**FRAGMENTS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

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

***Catanzaro 17 December 2018***

**WORKING IN PARISHES**

**Let's imagine a field. You can work in it in two ways. As a master of the field and as a day labourer. If you work as a day labourer, you go to the field, you lend your work, you get the salary and you go home.**

**That the field produces, does not produce, is well guarded and is not well guarded, that the plants in it dry or prosper, we do not care about it at all. We have lent our work. We have received the salary. That is it.**

**The owner of the field worries about it day and night, in the morning and in the evening, he Vigils, he watches, he is careful, he takes every necessary initiative at the right time so that the harvest does not go down the drain.**

**The master in the field is one with his field. His field is his life and his life ages in the field. A passage from Sirach illuminates this truth. I think it must be carefully pondered, weighed and meditated.**

**"The wisdom of the scribe lies in the pleasure of free time, who is little devoted to practical activity will become wise. How might who handles the plough and boasts of wielding a goad, pushes the oxen forward and takes care of his work and speaks only of calves, become wise?**

**He dedicates his heart tracing furrows and does not sleep in order to feed the heifers. Thus every craftsman and builder who spends the night like the day: those who engrave images by seals and patiently try to vary the figures, dedicate their hearts to reproduce the drawing well and stay awake to finish the work.**

**Thus the blacksmith who sits next to the anvil and is intent on working the iron: the blaze of fire melts his flesh and he must struggle with the heat of the furnace; the sound of the hammer deafens his ears, his eyes are fixed on the model of an object, he dedicates his heart to finish the job and is awake to complete it to perfection.**

**So the potter who is sitting at his work and with his feet turns the wheel, is always anxious for his work, he struggles to produce in large quantities. With his arm he moulds the clay, while with his feet he bends its resistance; devotes his heart to a perfect paint job and is awake to clean the furnace.**

**All of these trust in their own hands and everyone is skilled in his job. Without them a city is not built, no one could stay there or move around it (Sir 38, 24-32).**

**I do not believe that working in the parish means being wage earners or lenders of work. Instead, I think it means to make the parish your own field, dedicating "your own time" to the care of souls.**

**BRINGING JESUS ​​TO THE WORLD**

**Now let us imagine the mystery of Incarnation. Jesus did not bring the Father into the world by drawing him from heaven and giving him to men. Nor did he bring the truth, the light and eternal life, drawing and giving it.**

**Jesus brought the Father because he was one with the Father. He brought light, truth and eternal life because He was life, truth, grace and eternal life. He gave the divine and eternal realities because He was these realities.**

**If one is light he gives light, if he is salt he gives salt, if he is truth he gives truth, if he is faith he gives faith, if he is Word he gives Word, if he is love he gives love, if he is life he gives life, if he is mercy he gives mercy and if he is peace he gives peace.**

**You cannot give what you are not. One gives what he is. A dog will always give himself as meat. He is not a man and he might never be given as a man. A man is a man and he gives himself as a man. He gives himself as he is.**

**If he is goodness he gives himself as goodness. If he is malice he gives himself as malice. If he is jealousy and vice he gives himself as jealousy and vice. If he is fidelity to the Word, he is given as fidelity to the Word. He will never deny it. He will be faithful to it.**

**To know what we give, it is enough to know what we are. If we are foolish we will give foolishness. If we are immorality we will give immorality. If we are justice we will give justice. If we are holiness we will give holiness.**

**Whoever wants to give to others, let him know that he must intervene on himself. He might intervene on himself only if he lets himself be transformed little by little by the grace of Christ, by the love of the Father and by the truth of the Holy Spirit.**

**Without a careful, accurate, polite and uninterrupted work on himself, one can never be useful to God for others. How might we think of bringing Jesus into the world, the true Jesus, without even knowing the Gospel?**

**If we are world we will give world. If we are darkness we will give darkness. If we are vice we will give vice. If we are goodness we will give goodness. If we are without charity we will never give charity. If we are presumptuous we will give presumption.**

**Either we change our nature, becoming nature conformed to Christ the Lord, by the work of the Holy Spirit, or we will give only our humanity and, moreover, full of many vices. The mission starts from our nature.**

**PERSECUTED FOR CHRIST JESUS**

**When one gives his life to Christ, he gives it as he possesses it: it is still an uncultivated, untouched, raw, unformed, unsanctified life and not conformed to the thoughts of Lord Jesus. It is still hardly a Christian life.**

**But it is life given to Christ for the mission. How will the Lord purify our life to make it in full conformity with that of Christ Jesus? Making it go through the crucible of suffering and of pain.**

**Suffering and pain are caused by the persecutions that will always come upon those who have given their lives to Lord Jesus. But we know that Christ Jesus was made perfect by the things he suffered.**

**He who gives life to Christ will also pass through persecution. The Lord does not want his servants uncultivated, untouched, raw, not trained and not sanctified. He wants them in all conform with the image of his Son.**

**Persecution is the Lord's true grace. It proves the measure of our faith, charity, hope, forgiveness, mercy, justice and inner peace. Reaction to the persecution reveals perfection.**

**Sometimes even an insipid word, said without reflection, reveals the measure of our spiritual growth. When are you perfect for the Lord? Never. Perfection is always to be achieved. It is never acquired.**

**A TIME FOR CHRIST JESUS**

**Let's return to the image of the field. Let us return to the right way to work in it, as farmers and not as wage earners. If we want the field produces everyone is obliged to give some time to it.**

**If you don't give any time, if you keep yourself out of the field, you might never work for Christ Jesus. Everything grows in the field, never outside of it. Even the souls we find outside the field must be brought inside.**

**Every soul left out of the field is a soul that might never either grow and or produce fruit of eternal life. One might even think of making himself a nursery of souls. But then what happens?**

**If the souls from the nursery are not brought into the field, they suffocate, die, do not grow and lack the necessary living space. Souls can also be kept in the personal storage room.**

**But they will always be without any fruit. When the Lord says a Word, according to that Word one must walk. We can all invent more beautiful ones, but they are means, they can never replace the Word.**

**The Word says that we must give our time - each according to his possibilities - to cultivate his field, which is the Parish, in obedience to the Parish Priest for the things of God and the truths of salvation. It does not say anythign else.**

**We can also imagine a thousand other ways. No fruit of salvation is born. No man might declare the Word of Jesus obsolete, old, of other times, worn out, torn and in need of many patches.**

**We must convince ourselves with a deep conviction of faith that the time given to the camp is the only one useful for us. The other time lived outside the camp is useful either to train us or to gather some other soul.**

**All that time given to the camp is useless but only as paid workers. We have done our work, we have done our job. Then what happens in the field no longer concerns our mission.**

**Saint Paul gives us the rule of how to work in the field. But he worked full time, because it was his vocation and mission. But we can imitate him for the little time we live in the field.**

**Instead, I did not avail myself of any of these rights, nor do I write to you so that it is done so with me; I'd rather die. No one will take away this pride from me! In fact announcing the Gospel is not a source of pride for me, because it is a necessity that is imposed on me: woe to me if I do not announce the Gospel!**

**If I do it on my own, I have the right to a reward; but if I do not do it on my own, it is an assignment that has been entrusted to me. So what is my reward? That of proclaiming the Gospel for free without using the right conferred on me by the Gospel.**

**In fact, although I was free from all, I made myself the servant of all to gain the greatest number: I became a Jew for the Jews, to gain the Jews. For those who are under the Law - although I am not under the Law - I have become like one who is under the Law, for the purpose of earning those who are under the Law.**

**For those who have no Law - even though I am not without the law of God, rather being in the law of Christ - I have become like one who is without Law, for the purpose of earning those who are without Law. I made myself weak for the weak, to gain the weak; I made myself everything for everyone, to save someone at all costs. But all I do for the Gospel, to become part of it too.**

**Don't you know that, in stadium races, everyone runs, but only one wins the prize? Run you too in order to conquer it! But every athlete is disciplined in everything; they do it to get a wreath that fades, instead we one that lasts forever.**

**Therefore, I run, but not like one who is without a goal; I do boxing, but not like someone who beats the air; on the contrary, I treat my body hard and reduce it to slavery, so that it may not happen that, after having preached to others, I myself will be disqualified (1 Cor 9,15-27),**

**I repeat. The amount of time depends on the particular vocation received. The modalities of Saint Paul can instead be imitated by all. We can all make ourselves everything for everyone to gain souls for Christ.**

**CHRIST JESUS MU​ST BE GIVEN TO ALL**

**That day Jesus left the house and sat by the sea. So many people gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.**

**He spoke to them of many things with parables. And he said, "Behold, the sower went out to sow. As he sowed, some fell along the road; the birds came and ate it.**

**Another part fell on the stony ground, where there was not much land; it sprouted immediately, because the ground was not deep, but when the sun came up, it was burned and, having no roots, it dried up.**

**Another part fell on the brambles, and the brambles grew and choked her. Another part fell on the good ground and gave fruit: one hundred, sixty, thirty for one. Who has ears, let him hear"(Mt 13,1-9).**

**Saint Paul reveals that the Lord wants every man to come to the knowledge of the truth. The truth is Christ, in Christ, the truth is the Father and the Holy Spirit. In Christ there is also the truth of every man.**

**Therefore, first of all, I recommend that questions, supplications, prayers and thanks are made for all men, for kings and for all those in power, so that we can lead a calm, peaceful and dignified life and dedicated to God.**

**This is a beautiful and pleasing thing in the sight of God, our saviour, who wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. In fact, only one is God and one is also the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.**

**He gave this testimony in the established times, and I have been made a messenger and an apostle of it - I tell the truth, I do not lie -, teacher of the pagans in faith and truth (1 Tim 2: 1-7).**

**There is no man on earth to whom Christ Jesus must not be given, manifested and announced. It is his right. It cannot be taken from him for any reason in the world. He will be the one to exclude himself from salvation.**

**This truth has now been declared obsolete. Not only. It has also been said and it is said that every way is good to reach God. We forget to say that only the Father of Christ Jesus is the only God alive and true.**

**LIVING AND DYING FOR CHRIST**

**When you give your life to Christ Jesus, you don't give it for a time, for a day and you don't even give it partially. You give it all. You place it at his service. It is no longer our will that must lead us, but his.**

**Jesus gave his life to the Father up to his death by cross. We too must give life to Christ until the death by cross. How is life given to Christ until death by cross? Delivering it to the Gospel, to the whole Gospel.**

**Giving life to Christ is giving it to his Word. His Word is obeyed, life is given to Christ the Lord. We do not obey his Word, life remains firm in our hands. Life is given by obeying.**

**Everything in our faith is obedience. Obedience to the Word is taken away, one lives of dead faith. If faith is dead, even the gift of our life to Christ is dead. Our obedience reveals the truth of our faith.**

**NATURE SPEAKS OF GOD**

**Thus Wisdom: All men who lived in the ignorance of God were truly vain by nature, and from the visible goods they were not able to recognize the one who is, nor, examining the works, did they recognize the artificer. But they considered as gods, rulers of the world either the fire or the wind or the fast air, the starry vault or the rushing water or the lights of the sky.**

**If, fascinated by their beauty, they have taken them for gods, let them think how superior their sovereign is, because he who is the principle and the author of beauty created them. If they are struck with astonishment at their power and energy, let them think from this how much more powerful is the one who formed them. In fact from the greatness and beauty of the creatures by analogy one contemplates their author (Wis 13,1-5).**

**HOW ONE GROWS IN FAITH**

**In faith one grows, growing in obedience to the Word. faith must never be separated from the Word of God and of Christ Jesus. The Word is the soul of faith. The more Word is lived, the more faith grows in us. It is a perennial rule.**

**Today we are without faith, because we are without the Word of the Lord. We have removed the Word written by the Holy Spirit. We are all taking refuge in a Word conceived by us. It is the death of faith.**

**THANKSGIVING PRAYER**

**The Lord must always be thanked for every benefit he bestows upon us. Knowing that in our life all good is a gift from God, we should never stop raising our hymn of thanksgiving.**

**In the field of the spirit and soul everything is also by the grace of the Lord. Even being able to listen to the true and living Word of Jesus is a gift. The Lord must be thanked for eternal centuries. He has granted us the grace of eternal life.**

**SHORT FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**Never can the rules of missionary work come from our heart. They can only come from the Holy Spirit, who suggests them to every single person. However, there are universal rules that must never be forgotten. They always oblige. The first rule is that we work for the eternal salvation of every soul.**

**The second rule tells us that the place where this work must be done is in the Christian community, which concretely, in the territory lives in a Parish. If we exclude the parish community, the soul is exposed to serious risks of eternal perdition or non-salvation according to God. If we detach ourselves from the Spirit the rules do not generate eternal life.**

**Let's imagine a field. You can work in it in two ways. As the master of the field and as a day labourer. If you work as a day labourer on a daily basis, you go to the field, lend the work, you get the salary and you go home. Whether the field produces, does not produce, is well guarded, is not well guarded, that the plants in it dry or thrive, nothing interests us. We have lent our work. We have received the salary. That is it.**

**The owner of the field worries day and night, in the morning and in the evening. He vigils, watches, is careful and takes every necessary initiative at the right time so that the harvest does not go down the drain. In the field the master is one with his field. His field is his life and his life ages in the field.**

**The Christian is called to work in the field of God which is the Parish. If we want the field to produce everyone is obliged to give time to it. If you don't give any time, if you keep yourself out of the field, never might you work for Christ Jesus. Everything grows in the field, never outside of it. This truth forces us to be converted to fruitful work.**

**Even the souls we find outside the camp must be brought inside. Every soul left out of the field is a soul that might never either grow and or produce fruit of eternal life. One might even think of making himself a nursery of souls. But then what happens? If the souls from the nursery are not brought into the field, they suffocate.**

**They die, they do not grow and lack the necessary living space. Souls can also be kept in the personal dispensation. But they will always be without any fruit. When the Lord says a Word, one must walk according to that Word. We can all invent more beautiful ones, but they are means, they can never replace the Word.**

**The Word says that we must give our time - each according to his possibilities - to cultivate his field, which is the Parish, in obedience to the Parish Priest for the things of God and the truths of salvation. It says nothing more. We can also imagine a thousand other ways. No fruit of salvation is born.**

**No man might ever declare the Word of Jesus obsolete, old, of other times, worn out, torn and in need of many patches. We must convince ourselves with a deep conviction of faith that the time given to the field is the only one useful for us. The other time lived outside the camp is useful either to train us or to gather some other souls.**

**All that time given to the field but only as paid workers is useless. We have done our work, we have done our job. Then what happens in the field no longer concerns our mission. I do not believe that working in the parish means being wage earners or work lenders. Instead, I think it means to make the parish your own field, dedicating "your own time" to the care of souls.**

**May the Mother of God obtain for us the gift of a great, lasting and perennial obedience to the Holy Spirit. But before that, may she give us a love for Him. If we fall in love with the Holy Spirit and choose him as our one and only Master, the fruits in the field of salvation will be many. Let Angels and Saints help for an ever new obedience to the Spirit of the Lord. Jesus obeyed the Spirit of God and redeemed the world.**