obedience to the true Word of God. The light that rises like the dawn and illuminates the world is obedience to the law. Without obedience one is darkness with darkness. No one will ever see the light of those who are disciples of the true God and Lord. Fasting does not make us men full of light. Instead, obedience to the Word which regulates both our works of justice and mercy and love makes light us in the Lord.

JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED (1Cor 2,1-5)

Saint Paul lives with only one desire in his heart: preaching Jesus Christ and this Crucified, because it is in Him, in the Crucified One, that all the love of God for man and all the love of the Man-God for his brothers is manifested. Without the vision before our eyes of Christ Crucified and the most pure faith in Him, we have a Gospel without history, without life and without any exemplarity. Christ Crucified is the attestation that every Word of the Gospel, every Word of God and every one of his Commands can be observed. In fact, Jesus

made himself obedient to the Father until death and death on the cross. If Jesus, who is a true man, has come to an obedience capable of annihilating himself, canceling himself up to be crucified by his creature, every other man can also succeed in his annihilation and obliteration for the salvation of his brothers. Obedience is always universal, as well as particular. One obeys to redeem the world.

THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS (Mt 5,13-16)

Faith must be an invisible and visible reality at the same time. If invisible reality does not produce visible fruits, corresponding to its nature, it is a sign that faith is dead. Each tree produces according to its nature. If a tree does not produce according to its law, it either failed in its truth or it died. Jesus' disciple is light of the world. He must not only be invisible, but also visible light. How does light make itself visible? Through the works it produces according to its nature. Since faith is obedience to every Word that came out of the mouth of Christ, according to the modalities left to us by Jesus who brought his light to the cross living it as a Crucifix, if you separate from the Word, faith is dead. But even if the Word is not obeyed, faith is dead. If the world does not see the works of our faith, it might never glorify God and never reach faith. You see faith, you come to faith. Faith is always born in one heart seeing the faith that lives in another heart. Faith is seen, by seeing works. The works are not seen, there is no faith.

*by the theologian,*

**Msgr. Costantino Di Bruno**