

## Rubric - Saint Augustine speaks to the man of today 2 / Unity and communion

In the heart of St. Augustine's writings there is a constant invitation to unity and communion. Contemplating the story of creation in Genesis, Augustine writes: "... From a single individual God gave rise to mankind, to teach men how much the unity of the many is pleasing to him" (The City of God, 12:22).

But how can we manage to live this at the heart of our Lord unity in the family, in the parish and in the Church?

After the death of his sister, who had held up saintly the female monastery, Augustine writes a letter (211) to the nuns, begging them to maintain unity, urging them to concord and specifying: "The main reason for which we gather to form together a community is that we live unanimously and form one heart and one soul reaching out to God, like the first Christians [Acts 4:32]"

Therefore, Augustine urges us not to forget the purpose for which we are called, that is God. So, the journey must always be reaching out towards God.

To teach how to achieve this end, Augustine places concord at the basis of every journey of communion and, taking up the words of Sirach (25,2), he comments: "Concord, friendship and harmony, these values are undoubtedly a source of joy and appreciable in the human context, but much more important on the divine level. [...] Concord among

brothers is a good thing, but observe where: in Christ and among Christians" (Speech 359).

So Augustine points out to us that in order for good harmony to always reign, Christ must be the bond of every relationship. And when you think about it, the parish is the place and the heart where you can cultivate and grow in these values, because you are driven by the same feeling and moved towards the same end; it is the place where you can welcome the joy that comes from cultivating nice and good friends with whom you can share common feelings; where you can live your journey of faith by putting your gifts to good use in harmony. Basically, faith is not lived alone, but it needs others and in the relationship with others, it grows, is perfected and matures, bringing to fruition the fruits of good works, of conversion and of charity.

But how can we overcome our limits that sometimes create obstacles in our relationships? How to be true builders of communion? Saint Augustine comes to our aid with his "Rule" which, although addressed to organize the life of the monks, it offers some teachings that are at the basis of every Christian journeying.

First of all, Augustine places Charity and prayer, reminding us to love God first and then our neighbour and "striving fervently to pray meditating in the heart what is uttered with the voice" (Rule 1-2).

He educates us to live fraternal charity with the following principles: mutual custody; fraternal correction, "using love for people and hatred for vices"; solicitude for forgiveness; dialogue, which is the building block of each relationship and "not seeking personal interest but putting common good ahead of this."

**Stefania Tolomeo**

### I will not leave you orphans

Today's Gospel (Jn 14: 15-21) instructs us on a fundamental passage in the life of the first disciples of Jesus which affects all of us. The Master announces that he will no longer be present as in the three years of his public life: protecting, educating, admonishing, exhorting and making known his friends all the will of his Father.

He announces that he will be removed from their sight and they will no longer be able to see him "according to the flesh", as it happened in their missionary journeys announcing the word and operating signs and wonder, from one synagogue to another. Now everything changes. Jesus proclaims another form of his presence, greater than the first, in which he is not only present here and now, but above all everywhere and always. This Lord's new presence form will be communicated through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, Jesus makes a promise: he says, I will not leave you orphans, I will send you another Paraclete; He will always remain with you. Forever and ever. Then, here is the big novelty: there will still be "Another One" who will not make us feel like orphans: with no Father and alone.

Jesus uses the Greek term "Paraclete", which means several things: "comforter", "defender", "teacher", "inner support" and "lawyer". All these meanings coupled to "Paraclete" indicate the complex mode in which, from now on, those who have accepted the way indicated by Jesus might continue to walk in the world, united to

their Master and Lord, no longer feeling like orphans and alone.

However, in order for this "fullness" and "inner strength" to be lived in every disciple, there are some conditions that must be fulfilled: Jesus' prayer to the Father, which is always listened to; and above all, that each disciple remains faithful, lives the commandments and never turns away from his truth. But mind you, not as a mere practice of norms and laws, a bit like the older brother of the merciful Father parable, but as an obedience out of love and a staying with Jesus. In fact, a life supported by love for Jesus is different than pure compulsion. To give an example: not only does every disciple of Jesus fulfill the precept of sanctifying Sunday by sitting in a Church where mass is celebrated, he transforms that participation into a search for God, joy, apostolate, meeting, singing, service, witness, charity, almsgiving and a heart and body rest.

Thus, love and obedience become one. Love leads us to obedience and obedience drives us to love God and men in truth, drawing the Father's love on us and letting Jesus make himself increasingly be known (cf. Jn 14:18). Martyrs and witnesses have consumed their lives in this constant love exchange.

May the Virgin Mary Mother of the Redemption grant us the grace that the Gift of her Love is never lacking in our journey and our entire existence is consumed in the obedience to that which comes from him.

**Father Domenico Concolino**

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## GUARDING AND RESPECTING THE EARTH: EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

*Reflection starting from the Catechesis of H.H. Francis  
on the occasion of the 50th World Earth Day (22.4.2020)*

**A**t the beginning of human history, God entrusted man the garden of Eden to cultivate and "keep it" (cf. Gen 2:15). Creatures in the image and likeness of their Creator, the man and woman have the task of working the land (increasingly studying the laws that regulate it) to draw from it the necessary fruits for their sustenance and the good of the entire humanity.

Even today, as always, respecting and protecting creation is man's responsibility. This responsibility has been lost sight of due to selfish ends aimed at ruining and seriously polluting nature, to the point that people's health itself is at risk. In this context, various international and local movements have also arisen with the end of conveying different messages in view of a greater attention to the environment by everyone.

During the general audience held on the occasion of the annual World Earth Day, referring to God's original plan, Pope Francis reminded all of us about the importance of having more care and respect for creation: "How can we restore a harmonious relationship with the earth and the rest of humanity? Many times we lose vision of harmony: harmony is the work of the Holy Spirit". According to the example and teaching of many saints, such as Francis of Assisi, only by walking according to the Spirit, that is, living in the state of grace, might each one achieve and live fully in peace, in an orderly and balanced way with others and with na-

ture, for it is true relationship with God that permeates every other relationship with authenticity.

Today, we must change the vision itself we have of the earth. This should not be for us exclusively "a repository of resources to be exploited" (Catechesis), but a gift of God to be valued, made to fructify, contemplated and defended with much attention. The earth is our "home", the "common home": nobody neglects or ruins his home, but tries to always keep it tidy and clean! Therefore, the harmonious relationship between man and creation must also necessarily "be expressed in concrete actions" (see Catechesis) of custody and respect for the earth.

We will all have a new relationship with creation and its creatures only if we are wisely willing to change our "gaze", vision of things and behaviour, by really taking on all our responsibilities according to the gift of God. We cannot keep on exploiting the land in a senseless way for utilitarian purposes, or even being disinterested in it and the rest of humanity that inhabits it. The land must be cultivated to draw the necessary livelihood, but it must also be respected, guarded and cared for.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, to enlighten and help us follow the way indicated by the Holy Spirit, the only one in which there might be true peace between God and man, man and his fellow man, man and creation.

**Father Felice Raffaele**

**The  
Lord's Day  
ROMAN RITE**

**I AM IN MY FATHER AND YOU ARE IN ME AND I IN YOU  
(VI Easter Sunday Year A)**

**THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE  
THE HOLY SPIRIT (At 8.5-8.14-17)**

The Church of God is a divinely structured body with personal and non-transferable ministries and charisms. Philip can baptize, he cannot give the Holy Spirit. This ministry is personal and it is of the Apostles. It is a non-delegable mandate. Today, this is the evil that creates chaos and confusion: everyone thinks he is capable of everything and everyone believes he can be enabled for everything and everyone can qualify for everything. Everyone must know what his ministry, his vocation, his charisma is and carry it out directly. Being gifts and ministries of the person, the person is the one who has to exercise them, sacrificing to them his own life. Peter is ministry of the Word, minister of the Holy Spirit and minister of Prayer. He does not delegate. He bestows ministry on others for other things, but is not divested of his responsibilities. He knows that he must give the Holy Spirit to the baptized in Christ Jesus, he goes to Samaria and lives his office with obedience.

**FOR A REASON FOR YOUR HOPE  
(1Pt 3.15-18)**

Christians have to endure every suffering, sorrow and persecution imitating Jesus the Lord, the one who suffered and died righteous for the unrighteous, to expiate the sin of the world, and pour every grace of salvation into the hearts. When the Christian is questioned by the world on the hope that moves him to live with love pain and suffering, then he can give the reason for the faith that animates him and his word will be true evangelization and true announcement of salvation. The Christian lives his faith in fullness of charity and hope. The

world does not see his faith, but his charity and his hope. It asks for reason of hope and charity, and it is then that he might be able to unveil all the wealth and power of his faith in Christ Jesus, in the Crucified that is the Risen One. Thus, the life of charity and hope becomes the means, the way for a true announcement of Jesus. Evangelization begins with the explanation and enlightenment of the personal life.

**HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER  
ADVOCATE (Jn 14: 15-21)**

Jesus lives with two Paracletes: with the Father and the Holy Spirit. So also every disciple will have to be in Christ and in the Holy Ghost, to be in the Father. That is why Jesus speaks of "another Paraclete". The first "Paraclete" is Himself. The second "Paraclete" is the Holy Spirit. What is the ministry of Christ and what that of the Spirit? The Christian must live in the "Paraclete" Christ to know every desire of Christ. He lives for Christ. He must deliver his life to Christ, by placing it in his will. But he also needs the second "Paraclete", that is, the Holy Spirit, for the perfect knowledge of the truth and charity with which Christ's will must be lived together with the necessary force that must always come from the Holy Spirit. The Christian cannot live either with Christ alone or with the Spirit alone. He must always live in Christ and in the Spirit. He must always live in the body of Christ that is the Church, for the Holy Spirit acts and works only in the body of Christ. Everything, is always in the body of Christ, for the body of Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

*by the theologian,  
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