**FRAGMENTS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

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

***Catanzaro 18 February 2019***

**HOUSE OF SERENITY AND COMFORT**

**The house of the Lord is the body of Christ, governed by the Holy Spirit, who gives each one gifts according to his will. However, each gift is similar to a small seed. It must be taken and helped to grow.**

**Only if it is made to grow might it produce fruit that must enrich and nourish the whole body and not only those who received it. Every gift of the Holy Spirit is given for the benefit of all. Here is what Saint Paul teaches.**

**There are different charismas, but only one is the Spirit; there are different ministries, but only one is the Lord; there are different activities, but only one is God, who operates everything in everyone. To each is given a particular manifestation of the Spirit for the common good; to one, by the Spirit, is given the language of wisdom.**

**Instead, to another, by the same Spirit, the language of knowledge; to one, in the same Spirit, faith; to another, in the one Spirit, the gift of healings; to one the power of miracles; to another the gift of prophecy; to another the gift of discerning spirits; to another the variety of languages; to another the interpretation of languages.**

**But all these things are worked by the one and the same Spirit, distributing them to each one as he wishes. Just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, although many, are one body, so is Christ. In fact we have all been baptized by one Spirit in one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free; and we have all been quenched by one Spirit.**

**Now you are the body of Christ and, each according to his own part, his members. Therefore, God has placed some in the Church primarily as apostles, secondly as prophets, thirdly as masters; then there are miracles, hence the gift of healing, of assisting, of governing and of speaking various languages.**

**Are they perhaps all apostles? All prophets? All masters? Do they all work miracles? Does everyone have the gift of healing? Does everyone speak languages? Do they all interpret them? Instead, desire intensely the greatest charismas. And then, I show you the most sublime way (cf. 1Cor 12: 1-31).**

**The soul of every gift, or the nourishment of every gift, is charity: Therefore, I urge you, brothers, by the mercy of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not conform to this world, but let yourself be transformed by renewing your way of thinking, in order to discern the will of God, what is good, pleasing and perfect to him.**

**By the grace that has been given to me, I say to each of you: do not value yourselves more than what is convenient, but evaluate yourselves wisely and justly, each according to the measure of faith that God has given him.**

**Since, as in one body we have many members and these members do not all have the same function, so also we, although many, are one body in Christ and, each for his part, we are members of one another. We have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us: those who have the gift of prophecy let them practice it according to what the faith dictates; whoever has a ministry awaits the ministry; who teaches is dedicated to teaching; who exhorts is dedicated to exhortation. Who gives, let him do it with simplicity; whoever presides, preside with diligence; those who do works of mercy, do them with joy.**

**Let not charity be hypocritical: hate evil, cling to good; love one another with fraternal affection, compete in esteeming one another. Do not be lazy in doing good, but be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. Be joyful in hope, constant in tribulation, persevering in prayer. Share the needs of the saints; be considerate of hospitality (Rom 12: 1-13).**

**Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor 13: 4-7).**

**How can we make the house of the Lord, the body of Christ, become home of serenity and comfort? Through two simple ways. First way: giving the greatest development to the gift of the Holy Spirit in our possession.**

**How is the gift given great development? By engaging all of us in soul, spirit and body at the service of the gift. The gift grows if it is nourished by the virtue of charity, of faith and of hope. An unfed gift is dead.**

**Second way to make the body of Christ become the house of serenity and comfort: recognizing the gift of every other brother and welcoming it with a great spirit of faith, charity and hope. Simple but effective ways.**

**Where the house of the Lord, the body of Christ, does not live with serenity and comfort, it is a sign that the Word proclaimed by the Apostle James is being fulfilled for us: Who among you is wise and intelligent? With good conduct, let him show that his works are inspired by meekness and wisdom.**

**But if you have bitter jealousy and a spirit of contention in your heart, do not boast or tell lies against the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes from above: it is earthly, material and diabolical; because where there is jealousy and a spirit of contention, there is disorder and all sorts of bad deeds.**

**Instead the wisdom that comes from above is above all pure, then peaceful, mild, yielding, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. For those who work for peace, a fruit of justice is sown in peace (Jas 3: 13-18).**

**Here is the perfect rule of Paul to be bearers in the body of Christ of serenity and comfort: If therefore there is some consolation in Christ, if there is some comfort, fruit of charity, if there is some communion of spirit, if there are feelings of love and compassion, make my joy full with the same feeling and with the same charity, remaining unanimous and undivided. Do nothing out of rivalry or vainglory, but let each of you, with all humility, consider others superior to yourself. Let not everyone look for his own interests, but also for that of others.**

**Have the same sentiments in you as in Christ Jesus: although he was in the condition of God, he did not consider being like God a privilege, but he emptied himself by taking on the condition of a servant, becoming similar to men. From the aspect recognized as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death and death on a cross. For this reason God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee bends in the heavens, on earth and under the earth, and every language proclaims: "Jesus Christ is Lord!", to the glory of God the Father.**

**Therefore, my dear ones, you who have always been obedient, not only when I was present but much more so now that I am far away, dedicate yourselves to your salvation with respect and fear. It is God in fact who arouses in you the will and work according to his plan of love.**

**Do everything without murmuring and without hesitating, to be blameless and pure, innocent children of God in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation. Among them you shine like stars in the world, keeping the word of life firm. Thus in the day of Christ I might boast of not having run in vain, nor having labored in vain.**

**But, even if I have to be poured on the sacrifice and offer of your faith, I am happy and I enjoy it with all of you. Likewise you also enjoy it and rejoice with me (Phil 2,1,18).**

**Without strong spiritual growth, passions, vices and sins will govern our soul, our spirit and our body and we will be in the body of Christ as crazy members that create every disturbance.**

**TOLLE ET LEGE - TAKE AND READ**

**We can understand how necessary the reading of Scripture is from an event that actually happened to Saint Augustine, when he was on the way of conversion, while the Holy Spirit was working in his heart.**

**We read in the Confessions (Book 8,11.29-30): Thus I spoke and wept in the boundless bitterness of my broken heart. Suddenly a voice, as of a child or a girl, comes to me from the neighboring house I don't know, what it was saying singing and repeating several times: "Take and read, take and read". I instantly shifted my appearance and began to think very carefully if it was a chant used in some boys' game, but I didn't remember having heard it anywhere at all.**

**Embanked the flood of tears, I got up. The only possible interpretation was for me that it was a divine command to open the book and read the first verse I would find you. I had heard say of Anthony that he received a warning from the Gospel, coming in by chance while it was read: "Go, sell all the things you have, give them to the poor and you will have treasure in the heavens, and come and follow me".**

**He interpreted it as an oracle addressed to him and he immediately turned to you. So I returned excited to the place where Alipio was sitting and where I had left the book of the Apostle when I got up. I grabbed it, opened it and read silently the first verse on which my eyes fell. He said: "Not in crapules and inebriations, not in embraces and shamelessness, not in contentions and envies, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ nor indulge the flesh in its lusts". I didn't want to read any further, nor did I need it. In fact, as soon as the reading of this sentence was finished, a light almost of certainty entered my heart and all the darkness of doubt dissipated.**

**having closed the book, holding my finger inside it or perhaps another sign, already serene in my face, I told Alipio about the happening. But he likewise revealed to me what was happening to him that I was unaware of. He asked to see the text I had read. I handed it to him and he raised his eyes even beyond the point where I had stopped, unaware of the rest. What followed said: "And welcome those who are weak in faith".**

**He referred it to himself and told me it. In any case, the admonition strengthened within him an honest decision and purpose, fully in line with his conduct, which had already led him for a long time away from me and further on the path of good. Without disturbance or hesitation he joined me. We go immediately to my mother and reveal her the decision we made: she rejoices; we tell her about the unfolding of events: she exults and triumphs.**

**And she began to bless you because you can do more than we ask and understand. She saw that you had granted her concerning me more than she had asked you with all her moans and pitiful tears. In fact, you turned me to you so fully, that I was no longer looking either for a wife or advances in this century, by now standing upright on that ruler of faith, where you had shown me to her so many years before during a revelation; and you changed her grief into much more abundant joy than her desires, much more precious and pure than that expected by the nephews of my flesh (Augustine, Confessions: 8,12,29-20).**

**The Word of the Lord is the light that illuminates our steps, lights up our spirit, warms our hearts and gives security of eternal life to all our acts. With only one verse of Scripture lived life changes.**

**Daily contact with Scripture gives true orientation to our life. I remember one day I wrote this simple rule to help find contact with the Gospel for my Parish:**

**Take the Gospel in your hand. Live a moment of silence and prayer. Read a passage from the Word of God. Ask yourself: What did I understand? What I did not understand? What do I put into practice? What do not I put into practice of what I have read? How to give others the riches of the truth of the Gospel? But do I really want to give something to others? Be honest with God and with your conscience and you will find the answer.**

**The Gospel is: Your navigation chart to the sky. The compass that marks the path of your holiness. The code of your daily living. The regulation of your behavior. The law of life. Love it, read it and live it; at any time make it your faithful friend, your trusted advisor.**

**The Gospel is the sun of our existence. Without this sun of eternal life, we walk in the darkness of our thoughts, deluding ourselves to walk along paths of holiness and salvation. Without the Gospel we walk in dense darkness.**

**A truth that needs to be brought to light wants the Gospel to be announced to be the Word drawn from our heart, our spirit, our soul and our body. We do not read the Gospel to others, we remind it.**

**We remind it drawing it from the heart. We put it in the hearts of our brothers only by drawing it from our heart. The Gospel is our soul as is the soul of Christ Jesus, the soul of the Apostles, the soul of martyrs and saints.**

**If we are deprived of this soul, can we give it to the world? If the soul is drawn from our soul, if it is our soul that we must give, we can never give it if the Gospel does not become our soul.**

**HOLY JOYFUL ​​PRIESTS**

**The Lord needs holy joyful and cheerful priests. When is a priest holy, joyful and cheerful? When he lives in the Spirit of the Lord. When every day he revives the Spirit that has been given to him.**

**What does living in the Spirit of the Lord mean? Handing over life to Him so that he may lead it according to the will of the Father, respecting the Command of Christ Jesus left to his Apostles.**

**When the Priest takes his life in his hands, then he is no longer either holy or joyful or cheerful. He becomes a worried, sad and distressed priest, because he experiences failure every day.**

**The Lord wants priests always guided, moved, taken by the hand and led by his Holy Spirit. This might happen if the Priest wears the dress of holy virtues both cardinal and theological.**

**SUMMARIZING LIFE**

**The whole life of a man is summed up in the yes said to God and in fidelity to it. Life is a yes. It is this yes, if one remains faithful to it. It is a yes that every day must be given to the Lord. It is a yes that demands perennial obedience.**

**It is a yes that asks to be given to every Word, every truth, every command and every motion of the Holy Spirit. It is not a yes to do something. Instead, it is a yes to live the whole life from the will of the Lord.**

**Today, we must confess it, the man has become incapable both of saying the initial yes and of preserving his life in the yes given with fidelity until death. Jesus was faithful to the yes given to the Father until death and also on the cross.**

**A JOURNEY OF CONVERSION**

**Our path is of conversion. What should we be converted to every day? To fidelity to the yes given to the Lord. All temptations are aimed at making us take back our yes and lead life by ourselves.**

**When this happens, we can do anything, but not in the yes given to the Lord. Conversion is returning to the given yes and growing in it every day with total abandonment to the Holy Spirit.**

**ASSIDUOUS AND CONSTANT PRAYER**

**The Christian is the man of prayer. The Christian is prayer. He must ask the Father for everything, every gift of grace, truth, peace, health and everything else for himself and for others. The Christian is a true prophet in prayer.**

**SHORT FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**