

The 25th year of Priesthood of fr. Francesco Brancaccio, a student aid opportunity in Cameroon

With a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Archbishop Vincenzo Bertolone and with the presence of Archbishop emeritus Msgr. Cantisani, in the St. John parish in Catanzaro the 25th anniversary of the ordination of Fr Francesco Brancaccio, ecclesiastical diocesan assistant of the Apostolic Movement was remembered. In the assembly full of parishioners, were also present the Arch-confraternity of St. John the Baptist and Evangelist and many faithful adherents of the Apostolic Movement.

In the homily, Archbishop Bertolone praised the Lord because "nobody and nothing deserves to scratch the beauty and joy of a priestly existence, that joy of belonging to him forever." He exalted the virtue of fidelity, which today deserves to be vigorously witnessed in the priestly, married life and in every undertaken Christian commitment. In fidelity - the presbyter commented - in a continuous and exact fulfilment of the duties of his state, moment by moment, accepting, smiling, thanking always and everywhere the Lord, one is sanctified.

In words of felt esteem, the archbishop has applied these thoughts to fr. Francis's priestly existence, thanking him "for the testimony of faith in the Lord of life and history, lived and proclaimed with cultural richness and clever passion and with fidelity to the Church, Bishop and Pope."

Recalling the various dimensions of the ministry of fr. Brancaccio, the archbishop emphasized the versatility in the pastoral,

theological, educational, training and missionary fields: pastor for 24 years, diocesan assistant of the Apostolic Movement, with various experiences in Africa, Episcopal vicar for culture, seminary teacher, theologian who is placed in a peaceful and serene dialogue with the secular world also abroad. Among other things, the bishop underlined fr. Francesco's obedience when he was recently asked to pursue a degree in canon law in Strasbourg, an assignment which he has fulfilled together with all other duties of the ministry.

Monsignor Bertolone thanked the Lord for the gift of father Francesco's vocation, recalling how it has matured from the spirituality of the Apostolic Movement, and had expressions that were pleasing and grateful for the inspirer Maria Marino. These words were taken up again by Fr. Francesco at the end of the mass; he reminded how the Lord, through the Apostolic Movement, called him in the service of the Church and of humanity, using the humility of Mrs. Maria Marino, whose example of faith and charity today continues through the sacrifice of much hidden suffering.

Thanking all the ecclesial realities and all the faithful, Fr. Francis had words of intense emotion for the apostolic testimony of the Archbishop and his constant care for the priests. He also wanted to express his gratitude to Pope Francis for the thrust of charity he infuses to the Church and the world and for the ever-open voice with which he addresses the priests with paternity. It is worth emphasizing the significant work of fraternal solidarity carried out during this celebration. Father Francesco invited the community to devote any possible gift initiative not to his person, but to a project of support for some students at the University of Douala (Cameroon), who, as it is explained in a note by the Director of the Institute Don Gustave Mohomye, take up with goodwill a small business to be able to carry on their studies in their country. Even the offers collected during the Eucharistic celebration are devolved entirely to this work.



The Lord comes before you

We maybe think little about the behaviour of our God. Every initiative in creation and salvation begins with Him and is also accomplished by Him. He walks in front of us and also closes our caravan. He goes ahead and follows us. If he were not in front of us, we would be lost after a few steps. If He were not behind us, we would be assailed by all the power of evil. We would be consumed in an instant. There is no salvation for those who walk without their Creator, Lord and God: "Break out together in song, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the Lord comforts his people, he redeems Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations; All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God. Depart, depart, come forth from there, touch nothing unclean! Out from there! Purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord. Yet not in fearful haste will you come out, nor leave in headlong flight, For the Lord comes before you, and your rear guard is the God of Israel" (cf. Is 52: 1-12).

What is the condition for God to precede and accompany us? He always precedes us in the promise of salvation and in the invitation to conversion. If he abandoned us for a single moment, we would be consumed by evil. This characteristic or "nature" of God must be of every disciple of Jesus. He must always precede every man in the proclamation of salvation and in the invitation to conversion. All Scrip-

ture is the narration of this anticipating action of the Lord. But also all Scripture is the story that the Lord has always been placed in the custody and protection of those who are in his Word. Even this second characteristic or "nature" of God must be "nature" of every disciple of Jesus. He must be the guardian in the truth of every other disciple. Only if the disciples will guard each other in the truth, no one might harm them. But if every disciple walks on his own and is disinterested in others, a divided kingdom has no consistency. The lone person will be attacked by every brigand and will be left half dead or killed on the roadside.

Like the Lord, the Christian must always open and even close the path of true salvation. Everyone must make himself strength of the other. Everyone must always act as the true body of Christ the Lord, a compact, well-bound and connected body. If a member leaves the body, he has no life. He cannot have any. He is alive in the body for the body. Great is the mission of the disciple of Jesus: giving life to the whole body, receiving life from all the body. Who can help us to live this very high mission is only Her, the Mother of Jesus. The disciple was entrusted by Crucified Jesus to Her for all the days of his life. If the disciple walks with his Mother, he will be the true body of Christ. If he abandons the Mother, he will be an excellent meal for Satan's belly.

Father Costantino Di Bruno

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Joyful announcers of the Novelty of the Gospel

*Reflections from H.H. Francis Speech to priests,
consecrated and seminarians (Medellín, September 9, 2017)*

Quoting the Aparecida document, during a meeting with priests, consecrated people, seminarians and their families in his apostolic journey to Colombia, Pope Francis said that "knowing Jesus is the most beautiful gift that any person can receive; having encountered him it is the best thing that has happened to us in life, and making him be known through our words and works is a joy for us", the joy of evangelizing (No. 29).

Are there people today in the world who have not yet known Christ? Are there people today that have abandoned, set aside, refused that Christ they have encountered and known? Unfortunately, in latter and former cases, there are so many of these people. What to do? Either you remain indifferent to this scenario - and it is not the best solution because the Lord will ask us to give account for every sin of omission, every drowsiness and of every deviance in his mission - or you decide to put the hand to the plough to cultivate these lands burned by the heat of the world set on fire by many temptations. Jesus wanted the priest so that he continues his own mission and leads every man of good will on the way of the Gospel. And how is all that possible? Being always attached to the True vine tree that is Jesus and according to what the Holy Father affirms during the encounter: "We must all be careful so that every vine is used for what it was meant: to bring fruit."

Then let's ask ourselves who is the priest? The witness with his eyes pointed to Christ, that becomes, in turn, a model to be imitated for every man who looks or listens to him. Every minister of God should be able

to say, "Look at me and you will know what the gospel is." Affirming this is a great responsibility. Affirming this means to emphasize the words of the Apostle Paul: "Make yourselves my imitators as I am of Christ." Who imitates Paul does not imitate the Apostle, but imitates Christ, for Saint Paul can say, "I am no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me." It is a hard, tiring work of continuous modelling on Christ's thoughts, his heart and his holiness. The other always realizes whether that priest is a priest of Christ and according to Christ, or he is minister by profession, by career.

To be witnesses you must be holy and to be holy, you must get rid of all that is part of the old man with a daily divesting. A witness priest is a priest who makes visible with his life the truth of God that he announces with his mouth. St. John Paul II, in the apostolic exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, speaks of the priest as "a living and transparent image of Christ the priest" (PDV 12).

There is a crisis of priests, but there is also a crisis of the priest, of his identity that involves his mission and his spirituality. The word of the priest is not always seen and accepted as the word of God. In spite of this, the priest must speak only God's word. He is consecrated to the Lord and in particular way to the "truth" (Jn 17,17).

Virgin Mary, Mother of every consecrated person, obtain for us from the Lord the grace of having holy and sanctifying ministers and many new priestly vocations and to consecrated life.

Father Francesco Cristofaro

*The Lord's Day
XXVIII Sunday
O.T. Year A*

BUT THEY REFUSED TO COME

BUT THEY REFUSED TO COME HE WILL DESTROY DEATH FOREVER (Is 25: 6-10a)

Man can live on earth in all conditions, even in the most extreme and inhuman, only remaining in the Word of the Lord, which is the only path leading to eternal hope. If man comes out of the Word of God, he loses true hope and everything becomes vanity, illusion, useless sacrifice, but also a strong temptation for him to be the one to create his own hope. But what hope is the man creating, today having left the Word of his God? Is true hope a dignified death by suicide? Or giving vent to every instinct, craving, lust, pride and every other vice of man? Or even for the miserable ephemeral comfort of some the destruction of the earth? Isaiah, the powerful voice of the Lord, announces that God is the Creator of true hope. He does not prepare it for one people but for all peoples. A very high truth that must be meditated. The good for one people, one only nation is pure egoism.

I HAVE THE STRENGTH FOR EVERYTHING THROUGH HIM WHO EMPOWERS ME (Phil 4.12-14.19-20)

Paul is the missionary of Christ Jesus, one who was hired by the Lord on a daily pay. He works for his Saviour, his Saviour works for him. He increases and nourishes the body of Christ always with new members, the Lord nourishes and sustains his body, soul and spirit so that he can accomplish the ministry that has been entrusted him to the end. Between the one who hires on daily and the one who lets himself be hired perfect justice must rule. If Paul's justice skips, Jesus cannot live his justice toward him. If the Apostle does not work for his Lord, not

even his Lord might work for him. They are out of the relationship of justice and fidelity. Christ Jesus is the strength of Paul, because Paul is the power of Christ Jesus. If Paul is not the power of Christ Jesus, because he decided to devote himself to other things, Jesus might not be Paul's strength. Today, the Christian has placed himself out of this relationship of justice and fidelity. He wants everything from his Lord and God, but he wants to give nothing to his Saviour and Redeemer.

EVERYTHING IS READY; COME TO THE FEAST. (Mt 22: 1-14)

The true hope of man is a gift of his God. It is possessed by invitation. The Lord prepares the eternal bridal banquet for his Son and sends his servants to invite. Everyone responds that he has something more urgent to do and refuses to go to the room of the eternal banquet. For all of these hope has died. There will be no salvation. They have refused the gift of God. The Lord still sends his servants to invite every rich, poor, alone, abandoned man, of cities and countryside. Nobody must be denied true hope. The room fills up. The Lord goes to visit those who were in the room and saw one without a bridal gown. He orders that he is taken out. Jesus wants to teach us that who receives the invitation to attend the gospel banquet is obliged to wear the gown of the Gospel. Saint Paul tells us that in the eternal kingdom one has to enter clothed with Christ. This is our only eternal bridal gown. If Christ is not worn by us, if we are not dressed and clothed with Jesus Christ, the Father will not know us and we will be taken out.

by the Theologian, Father Costantino Di Bruno