**FRAGMENTS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

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

***Catanzaro 11 February 2019***

**IN THE BEGINNING**

**The beginning is everything. In it is our truth. *In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. And God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them* (Gen 1.1-2.26).**

**In the beginning is the vocation of Abraham: *The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you*" (Gen 12: 1-3).**

**Christ Jesus is also in the Beginning: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth* (Jn 1,1-5-14). This beginning is the eternal foundation.**

**Peter reveals to us what his beginning of faith is: *We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, "This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain* (2Pt 1: 16-18).**

**Even Paul has his beginning of most pure faith: *I am grateful to him who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me trustworthy in appointing me to the ministry. I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and an arrogant man, but I have been mercifully treated because I acted out of ignorance in my unbelief. Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am the foremost. But for that reason I was mercifully treated, so that in me, as the foremost, Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life* (1Tm 1,12-16).**

**This principle is based on his encounter with Christ Jesus seen in the light of his divine and eternal glory, more than Peter on the mountain: *"My brothers and fathers, listen to what I am about to say to you in my defense." When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew they became all the more quiet. And he continued, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city. At the feet of Gamaliel I was educated strictly in our ancestral law and was zealous for God, just as all of you are today"***

***I persecuted this Way to death, binding both men and women and delivering them to prison. Even the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify on my behalf. For from them I even received letters to the brothers and set out for Damascus to bring back to Jerusalem in chains for punishment those there as well.***

***"On that journey as I drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from the sky suddenly shone around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' I replied, 'Who are you, sir?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazorean whom you are persecuting.' My companions saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who spoke to me. I asked, 'What shall I do, sir?' The Lord answered me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything appointed for you to do.' Since I could see nothing because of the brightness of that light, I was led by hand by my companions and entered Damascus"*  (Acts 22,1-11).**

**The Apostle Youth places as his principle his multiple knowledge of Jesus: *"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life - for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us - what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete. Now this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all"* (1Jn 1: 1-5).**

**Each Apostle of the Lord has his own particular "in the beginning" which marks the start of his new life. Christ also lives on two "in the beginning". One is in eternity: "In the beginning was the Word" and the other is in time: "And the Word became flesh and came to dwell among us full of grace and truth".**

**Every Christian necessarily also has his "in the beginning". Now let's ask ourselves: What is my "in the beginning"? What is the origin of my history with Christ Jesus? What is the foundation on which everything rests and is built. What is in the beginning is the real seed from which the tree grows.**

**If my "in the beginning" was true, if then it gave a radical change to my life, if today I returned to where I was before my "in the beginning", it is a sign that I have made either dry the tree or I have not sufficiently protected, guarded and helped it to grow, abandoning it to the animals of the forest.**

**This also applies to the mission that comes from it. For example, If the mission was that of "giving the world a new soul, the soul of the Word of Christ Jesus" and today not only is the new soul not given, but I myself have lost the new received soul, then the responsibility is great.**

**It means that I did not take good care of my "in the beginning" and consequently the mission was also lost. If I myself have become without the new soul of the Word of Christ Jesus, might I ever give the new soul of the Word to the world that is deprived of it? Who is without, he can give nothing.**

**Whoever detaches himself from his "in the beginning" and does not give it full development, according to truth and grace that come from God, he will return to his former life and the word of Peter will also be fulfilled for him: *If indeed, after having escaped the corruptions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ, they remain enmeshed and defeated in them again, their latter condition has become worse than the former.***

**It would have been better for them never to have known the way of justice, rather than, after having known it, turning their backs on the holy commandment which had been transmitted to them. For them the proverb occurred: "The dog has returned to his vomit and the washed sow has returned to roll in the mud" (2Pt 2,20-22). May the Lord preserve us from it!**

**DIVINE GUARANTEE AND PROMISE**

**The Lord never leaves his missionary alone when he gives a mission. This truth must be an absolute and infallible certainty for every person called by God and sent by him to announce his will. It is the law of both of the Old and New Testaments. It is the law for every missionary. An only example is sufficient. Behold what the Lord says to Jeremiah: *This word of the Lord was addressed to me: "Before I formed you in your mother’s womb, I knew you, before you were born, I consecrated you; I have established you a prophet of the nations." I replied: "Alas, Lord God! Here, I do not know how to speak, because I am young".***

**But the Lord said to me: "Do not say: "I am young". You will go to all those to whom I will send you and will say all that I will command you. Don't be afraid in front of them, because I am with you to protect you". Oracle of the Lord. The Lord stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: "Behold, I put my words upon your mouth. See, today I give you authority over the nations and over the kingdoms to uproot and demolish, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant".**

**This word of the Lord came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I replied: "I see an almond tree branch." The Lord added: "You have seen well, for I watch over my word to bring it about". This word of the Lord came to me again: "What do you see?" I replied: "I see a boiling pot, whose mouth is inclined from the north." The Lord told me: "From the north the misfortune will spread over all the inhabitants of the earth. For, behold, I am going to call all the kingdoms of the north. Oracle of the Lord. They will come and each will set his throne at the gates of Jerusalem, against its walls, all around, and against all the cities of Judah. Then I will pronounce my judgments against them, for all their wickedness, for they have abandoned me and sacrificed to other gods and worshiped idols made with their own hands.**

**Therefore, you tighten the garment on your sides, and rise up and tell them all that I order you; do not be frightened in front of them, otherwise I will be the one who scares you in front of them. And behold, today I make of you like a fortified city, a pillar of iron and a wall of bronze against all the land, against the kings of Judah and its leaders, against its priests and the people of the land. They will make you war, but they won't overcome you, because I am with you to save you». Oracle of the Lord (Jer 1: 1-19). The Lord is always with his envoy.**

**In the New Testament, the mission and the ways of God's presence in his missionaries change. Everything in the New Testament changes because with it we enter the fullness of truth and grace.**

**Here is the mission, the modalities of its development, the guarantee of divine assistance to the missionaries: Jesus approached and said to them: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28,18-20).**

**"Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And (behold) I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Lk 24: 46-49).**

**(Jesus) said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (Jn 20: 21-23).**

**When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (At 1,6-8).**

**When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim (Acts 2, 1-4). A mystery to be lived in faith.**

**If the missionary loses this faith, he will soon lose the mission. He will abandon the divine command and surrender to the thoughts of his heart. When does this happen? Always, when we separate ourselves from God.**

**How do you separate yourself from God? Not growing the missionary in grace and truth. In the Old Testament God took care of the work of salvation. In the New the full obedience of the missionary to the Spirit is required.**

**The Holy Spirit is obeyed by growing in the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is left to suffocate because one does not grow in him, or he is not revived, having suffocated the Spirit in us, even the mission is suffocated.**

**The suffocation of the Holy Spirit in the heart is the cause of the failure of the mission. When the mission fails, the cause must be found not in others but in us. And the cause is always the same: the absence of the Spirit.**

**One falls from the Spirit and falls from the mission. The Spirit is suffocated and the mission is suffocated. The Spirit dies in us and the mission dies in us. The Spirit dies and the mission is reduced to a human acting.**

**The Spirit dies and the mission is reduced to sterile liturgy, to vain works, to useless prayers and to fruitless meetings of eternal life. Without the Spirit there is no life for the mission, because the Holy Spirit is the life of the mission.**

**But the Holy Spirit is the life of the mission, if he is the life of the missionary. It is the utmost foolishness to think that the Spirit can be the life of the mission, if he is not the life of the missionary, who in turn must give life to the mission.**

**THE HEART TEMPLE OF THE SKY**

**When is the missionary life of the mission or gives life to the mission? When his heart is the temple of heaven. When is the heart the temple of Heaven? When God the Father lives there with all his eternal and infinite love.**

**Christ Jesus dwells in it with his grace, his truth, his light and his eternal life. When the Holy Spirit reigns in it with his communion, his spiritual gifts and the obedience to his mission.**

**When the Mother of God rules the heart, directing it to an ever more perfect obedience to Christ Jesus and to his Word. When the Angels are our model of faith and the Saints are examples of true love for Jesus.**

**If the heart is not the temple of Heaven, all our works and thoughts become earthly works and thoughts, works and thoughts according to the flesh. The flesh cannot produce eternal life and the mission has already failed.**

**If the heart is not the temple of Heaven, the mission will be lived according to the flesh, never according to the Holy Spirit and we know what the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit of the Lord are. Saint Paul is Master: *for you, brothers, have been called to freedom. But let this freedom not become a pretext for the flesh; through love, instead, you serve one another. In fact, the whole Law finds its fullness in a single precept: You will love your neighbour as yourself. But if you bite and devour each other, at least take care not to destroy each other completely! I tell you then: walk according to the Spirit and you will not be led to satisfy the desire of the flesh.***

**In fact, the flesh has desires contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit has desires contrary to the flesh; these things oppose each other, so you don't do what you want. But if you let yourself be guided by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. After all, the works of the flesh are well known: fornication, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, enmity, discord, jealousy, dissension, divisions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and such things.**

**Regarding these things, I warn you, as I have already said: whoever does them will not inherit the kingdom of God. On the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, magnanimity, benevolence, goodness, fidelity, meekness and self-control; against these things there is no law. Those who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Therefore, if we live of the Spirit, we also walk according to the Spirit. We do not seek vainglory, provoking and envying one another (Gal 5,13-26).**

**It is right that everyone asks: Is my heart the temple of Heaven? If it is not, or if it is in a partial way, or even in a very superficial way, everyone is obliged to free it from all falsehood and place the truth in it.**

**LOVE AND CONVERSION COUNT**

**Conversion is not the abandonment of the path of evil to walk on the path of good. Instead it is the abandonment of the word of men to embrace, follow, obey and realize only the Word of the Lord.**

**What Word of the Lord must you listen to? The last one addressed to us. God did not speak only to Abraham, but also to Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Prophets who follow one another in time and Christ Jesus.**

**The Apostles, in the Holy Spirit, have the mission of letting themselves be led to the whole truth of Christ and as they let themselves be led, leading every man. The Letter to the Hebrews in Chapter XI reveals the path of the Word.**

**In Chapter One he reveals that today God speaks through the Son and in Chapter three he invites us to listen to the voice of the Son, that comes to us through the voice of the Apostles, Masters, Prophets and Doctors. Letter to the Ephesians.**

**God, who many times and in different ways in ancient times had spoken to the fathers through the prophets, lately, in these days, spoke to us through the Son, whom he established heir of all things and by whom he made even the world (Heb 1,1-2).**

**For this reason, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as on the day of rebellion, the day of temptation in the desert, where your fathers tempted me by putting me to the test, despite having seen my works for forty years. So I was disgusted with that generation and I said: they have always a diverted heart.**

**They didn't know my ways. So I swore in my anger: they will not enter my rest. Take care, brothers, that you will not find in any of you a perverse heart and without faith that moves away from the living God.**

**Rather exhort each other every day, as long as this day lasts, so that none of you is obstinate and seduced by sin. In fact, we have become participants in Christ, on condition that we maintain the trust we have had from the beginning to the end (Heb. 3: 7-15).**

**And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ (Eph 4,11-13). The minister of the Word listens to men. After having listened, he tells them the Word of salvation of Christ Jesus.**

**What is love for the Christian? Realizing in his life every Word that God, through his Church, brought to his ear. You listen, you obey and you love. You don't listen and you don't love.**

**THE VALUE OF PRAYER**

**Christian prayer begins when God is asked to speak to our hearts, because we are ready to listen to him. You listen, obeying every Word that the Lord makes reach our hearts. The true prayer.**

**Prayer is also every request of grace, so that our obedience may be immediate to every Word of our God. It is also an invocation to the Holy Spirit to take us by the hand and lead us to the whole truth.**

**Praying is also presenting our life to the Lord, so that he gives us all strength to live it in his will, in his peace and in his truth. The Christian knows that with God's grace he can live in every difficulty.**

**But first of all prayer is seeing God in his eternal essence, confessing him as our God, blessing him, praising him, celebrating him and thanking him because we are from his mercy and grace.**

**FAITH AND SADNESS**

**The man of faith cannot live in sadness. If he is in sadness he is not in the fullness of faith. If he is in the fullness of faith he cannot be in sadness. In faith the Christian knows that everything contributes to his good.**

**Every trial is so that he grows in faith, in charity and in hope. Every difficulty is so that he increases in himself the fortitude of the Holy Spirit. The man of God is always tried. Temptation is also the proof of loyalty.**

**We can have moments of sadness, but to overcome them and strengthen ourselves in the love of God. The Christian knows that he has made a gift of his life to God. This gift must be done every day, at any time and in every circumstance.**

**FAITH AND PRAYER**

**Faith tells us that every perfect good descends from the Father of heavens. It tells us that the Father is abundant in every gift of grace. He gives without measure. But faith also tells us that the Father must be prayed with the love of true children.**

**One returns repented to Him and remains in his house - the house of God is the Word of his Son - one hears his voice and he listens to ours. The Father speaks to his son, the son listens to him. The son speaks to the Father, the Father listens to him.**

**SHORT FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Christian life is built on some essential truths. We indicate three of them: In the beginning, divine guarantee and promise and the heart temple of heaven. They are not the only ones. There are many others.

*IN THE BEGINNING: The beginning is everything. In it is our truth. Every Christian necessarily also has his "in the beginning". Now let's ask ourselves: What is my "in the beginning"? What is the origin of my history with Christ Jesus? What is the foundation on which everything rests and builds? What is in the beginning is the real seed from which the tree grows. If my "in the beginning" was true, if then it gave a radical change to my life, if today I returned to where I was before my "in the beginning", it is a sign that I have made the tree either be dried or I have not sufficiently protected, guarded and helped it to grow, abandoning it to the animals of the forest. This also applies to the mission that comes from it. If the mission, for example, was that to "give the world a new soul, the soul of the Word of Christ Jesus" and today not only this new soul is not given, but I myself have lost the new soul received, then the responsibility is great. It means that I did not take good care of my "in the beginning" and consequently the mission was also lost. If I myself have become without the new soul of the Word of Christ Jesus, might I ever give the new soul of the Word to the world that is deprived of it? Who is without, he can give nothing. Whoever detaches himself from his "in the beginning" and does not give it full development, according to truth and grace that come from God, he will return to his former life.*

*GUARANTEE AND DIVINE PROMISE: When the Lord gives a mission, he never leaves his missionary alone. This truth must be an absolute, infallible certainty for every person called by God and sent by him to announce his will. If the missionary loses this faith, he will soon lose the mission. He will abandon the divine command and surrender to the thoughts of his heart. When does this happen? Always, when we separate ourselves from God. How do we separate ourselves from God? Not growing the missionary in grace and truth. The missionary is asked full obedience to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is obeyed by growing in the Holy Spirit. If one lets the Spirit be suffocated because he does not grow in him, or he is not revived, having suffocated the Spirit in us, even the mission is suffocated. The cause of the failure of the mission is the suffocation of the Holy Spirit in the heart. When the mission fails, the cause must be found not in others but in us. And the cause is always the same: the absence of the Spirit. One falls from the Spirit, he falls from the mission. The Spirit is suffocated, the mission is suffocated. The Spirit dies in us, the mission in us dies. The Spirit dies, the mission is reduced to a human acting. The Spirit dies and the mission becomes a sterile liturgy, vain works, useless prayers and fruitless encounters of eternal life. Without the Spirit there is no life for the mission, because the Holy Spirit is the life of the mission. But the Holy Spirit is the life of the mission, if he is the life of the missionary. It is the utmost foolishness to think that the Spirit can be the life of the mission, if he is not the life of the missionary, who must give life to the mission.*

*THE HEART TEMPLE OF THE SKY: When is the missionary life of the mission or does he give life to the mission? When his heart is the temple of heaven. When is the heart the temple of Heaven? When God the Father lives there with all his eternal and infinite love. Christ Jesus dwells in it with his grace, his truth, his light and his eternal life. When the Holy Spirit reigns in it with his communion, his spiritual gifts and obedience to his mission. When the Mother of God rules the heart, directing it to an ever more perfect obedience to Christ Jesus and to his Word. When the Angels are our model of faith and the Saints are examples of true love for Jesus. If the heart is not the temple of Heaven, all our works and thoughts become earthly works and thoughts, works and thoughts according to the flesh. The flesh cannot produce eternal life and the mission has already failed. If the heart is not the temple of Heaven, the mission will be lived according to the flesh, never according to the Holy Spirit and we will only know the works of the flesh and never will we produce the fruits of the Spirit of the Lord. It is right that everyone asks: Is my heart the temple of Heaven? If it is not, or if it is in a partial way, or even in a very superficial way, everyone is obliged to free it from all falsehood and place the truth in it.*

Mother of the Redemption, help every Christian to find his soul again as a true disciple of Jesus. Only by finding him he might give it to every one of his brothers. Angels, and Saints arrange that these three truths are our very way. The truth of the world is from the truth of Christ in us.