

RUBRIC - SAINT AUGUSTINE SPEAKS TO THE MAN OF TODAY (3/MONICA AND AUGUSTINE)

"The family is the place where parents become the first teachers of the faith for their children. It is an artisan task, from person to person" (Amoris Laetitia 16)

With these words, Pope Francis exhorts each parent to become aware of the special mission that surrounds their life and of the responsibility before the Lord for a "task" received on the day of the Baptism of their children; an arduous and difficult task, not without any obstacles.

Obstacles that Santa Monica, St. Augustine's mother, has endured and overcome with determination in the education of her children, with perseverance in prayer and with full trust in the Lord.

This is confirmed by Augustine, who in his Confessions makes a portrait of his mother as an exemplary model to turn to: "Monica was multi-faceted in appearance, virile in faith, vigilant in calmness, maternal in love and Christian in piety".

Determined to educate her children in faith, she never gave up, "she had raised her children by giving birth to them as many times as she had seen them go away from the Lord" (Conf. IX, 9) resorting to God with constant prayers. And even when Augustine seemed by now lost in his restless wandering, Monica replied to her son with the cer-

tainty of her faith: "I believe in Christ that before migrating from this world I will have seen you a convinced Catholic". (Conf. VI, 1)

Monica was certain that: "it could not happen that the son of so many tears were lost", as Bishop Ambrogio told her, to whom she had turned to for help. (Conf. III, 12)

Monica's confidence stemmed from a heart full of trust in the Lord.

The faith that Monica had so much at heart to transmit to her children, was in all that she lived daily, it was enough to look at her: "Monica was assiduous in going to church, practicing alms by taking care of the poor and she had ruled her house with devotion. Living her life in simplicity and the careful attention to small things, she managed to convert her atheist husband; in conversations with her friends she was a good adviser; she also won the aversion of her mother-in-law and she succeeded with respect, persevering in endurance and docility; she had received a great gift from God, that of being able to bring peace where there was dispute."

"Such was Monica, Augustine confesses, thanks to the instructions he had received from the Lord, his spiritual master." (Conf. IX, 9)

The strength with which Saint Monica lived her mission to keep her children in faith, a mission that every mother and every parent must have at heart, was the result of a great love for the Lord, a love that Monica poured into everything she did.

Just as the inspirer in the Apostolic Movement has always exhorted (as an example, I am thinking of the splendid text "Mission of a mother"), urging us to live and do everything for love: "Being a mother is a mission, a mission of love. Mom, pray! Everything is prayer, if you do it with love and for love... you will be an instrument of conversion in your mission as a mother."

Stefania Tolomeo



May the patient and benign Lord guide our steps

The Gospel of this Sunday speaks to us through the parables about the "Kingdom of Heaven". The parabolic language of Jesus highlights, according to the degree of understanding, as "Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known" (Mt 10,26). But the disciples themselves do not always fully understand the mystery. In this context too, they will always be the ones to ask the Master for explanations.

Wheat and weeds represent good and bad. At least in the field, unlike human living, nobody has sown the weeds. But they still exist in the field. In the parable, the servants themselves are the ones to note this presence and question the owner about "why ever there are weeds" together with the wheat planted with the patience and effort of the farmer.

A similar context that emerges in our questions when we ask ourselves about the beauty and goodness of God in creation and about the evil and sin that man himself, created in his image and likeness, proposes and feeds even with great diabolical intelligence.

Good and evil walk on the same road. We human beings are given the freedom to choose between good and evil; to be builders of peace and love or to be wreckers of the grace of the Lord with our actions, our thoughts and plans too often slaves of the world.

Let us notice well how many times we ignore God from our choices and we are ready to make wars to show hatred to the brothers, forgetting that we have been created to love.

The servants also ask the master the question: "Do you want us to go and pull the weeds away?"

In this question we note how we all wished we could be resolvers and judges with full powers, excluding patience and even the cross. But even in the face of human impatience, God does not ask to eradicate the weeds. He shows patience in the certainty of a possible conversion.

Jacques Marie Louis Monsabré, a famous Dominican preacher, during a sermon in the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris thus addressed the people: "If God granted me his omnipotence for 24 hours, how many things I would change in this world!". But always before the people he continued: "But if God, together with his omnipotence, also granted me his omniscience, I believe I would leave all things as they are".

In the parable we also note how God patiently waits until the wheat is harvested. And it will be precisely at that moment that he will put everything in order, separating good from evil.

And it is always that providence of God that allows that pinch of yeast to ferment the dough, making the bread soft and tasty. This process also takes place in secret, but it also requires human collaboration.

Through parables, Jesus invites us to imitate God's patience in the face of evil, reaffirming that we too can be that leaven of love, charity and solidarity towards those who limp or have lost their way.

Aware that everyone's destiny is played out in free choices, may the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, help us know how to choose with a right conscience between good and evil, becoming imitators of Her son Jesus.

father Giovanni Scarpino

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THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

Reflections starting from the catechetical cycle of H.H. Francis on prayer / 1 (6 May 2020)

In the general audience of 6 May, Pope Francis began a series of catecheses on prayer, called "breath of faith", "its most proper expression".

He carries on the argument starting from the Gospel episode of Bartimaeus (cf. Mk 10: 46-52 and par.), the blind man sitting on the edge of a road in Jericho who, when he hears Jesus pass by him, starts shouting: "Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!". A cry that annoys neighboring people, who want to silence him at all costs; but he shouts even louder: "Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!", until Jesus, hearing him, makes him be called. He leaps to his feet and, led by Jesus, to his question to express his desire, he replies: "Master, I want to see". The cry becomes a question. And Jesus to him: "Go, your way; your faith has saved you".

That cry, the only weapon in his possession, broke through the heart of Christ, opened the way to salvation for him. The Lord "recognizes that poor, helpless, despised man, all the power of his faith", that confesses him Messiah, Son of David, and that "attracts the mercy and power of God".

Faith is a voice that cries out and does not want to be suffocated: "it is a protest against a painful condition for which we do not understand the reason", "it is a hope to be saved", contrary to the non-faith that "wants to stifle that cry", that limits itself to "suffering a situation to which we have adapted", to "getting used to the evil that oppresses us". This "invoking voice" is present in the heart of

each man, "it comes out spontaneously" and "wonders about the meaning of our journey down here, especially when we are in the dark:" Jesus, have mercy on me!".

The Holy Father continues: "But, are not perhaps these words carved in the whole of creation? Everything invokes and pleads for the mystery of mercy to find its definitive fulfillment. Not only do Christians pray: they share the cry of prayer with all men and women. But the horizon can still be widened: Paul says that the whole creation "groans and suffers the pains of childbirth" (Rom 8:22). Artists often make themselves interpreters of this silent cry of creation, which presses in every creature and emerges above all in the heart of man, because man is a "beggar of God" (cf. CCC, 2559)".

Every day we always gain experience of this precariousness and we feel, in the depths of our hearts, the need to raise our voice and our hands to Him, to "implore the gift of salvation".

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, make us understand the great value of prayer, which is not "an unanswered shouting, a noise that disturbed and ended there", but "a cry that comes from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God". And, like Bartimaeus, may she help us persevere in it until we get what is needed for our true good, that of our families, of the communities, of the Church and of the whole world.

Father Gesualdo De Luca

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE LIKE THE SUN
(XVI SUNDAY O.T. YEAR A)

THOSE WHO ARE JUST MUST BE KIND
(Wis 12: 13-16.19)

Man was created to be on earth the visibility of his God, in the image of whom he was created. God is holy. Man must also be holy. God loves. Man also has to love. God forgives. Man must also forgive. God leaves room for repentance after sin. Man must also leave room for repentance. God offers reconciliation to men. Man must also offer his brothers reconciliation, forgiveness, and hospitality. God died on the cross to redeem man. Man must also die on the cross to redeem man. Who wants to know himself day by day he must "study" God. How does "one study God"? "By studying" Jesus Christ. If God gives himself for the salvation of man, man must also give himself for the salvation of his brothers. Man must never forget his truth. This is the mission of man: manifesting in his life how holy his Lord is.

THE SPIRIT COMES TO THE AID OF
OUR WEAKNESS (Rm 8: 26-27)

Every man was created by the Lord to accomplish a particular, unique end in time and eternity. Whoever knows the end assigned is only the Lord. Man does not know it. He has to ask Him to manifest it to him. Not only that, but also that he can help him. If we are in the grace of God and deliver us entirely to the Holy Spirit, He will pray in us and will ask the Father for us that through us all his will is fulfilled. If we entrust ourselves to Him with a constant prayer and trust Him, it will be true peace for us in our hearts. Knowing that the Spirit of God wants only our

greatest good, we accept everything as his true great gift of love. If we lack a vision of faith, we will always be in the turbulence of the heart. We will wish ends not our own that could bring confusion in our lives and would be very damaging to us and to others. Everything is from the Spirit and from our faith in Him.

WHERE HAVE THE WEEDS COME
FROM (Mt 13, 24-43)

We know from the Scriptures that the Lord has sown in His creation only words of good, truth, justice and peace. The bad word has been sown in the world by the enemy of God and man, that is, by Satan. When a man lets the bad word be sown in his heart, he always becomes a seeder of bad words in the hearts of his brothers. Can you stop seeding the bad word? Never. Can the bad word be extirpated from the hearts? Not even this might happen. What can then be done? Those who believe in the Word of life must commit all their efforts to sow the good word of God in every heart, knowing that the enemy will soon be passing and will sow the word of death. Today the sowing of the word of death is occupying all the spaces and all channels of communication. You sow the weeds by making it be exchanged for good grain. What is most terrifying is the fact that those who once were seeders of the good word, little by little are turning into seeders of the bad word. It is as if Satan no longer had any adversaries in this world.

by the theologian,
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