**FRAGMENTS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

**(How to be good disciples of Jesus today)**

***Catanzaro 28 May 2018***

**SIGNS AND FAITH**

**A sign is the work that attests the presence of the Lord our God in our life. It can be operated directly by God or through the men of God whom He wants to accredit as true men of God.**

**In the Holy Scriptures the signs made directly by God are few, one of these is the burning bush. It burned, but it was not consumed. It was this sign that attracted the attention of Moses to approach the Horeb.**

**Almost all signs are worked through the men of God in Holy Scripture. We can say that the life of Moses was a whole sign, from his call to death. For him the Lord opened the Sea in two.**

**A sign has only one purpose: attesting, manifesting and revealing that the Lord is with the man whom he has called and sent. In fact, the sign is the fulfilment of things that no man might ever do. It is beyond human possibilities.**

**The magicians of Egypt, at the fourth sign of Moses, attest that what was happening was not the work of man, of any man. Instead it was the finger of God the one to operate, that is, the Lord God in person. The God of Moses was at work.**

**What do the signs made by God in Egypt till the passage of the Red Sea on dry feet lead up to? To believe that the God of Moses is superior to every other God and also to believe that the Almighty God was working in Moses.**

**The sign must produce a double fruit: convincing that it is truly He who governs the events and that He wants to govern them through the person to whom the sign is given or by means of whom it is given.**

**In the Gospels the signs must convince the disciples that Jesus is truly God and the Son of God and those who are not disciples that He is really a man of God. The signs given by Jesus are by modes and substance beyond all signs.**

**FAITH AND THE WORD**

**Above all, the sign must lead to believe that what the man of God says is the most pure Word of God. Also because he always distinguishes between the Word of God and every other word, because he has no other words to say.**

**Moses gives ten signs to the pharaoh. This must not believe in the signs, but in the Word that the Lord has addressed to him. What Word has he addressed him? The Lord says: Leave my people free so that he can leave Egypt.**

**The primary, essential end of the sign is to implant into the hearts the Word that the Lord says, if the sign is operated directly by Him, or the Word that the man of God says in the name of the Lord and with his authority.**

**Stopping at the sign is of no use. Everyone wants the signs of great good. Not everyone wants the truth contained in the sign. Jesus works the multiplication of the loaves. The loaves were welcomed and eaten by all.**

**When Jesus passed from the sign to the Word to be accepted and then also to the Eucharist, inviting them to believe in it, the disciples abandoned him giving the excuse that the Word of Jesus was hard.**

**In the Gospel Jesus reproached some cities - Bethsaida, Corazìn, Cafàrnao - because they received the miracles. Instead they refused to welcome the Word. They did not get converted to his Gospel.**

**Today the universal sign of the Christian to be given to the world is the translation into life of every Word of Jesus. As Jesus has translated every Word of the Father into his life, so it must be for the Christian. This sign must be given.**

**There is no greater sign than this: attesting that the Lord is with the man that lives the whole Gospel. No one, if he does not have God in his heart, might live a single Word of the Gospel according to the truth of the Word.**

**Whoever lives the Gospel attests that God is in him and works through him. A Christian that lives the Gospel can proclaim the Gospel. He can ask for conversion to it. He can say: You can live the Gospel because I live it.**

**THE WORD AND THE PERSON**

**What is the relationship that must govern the Word and the Person? The person must always have his ear always turned towards the Lord so as to listen to even the faintest sighs of his heart and his will.**

**Instead, he must have his mouth always turned towards the man in order to report what he hears from the mouth of his God. God must speak to him. He must speak to the people. Never must he open his mouth, if he has not listened first.**

**The person must refrain from every thought, every interpretation and every elaboration of the Word heard. He listens and reports. As he listens, he will have to report. Never the word of his heart must pollute the Word of God.**

**But even who listens to the Word referred to by the man of God must stick to living what he has heard, without adding anything or taking anything away from it. The fidelity of the prophet in saying, must be the listener's fidelity in living.**

**No theology might replace the Word referred to by the men of God. He might try to understand, harmonize and structure it, but never might he substitute it with his understanding, interpretation and harmonization.**

**The Word remains forever. Theologies change. Even because not only do they often serve the fashions of the moment, but also because often some are a true betrayal of the Word. The Word is. Theologies are not.**

**It often happens that theologies are given dogmatic value. Instead, the Word is deprived of its essential truth. In recent times it has happened that some theologians have declared void many truths of the Word.**

**What did the Christian do? He followed these theologians and denied Christ the Lord, the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Father and the Church herself. Many of these things have been and will be made in the Church.**

**Even the theologian must forever be a servant of the Word and never lord of it. He cannot take God's place and erase the essential, fundamental truths contained in the Word of the Lord.**

**The Person, whoever he is - Prophet, minister of the Word, exegete, hermeneut and catechist – he is always an intermediary of the Lord to make the true Word resound in every ear, so that it may enter into every heart.**

**It is a sin against the Word and consequently because it is against the Author of the Word, to replace the Word of God with the word of man. The intermediary, whoever it is, must abide by the highest respect for the Word.**

**All the evils of the world arise either from non-faith in the Word of the Lord or from its replacement. Today almost all the ills of the Church are the result of an almost general substitution of the Word of Lord Jesus.**

**Either every person returns to the Word by announcing only the Word of God or there will be no future of good either for the Church or for the world. The return to the Word to announce only the Word always obliges everyone.**

**THE PERSON AND SUFFERING**

**When the intermediary of God for the announcement of the Word begins his ministry or lives the task entrusted to him, the powers of the underworld immediately fall on him. They do not want the Word to resound pure and integrate.**

**Obstacles, threats, even violent oppositions, sometimes spiritual martyrdom and then physical martyrdom are the instruments used by the powers of the underworld to prevail against every intermediary that announces the true Word of God.**

**Suffering does not come from the Word, but from forces opposed to it. Jesus had just begun to give the true Word and immediately people wanted to throw him down from the precipice of the mountain on which Nazareth was built.**

**We know all the difficulties encountered by Jesus throughout the three years of public life. His every Word was studied. They wanted to find even one mistake in it in order to get him out of the way.**

**They came to the point of calling him possessed, declaring him a blasphemer, one who chased away demons through Beelzebùl, prince of demons. In the end he was accused of blasphemy because he revealed his truth.**

**Hatred against Him, because of the true Word proclaimed by Him, was so great as to ask for death by crucifixion. What happened with Jesus will happen with every one of his disciples that announces the Word according to truth.**

**Word and persecution the intermediary of the Word are one. The more he is faithful to the Word, the more persecution grows. The less he is faithful and the less persecution is. He is faithful to God, the powers of the underworld are to hatred.**

**The intermediary grows in fidelity to the Word and even the hatred of the powers of the underworld grows. They persecuted me, they will persecute you too. Let whoever welcomes the Word and remains faithful to it, prepare himself for persecution.**

**Separating Word and persecution in the intermediary will be impossible. They will have to be one thing until death. Then the separation will be eternal. Until the moment of death, persecution will be like the skin.**

**SUFFERING AND PERSEVERANCE**

**However, the mediator of the Word, lives of a certainty. The forces of evil might assail, attack and fight him with all their strength, but they have no power except to the extent that the Lord leaves them power.**

**When the Lord invested Jeremiah of the prophetic mission, he also reassured him: Do not fear them. They will wage war against you, but they will not overcome you, because I am with you to guard and protect you.**

**Jesus tells his disciples the same truth: I am not alone. The Father is with me. In truth, the Father has always been with Jesus. He has not left him a single moment. Even on the cross the Father was with him to assist him.**

**Paul also witnesses the same truth. He says that everything is possible in him who gives him strength. Without the grace and strength that comes from God, the powers of Satan cannot be challenged. On the contrary, with God, everything is possible.**

**If the mediator of the Word wants to overcome the powers of the underworld he must walk with God in the heart and with the Word on his lips. Let nobody think of being able to walk without God and be victorious. He will be defeated.**

**I know that the Lord gives all his instruments his protection: "They will wage war against you, but they will not overcome you. A light will surround you and nobody might destroy it". It is his Word. Indeed it is his Promise.**

**Whoever gets disheartened, becomes discouraged, recedes and abandons the mission, does all this because he does not walk from grace to grace. Not feeding himself on God, he has no strength to resist the powers of the underworld. He is afraid.**

**This is why we are invited to draw all strength in the Lord. All force is drawn in a particular way in the Eucharist. This sacrament is the source where the mediator of the Word draws the strength of perseverance.**

**PERSEVERANCE AND MISSION**

**The salvation of man is from the mission lived by the men of God with full fidelity to every command received. There is no mission of salvation without obedience, because the mission is obedience.**

**Mission is obedience because it is doing what has been commanded. God commands what to do and what to say and the man of God performs what has been commanded him. If the mission is not obedience, it is not mission either.**

**However, the mission is not accomplished in one day, with only one announcement. The mission is of a lifetime. Obedience, mission and perseverance must be one, otherwise no salvation will be possible.**

**For this reason one must always persevere. This is why we must always immerse ourselves in the grace and truth of Christ Jesus. This is why we must be vigilant so as not to deviate either to the right or left.**

**If the Lord's missionary does not live all in the Word, with soul, spirit and body, he will easily get tired, will lack in light, will be lacking in truth and will abandon the true mission; he will live a false one, not of God.**

**That many live today a mission not of God is attested by the fact that children are no longer generated by God. But how can children be born to God if baptism and pure faith in Christ Jesus have been declared useless?**

**If the children of the Church place themselves outside the Word, they do not live the Word, how do true witnesses of it go about proclaiming it as? The first obedience to the mission is that of the missionary to observe Himself all the Word.**

**Without this primary obedience, obedience to the mission will always be ineffective. Soon it will not be carried out anymore. If it is carried out, it is done in a human way and no longer according to the heart of Christ the Lord.**

**THE MISSION AND THE SIGN**

**How will the man who hears the Word know that the Word heard is the true Word of God given to him for his salvation? Is the Word enough or does he also need signs? Yes. He needs signs, but some particular signs.**

**The first sign is the perfect conformation of the life of the missionary to the Word he announces. There is no sign of truth higher than this. It is mandatory for all those who consecrate themselves to the gift of the Word.**

**The second sign is invisible and it is of the Word that the missionary announces. The more the man of God grows in wisdom and grace, the more the Holy Spirit increases his power of conversion, illumination and persuasion.**

**The missionary's sign is the missionary himself. It is the missionary if he grows in wisdom and grace, if he obeys the Word and if he does the mission according to the orders and commands received without any omission.**

**THE SACRAMENTAL SIGN AND CONVERSION**

**The sign of signs of the missionary that attests to his desire to live the whole Word, with perfect daily conversion to it, is his devoted, pious, attentive and holy participation in the Body and Blood of Christ Jesus.**

**A missionary who lives in a distracted way the Eucharist or even without the desire to live and die for Christ, reveals that he is not converted and consequently the mission either is not carried out by him or it will be carried out without fruit.**

**SHORT FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**It is right to give a clear word on the value of the sign in relation to the Word and to the person called to give the Word by accompanying it with signs. The sign is given in view of faith. Faith in whom? In the God of the Word and in the man of God who brings the Word. The gift of the Word cannot exist without the sign, because the first of the announced Word is the Word lived in him who announces the Word. Christ Jesus on the cross that forgives his executioner is the greatest of the truth of his teaching. No man, if offended, while being killed asks for forgiveness. Christ teaches it and does it. His Word is true.**

***The sign is the work that attests to the presence of the Lord our God in our life. It can be operated directly by God or through the men of God that He wants to accredit as true men of God. In the Holy Scripture there are few signs directly operated by God, one of these is the burning bush. It burned, but it was not consumed. It was this sign that attracted the attention of Moses to approach the Horeb. Almost all signs are worked through the men of God in Holy Scripture. We can say that the life of Moses was a whole sign, from his call to death. For him the Lord opened the Sea in two. The sign has only one purpose: attesting, manifesting and revealing that the Lord is with the man whom he has called and sent. In fact, the sign is the fulfilment of things that no man can ever do. It is beyond human possibilities. The magicians of Egypt, at the fourth sign of Moses, attest that what was happening was not the work of man, of any man. It was instead the finger of God to operate, that is, the Lord God in person. The God of Moses was at work. What do the signs made by God in Egypt up to the passage of the Red Sea on dry feet, lead to? To believe that the God of Moses is superior to every other God and also to believe that the Almighty God was working in Moses.***

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***When Jesus from the sign passed to the Word to be accepted and then also to the Eucharist, inviting them to believe in it, the disciples abandoned him giving as an excuse that the Word of Jesus was hard. In the Gospel Jesus reproaches some cities - Bethsaida, Corazìn, Capernaum - because they received the miracles. Instead they refused to welcome the Word. They did not get converted to his Gospel. Today the universal sign of the Christian to be given to the world is the translation into life of every Word of Jesus. As Jesus has translated every Word of the Father into his life, so it must be for the Christian. This sign must be given. There is no sign greater than this: attesting that the Lord is with the man that lives the whole Gospel. No one, if he does not have God in his heart, can live a single Word of the Gospel according to the truth of the Word. Whoever lives the Gospel attests that God is in him and works through him. A Christian that lives the Gospel can proclaim the Gospel. He can request conversion to it. He can say: You can live the Gospel because I live it.***

**May the Mother of God, Angels and Saints, help us to be true people of God for the proclamation of the Word accompanied by the sign of our life completely in conformity with the Gospel.**