**FRAGMENTS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

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

***Catanzaro 14 January 2019***

**THE PRIEST IN THE CHURCH**

**Let us ask ourselves: Who is a priest for the Church, in the Church and with the Church? For the Church he is the presence of Christ Jesus, Head and Shepherd, of his flock. He is the one who has to take care of, nourish, sanctify and teach.**

**It is he who must guide and lead the flock to the source of truth, justice, faith, charity and hope that are in Christ Jesus and in the Holy Spirit. It is He who must administer the mysteries of God.**

**It is He who must separate, as with a double-edged sword, light from darkness, truth from falsehood, good from evil, justice from injustice, holiness from sin, the true Gospel from the false gospels and Christ from idols.**

**He is the one who has to watch out that no predatory wolf enters the flock of the Lord to devour, kill, tear, and steal the sheep that are of Christ Jesus. It is He who precedes the flock in holiness and truth.**

**He must never forget either the warning of Isaiah or the words of Malachi. He must always remember Peter's teaching: "You all, beasts of the field, come and eat; you all, beasts of the forest, come. His guardians are all blind, they understand nothing.**

**They are all dumb dogs, unable to bark; they doze crouching, they love to doze off. But these greedy dogs, who do not know how to satisfy themselves, are the shepherds who do not understand anything. Everyone follows his own way, everyone takes care of his own interest, without exception (Is 56,9-11).**

**"For the lips of the priest must keep knowledge and from his mouth the teaching is sought, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. Instead, you have strayed from the right path and have been stumbling stones to many with your teaching.**

**You have destroyed Levi's covenant, says the Lord of Hosts. Therefore I also made you contemptible and abject before all people, because you did not follow my ways and used partiality in your teaching" (Mal 2,7-9).**

**"I urge the elders who are among you, as an elder like them, witness of the sufferings of Christ and sharing in the glory that must be manifested: feed the flock of God that is entrusted to you, watching over it not because you are forced but willingly, as God likes it and not out of shameful interest.**

**But with a generous soul, not as masters of the people entrusted to you, but making you models of the flock. And when the supreme Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade" (1 Pt 5: 1-4).**

**With the Church he is a member of the body of Christ, a true disciple of Jesus. Being He the Shepherd of the Flock, the Guide, he must always advance on the path that is Christ Jesus. The flock walks behind Him.**

**If he takes paths of falsehood, lies, perdition and damnation, even the flock will follow him. If he gets worldly, the flock will also be worldly. It will not see the Gospel written on his shoulders and move away.**

**The flock always walks behind the Shepherd. The perdition of the flock is from the perdition of the Pastor. The loss of the flock is from the loss of the Pastor. The falsity of the flock is the shepherd's falsehood.**

**The Pastor must always be a light of truth for the whole flock. The flock may not even follow the light, but the light is there and of the non-following it will make itself responsible before God for eternity. The light was there.**

**In the Church, in the body of Christ, the presbyter is always before the body of Christ and the Church of Christ. He must be the model to look at. We could say he must be like the bronze serpent in the desert.**

**When the sons of Israel were bitten by poisonous snakes, they looked at the bronze serpent hoisted in the middle of the camp and they recovered. The flock, bitten by falsehood or sin, looks at the presbyter and heals.**

**This is why Saint Paul presents himself as a true bronze Snake in everything: "For our part, we give no cause for scandal to anyone, so that our ministry may not be criticized; but in everything we present ourselves as ministers of God with great firmness:**

**in tribulations, in necessities, in anguish, in beatings, in prisons, in tumults, in labours, in vigils and in fasts; with purity, with wisdom, with magnanimity, with benevolence, with the spirit of holiness, with sincere love, with a word of truth and with the power of God;**

**with the weapons of justice on the right and on the left; in glory and dishonor, in bad and in good fame; as impostors, yet we are truthful; as unknown, yet very famous; as dying, and yet we live; as punished, but not killed; as afflicted, but always happy;**

**as poor, but able to enrich many; like people who have nothing and instead we own everything! (2Cor 6: 3-10). For the flock the presbyter must be a mirror of every virtue, both theological and cardinal virtues.**

**THE PRIEST GLORY OF GOD**

**As Christ Jesus is the glory of the Father, so the presbyter must be the glory of Christ Jesus. When the Father sees Christ, he rejoices for his holiness. Christ too must rejoice for the holiness of his presbyter.**

**What is holiness for the presbyter? Fidelity to every delivery that Christ entrusted to him. What are these deliveries? Every command given to him. First command: Being from Christ Jesus as Christ Jesus is from the Father.**

**The Priest is not a servant of man, but a servant of Christ, just as Christ is not a servant of man, but a servant of the Father. As Christ serves man from the will of the Father, so the presbyter serves man from the will of Christ.**

**The presbyter is the glory of Christ, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, he is the glory of God, if he works so that the glory of Christ Jesus may be confessed by every man, every people, language and tribe. The Father is the glory of Christ Jesus.**

**Christ Jesus is the glory of the presbyter. He is the glory of the presbyter if the presbyter works to make Christ be known, loved and served. Working for Christ, the presbyter becomes the glory of Christ and in Christ, the glory of God.**

**Just as before the eyes of Christ Jesus there was only the Father, to whom he lent all obedience, so before the eyes of the presbyter there must be only Christ to whom to give every obedience and every listening.**

**Always looking at Christ and listening to his voice, the presbyter will serve the man as a true servant of Christ. Today it is the presbyter's eyes that have moved. They no longer look at Christ, but they look at man.**

**Not looking at Christ anymore, they do not serve man from the will of Christ, they serve him from their will or from the will of man. When this happens, the presbyter is no longer a presbyter. He is from man and not from Christ.**

**Thus the presbyter loses essence, truth and mission. His being is the being from Christ, through Christ, in Christ and with Christ. He is the being from the will of Christ by the will of Christ. Never must he be from the will of man.**

**THE PRIEST MAKES THE BREAD OF LIFE**

**A truth that is the essence of the Church and essence of the presbyter is his particular bond with the Eucharist and the Gospel. He transforms, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus.**

**Thus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, He is called to transform the Gospel into the Word of salvation, redemption, justification, conversion, peace, holiness, justice, truth and mercy, for every man.**

**While the transformation of bread and wine into body and blood takes place ex opere operato, the transformation of the Gospel into the Word of eternal life takes place ex opere operantis. His sanctification is a must.**

**The more the presbyter will conform to Christ Jesus and the more his Word is the Word of eternal life, the Word of conversion and salvation. He does not conform to Christ, his Word is the word of man and no longer the Word of the Holy Spirit.**

**This truth also applies to the sacrament of Penance which he celebrates. The word ex opere operato is only in the absolution formula. But first he needs the Word of conversion and true repentance.**

**He must always draw this Word from the heart of the Holy Spirit and for this reason it always urges his greater conformation to Lord Jesus. Everything in the presbyter is from the conformation to Christ Jesus.**

**LEANING ON THE PRIEST**

**If this is the mission of the priest, it is also the mission of the flock not only to follow the presbyter, leaning on him, loving him and respecting him, but above all it is his obligation to pray with incessant prayer.**

**Why does the flock have to pray for the presbyter? To ask the Holy Spirit for him a perfect conformation to Christ Jesus, Pastor and Head of his Church. The holiness of Christ must envelop the presbyter.**

**The Priest is the glory of the flock. The flock is the glory of the presbyter. The presbyter prays for the sanctification of the flock. The flock prays for the sanctification of the presbyter. Prayer is the first way to be loved.**

**From the sanctity of the priest is the sanctity of the flock. But also from the sanctity of the flock is the sanctity of the priest. This is the great mystery that is lived in the body of Christ. We are from each other. We receive and give life.**

**How must we lean on the Priest? How the tree leans on the earth. As we are called to be rooted and planted in Christ Jesus, so we are called to be rooted and planted in the presbyter.**

**As the Father does everything through Christ, so Christ does everything through the presbyter. Nothing is done without the presbyter of his Holy Church. We are in the heart of the mystery of faith. Faith is lost, everything is lost.**

**It is a serious sin against the faith when we rely on the presbyter to be supported by him on our decisions, thoughts, will and intentions. The essence of the priest is substantially changed.**

**The essence of the priest is his being always from Christ the Lord. Never must he be from the will of man. But also the essence of every disciple of Jesus is his being always from Christ, with Christ and through Christ.**

**The presbyter is the point of contact so that in his true essence every disciple of Jesus finds his true essence. If the presbyter is led astray from his essence, even the faithful layman will be misled. He loses his true essence.**

**THE NEED OF HEAVEN**

**What does Heaven need? Every member of the body of Christ, every disciple of the Lord, every Christian, so that through the offering of his life, words and works, Heaven can make the body of Christ beautiful.**

**How might Heaven make the body of Christ beautiful? Adding new members to the body of Christ. Sanctifying according to truth and justice those who are already disciples of the Lord. Showing the world the life of Christ Jesus.**

**How is the life of Christ Jesus shown to the world? Becoming us life of Christ Jesus in the body of Christ Jesus. If the Christian does not become the true life of Jesus in the body of Christ Jesus, he serves neither Christ nor the world.**

**Today the temptation of the Christian is only one: that of freeing himself from every relationship of life with Christ the Lord, both a relationship of grace and of the Word. We want to be Christ without grace, without truth and without the Gospel.**

**We want to be Christians who no longer form the body of Christ. Life is only in the body of Christ. We separate ourselves from the body of Christ, we enter into a spiral of death. There is no eternal life outside the body of the Lord Jesus.**

**Then, here is the need of Heaven. Heaven needs Christians who want to form, sanctify, increase and make the body of Christ beautiful in history. It is the mission of every Christian. Without this mission, the body dies.**

**Every structure, every form of life, everything else that the Christian does, must have this one and only purpose: makinig the body of Christ beautiful, becoming himself the true body of Christ, helping every other man to make himself the true body of Christ.**

**IN COMMUNION WITH HEAVEN.**

**If the disciple of Jesus wants to walk towards Heaven, according to truth and justice, he must live of two communion in a true, real and authentic way: true as with the body of Christ on earth and true communion with Heaven.**

**Only by living true communion with the body of Christ on earth can one live of true communion with Heaven. If you do not live as the true body of Christ on earth, there might never be true communion with Heaven.**

**Communion with Heaven has only one purpose: helping us so that we can live as the true body of Christ on earth. How do you live as the true body of Christ? Making us the true body of Christ, living of truth and justice.**

**Helping every other man to become the true body of Christ, so that he also lives of truth and justice for all the days of his life. Never will communion with Heaven be true and communion with the body of Christ is not true.**

**Those who think they can walk in communion with Heaven towards Heaven, uprooting themselves and cutting themselves from the body of Christ, are in great error. The body of Christ is the visible one. There is no invisible body without the visible.**

**But today the great temptation is only one: I want Christ without the Church. I want God without Christ. I want the Church without either sacraments or Gospel. I want an invisible God without any historical visibility.**

**Blessed is he who knows how to avoid this temptation. A God without Christ is an idol. A Christ without the Church is an idol. Even the Church without her apostolic dimension is an idol. Christ, God and Church are one.**

**MAKING JESUS BE LOVED AND KNOWN**

**Why Jesus has chosen us to be his disciples: to love him and to make him be loved, to know him and to make him be known. If we lose sight of this end, everything turns into a sterile organization of things.**

**We have not been chosen to organize sterility, vanity and futility. We have been chosen to put Christ Jesus at the centre of our hearts and to help every other man put Jesus Christ at the centre of his heart.**

**Then the question that everyone must ask his spirit and his soul is only one: is Christ Jesus at the centre of my heart? Does the world see that I love Jesus as Jesus loved his Father and was one with Him?**

**Does the world see that I work only so that Jesus enters the heart of every other man, or does it see me as an embalmer of dead souls, to be kept in the cemetery of my organization of vanity, sterility, futility and foolishness?**

**Do I know that the measure of my love for Christ is given by my mission to bring some soul to Jesus and to deliver it to Him so that, in his one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, it finds peace, salvation and eternal life?**

**Do souls approach Christ the Lord for me, or move away from Him, because the Christ that I offer is not a Christ of love, joy, peace, consolation and hope, but he is only a Christ reduced to a structure?**

**Woe to reduce Christ Jesus to an organization, structure, rules to be observed and rules to be practiced. The structure is for Christ, never Christ for the structure. The structure must always skip so that Christ triumphs with light.**

**All that takes place in the Church, is accomplished and realized has to have Christ Jesus as its sole end. Christ Jesus must be announced, preached, taught, confessed, recognized, loved, served, listened to and obeyed.**

**When Christ is taken away from the heart, mind, desires, the Gospel, morality, the sacraments, the Church and structures, no salvation is produced any more. Energies are consumed in vain.**

**Here is the end of all, of everything: loving and to having Christ be loved, knowing and make Christ be known, confessing and making Christ be confessed, serving and having Christ be served, listening and having Christ be heard. Christ is always everything.**

**Here is Paul's style, life and program: "But these things, which for me were gains, I considered them a loss because of Christ. Indeed, I believe that everything is a loss because of the sublimity of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. I gave up all these things for him**

**and I consider them garbage, to gain Christ and be found in him, having as my justice not that deriving from the Law, but that which comes from faith in Christ, the justice that comes from God, based on faith: so that I may know him, the power of his resurrection,**

**communion in his sufferings, making me conform to his death, in the hope of reaching the resurrection from the dead. I certainly did not reach the goal, I did not reach perfection; but I try to run to conquer it, because I too have been conquered by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not yet believe that I have conquered it.**

**I only know this: forgetting what is behind me and leaning towards what is before me, I run towards the goal, to the reward that God calls us to receive up there, in Christ Jesus (Phil 3: 7-14). How tasty it would be if every disciple of Jesus made this program his own.**

**RETURNING REPENTED TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE**

**How do you go back repented to the Father's House? Denying sin and loving truth and justice. Abandoning all idolatry and immorality and following the ways of obedience to every Word of Christ Jesus.**

**A truth obliges and must be said: We do not convert to God. We convert to the Word of God and the God of the Word. We are not converted to Christ Jesus. We convert to the Word of Christ Jesus and to Christ Jesus of the Word.**

**We are not converted to the Church, but to the Gospel, to the truth, to the grace of the Church and to the Church of the Gospel, of truth and of grace. We do not convert to the Holy Spirit, we convert to the Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus.**

**We don't even convert for a moment or a day or even a week or a few months or a few years. We convert to dwell in Christ, in the Spirit, in the Father, in the Church, in truth and in grace.**

**There is a conversion that is not from sin to grace, from darkness to light, from idols to the living and true God. This conversion is from truth to truth. It is a conversion that wants us to always walk in truth.**

**The Christian must walk from faith to faith, truth to truth, knowledge to knowledge and perfection to perfection. Jesus also walked growing in wisdom and grace before God and men.**

**KNOWING TO BE KNOWN**

**It is the Word of Jesus. It is his Gospel: "Do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed or secret that it will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness you say in the light, and what you hear in your ear you announce it from the terraces.**

**And do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but have no power to kill the soul; rather be afraid of the one who has the power to make the soul and the body perish in Gehenna. Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not even one of them will fall to the ground without the will of your Father. Even the hair of your head is counted.**

**Therefore, do not be afraid: you are worth more than many sparrows! Therefore, whoever recognizes me before men, I too will recognize him before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I too will deny him before my Father who is in heaven *(Cf. Mt 10: 26-22).* Who recognizes Jesus is recognized by Jesus.**

**If also to recognize Him we must go through every martyrdom both of the spirit and of the soul, both bloodless and bloody, all the sufferings of the present moment are not at all comparable to eternal glory.**

**SUFFERING FOR JUSTICE**

**Whenever Christ is recognized and confessed, Christ is announced and testified according to the truth of the Gospel, one must always pass through suffering. The world hates light and lashes out to suffocate and eliminate it.**

**Christ Jesus is crucified not because he makes miracles. Everybody wants miracles. But because he says the Word of his Father, the true one. He is the true and faithful witness of the Father. Thus He wants his disciples.**

**Here is what the Spirit says: "Be faithful to death and I will give you the crown of life. Who has ears, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches. The victor will not be struck by the second death" (Rev 3.10-11)**

**PERSEVERANCE IS MISSING**

**Non-perseverance is the sin of many. One begins but then he does not carry forward what he has begun. We start with the truth and end up in falsehood. First great zeal, great love and then apathy and spiritual sloth.**

**The temptation comes and makes us start with the omission of the little things, ignoring that who falls into the small things, little by little also fails in the big ones. Perseverance is in small things.**

**First, prayer is omitted. Then the reading of a Gospel page is omitted. We continue with abstinence from the Eucharist and from Confession. Even Sunday Mass disappears. We have already fallen from the true faith.**

**THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER**

**For every gift that is received, it is right to thank, bless, praise and celebrate the Lord for his great mercy. Each of his gifts is true charity and true love for our salvation and eternal redemption.**

**Even a Word spoken in the Holy Spirit is a gift for eternal life. Together with thanksgiving to him we must ask for the conversion of every heart and perseverance in the following of Christ Jesus, in his Church.**

**SHORT FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**It is right that every member of the body of Christ knows who the presbyter in the Church is.**

***Let us ask ourselves: Who is a priest for the Church, in the Church and with the Church? For the Church he is the presence of Christ Jesus, Head and Shepherd, of his flock. He is the one who has to take care of, nourish, sanctify and teach. It is he who must guide and lead the flock to the source of truth, justice, faith, charity and hope that are in Christ Jesus and in the Holy Spirit. It is He who must administer the mysteries of God. It is He who must separate like a double edged sword, light from darkness, truth from falsehood, good from evil, justice from injustice, holiness from sin, the true Gospel from the false gospels and Christ from idols. He is the one who has to watch out that no predatory wolf enters the flock of the Lord to devour, kill, tear and steal the sheep that are of Christ Jesus. It is He who precedes the flock in holiness and truth.***

***He must never forget either the warning of Isaiah or the words of Malachi. He must always remember Peter's teaching: "You all, beasts of the field, come and eat; all of you, beasts of the forest, come. Its guardians are all blind, they understand nothing. They are all dumb dogs, unable to bark; they doze crouching, they love to doze off. But these greedy dogs, who do not know how to satisfy themselves, are the shepherds who do not understand anything. Everyone follows his own way, everyone takes care of his own interest, without exception (Is 56,9-11). "For the lips of the priest must keep knowledge and from his mouth a teaching is sought, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. Instead, you have strayed from the right path and have stumbled upon many with your teaching. You have destroyed Levi's covenant, says the Lord of Hosts. Therefore I also made you contemptible and abject before all the people, because you did not follow my ways and used partiality in your teaching" (Mal 2,7-9).***

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**Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints arrange that the truth of the presbyter lives in every heart.**