

SPIRITUAL NOTES

Do not put anything before the love of Christ

Walking through our towns, often woven with enchantment for the beauty of their very characteristic historical centres, you come across new, gigantic structures, that have never been completed for decades. Not only do they disfigure the wonderful landscape that can be glimpsed, but it is natural to think: so much money has been spent on something like this and it has never been realized.

Jesus wants to make us understand the same thing about his sequel. It is not a work valid for a day, a month and a year. It involves the commitment of a whole life. Who decides in his heart to be a disciple of Christ must take into account four elements: love; the cross; renunciation; perseverance.

In the Gospel we are often presented with a large crowd that goes behind Jesus and He does not want to delude or disappoint anyone. The crowd must know what it's going to meet by following it. Jesus is not one of the many men of our time that promises illusory happiness indefinitely, as long as he has a following behind him or to make the cast of his image even more impressive. Jesus comes into the world to give us the truth of his Father and the truth involves the four realities or dimensions which we have just mentioned.

Love above all. Whoever wants to be a true, genuine and authentic Christian must

not put anything or anyone before Christ's love. Love for Jesus must be absolute, exclusive, one-sided; it must surpass heaven and earth; it must soar high beyond personal affections, possessions, thoughts and property. Everything else either is loved in Christ or Christ is not loved.

It is necessary, then, to know how to carry one's own cross which for the believer is the Word of Christ. The Word is known, we are formed and informed in it, we put it into the heart and live it daily. The Word is the gentle yoke that the Lord places on our shoulders.

Renunciation of all that stands between us and the love of God and does not make us walk quickly behind Him. And the first true great renunciation is the sin that lives in our flesh, which is like an immense ballast on the balloon of our Christian life.

But all this edification cannot be accomplished until the end but thanks to perseverance which is a gift from God to be constantly asked in prayer. Only who perseveres until the end can testify to the world that his work started over time has achieved its full accomplishment and fulfilment. Our salvation is in our perseverance.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption and our Mother, the love of God in you was daily bread and every word, gesture, action generated by your immaculate heart, have always been the fruit of this very pure love woven into your mind, your spirit, your heart and your body. Support us with your prayer and your powerful intercession so that the tower of our faith may be well founded, built, consolidated, perfected and concluded on the rock of the Word of your Son Jesus. Only in this way will we give true glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit of whom you are eternal dwelling.

Father Nicola De Luca

My kingdom is not of this world

Jesus was sent by the Father to our earth to work, in the Holy Spirit, through the work of the Apostles, the creation of the new man. As the new man, that walks in his truth, given to him again for his faith in Christ Jesus, he must be given back to the Father, to give him true adoration, which is the confession that only He is God and only his divine and eternal will is his law. If man wants to be the kingdom of God, that is, subject of the Father, he must abandon the adoration of himself, of his thoughts, of his will, of the concupiscence of the flesh and eyes and pride of life and surrender himself to his Creator, recognizing him as his only Lord, Redeemer, Saviour and Father. The thought cannot be changed if the nature of man is not changed. New nature, new thinking. New truth of all man's being, new desires and new will.

The kingdom of God is the acceptance of the will of the Father as our only will, manifested in its fullness of light in Christ Jesus. When is the Father's will received? When we accept the invitation to let ourselves be reconciled with God, repenting of our sins, leaving behind the previously lived life. We let ourselves be immersed in the waters of baptism and become new creatures in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. With the Spirit of God, in the body of Christ, which is our truth and light, we live as true children of the Father. We are kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, all those who think that a word is enough to a man to make the man live like a real man,

are in great error. The truth of man is in the grace of Christ, it is in the work of the Holy Spirit, it is in the sacraments of salvation that the Church celebrates for her children and in which they are transformed into new creatures and restored in their truth, even in an even greater and more admirable truth than the first. The word of men is of no use if one does not pass through an immersion without interruption in the grace of Christ the Lord. Grace must be for us the new Garden of Eden.

Truth is created by grace and nourished by it without interruption. Then it is up to man to make it grow through obedience to the Word. If we do not approach grace, the truth is either not created in us, or if it has already been created, little by little it goes out like a fire that is not fed. If it is not made to grow in obedience, it might never produce a fruit of eternal salvation, either for us or for others. Grace and truth must be man's perennial food. Grace and truth are gifts of God bestowed to us through the Church. If the Church does not give the Word no process of conversion or regeneration or growth in truth is possible. If she does not give grace, the grace received suffocates and dies in us. Grace and truth together make us a real kingdom of God. Mother of the Redemption, make us faithful hearers of the Word of Jesus and fill us with the holy desire to nourish with love of his grace. Grant that grace and truth are our very life.

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"Becoming saints is possible"

Reflection from the speech of H.H. Francis for the canonization of the blessed Paul VI, Oscar Romero and others (14.10.2018)

We are all called to holiness, and it is possible. This is also confirmed by the figures of men and women that the Holy Father places before all of us, each one with his identity and his particular mission.

Pope Francis, inspired by the liturgy, starts with a question, which we find in Mark's Gospel (Mk 10:17): "Teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?" Jesus wants us to go beyond the simple external observance of the law. Our Lord proposes a story of love, a gift of self: from doing for oneself, to being with Him.

The Master offers us a sharp life of sequel. He disorients the rich young man and uses two verbs: "come" and "follow me". Come: do not stand still, because it is not enough to do nothing wrong to be of Jesus. Follow me: do not go after Jesus only when you please, but look for him every day; do not be content to observe the precepts, do a little almsgiving and say some prayer: find in Him, the God that always loves you, the meaning of your life, the strength to give yourself to the specific will that he offers you. Jesus wants us to leave everything that weighs us down from our hearts, to fill it with Him alone. Our sense of "having" makes us incapable of loving. With a heart in which there is the weight of human things, one cannot love God and neighbour. "Jesus is radical" - Pope Francis says. He gives everything and asks for everything, a total love and wants an undivided heart; he gives us bread and we risk giving him crumbs, He offers us eternal life and we give back "some scraps of time", "a percentage of love". All or nothing. The Vicar of Christ makes an example: "Our heart is like

a magnet: it lets itself be attracted by love, but it can be attached only on one side and it must choose: either it will love God or it will love the riches of the world (cf. Mt 6:24); either it will live to love or will live for itself (cf. Mk 8:35). Let us ask ourselves which side we are on". We risk going away like the rich, sad young man.

Starting from evangelical references, the Pope highlights the figures of ordinary people like us, who have lived their everyday life and gradually freeing themselves of a burden that could remove their life from the Lord, they had the possibility to realize the good that God had entrusted to them, thus becoming exemplary witnesses. These figures, which today the Church places before our eyes, are people equal to us. They have had a predilection for the poor, have been misunderstood, have witnessed with passion the beauty and the joy of following Jesus totally. We too must live our vocation to holiness as the Lord exhorts us, through his word - "Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Lev 19.2) - and the way the Church always reminds us. Saints are the clear proof that this is possible. These saints, in different contexts, with different charismas, ministries and different responsibilities, have translated the Word into life today, without tepidity, without calculations, with the ardour of risking and leaving. With this liturgy of canonization, the Lord invites us not to be discouraged, to be grateful to be part of the path of Christian spirituality and to witness it to the brother whom we see, not only with words, but with life. May the Mother of the Church guide and protect us.

Father Nicola Coppoletta

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

YOU SAY I AM A KING
(OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST KING OF THE UNIVERSE)

HIS KINGSHIP SHALL NOT BE DESTROYED (Dn 7: 13-14)

The prophet Daniel in a vision has before him the Lord of heaven and earth. He is surrounded by his Angels, that are myriads of myriads, all careful to carry out his every order or command. To the Lord of the universe is presented one similar to a son of man. The Lord him gives his very glory, every power and honour. He is exalted by the Lord with all glory. No creature, either angel or man, receives from the Lord his eternal kingdom. Now the kingdom of God is placed all in his hands. Every power of God is in his hands. Every glory and every honour of God envelop his life. But the way through which this figure, like a son of a man, reaches the Ancient of Days, is not revealed to Daniel. The way is his passion and death. The Son of Man is elevated because of his humiliation. Jesus became obedient until death on the cross and the Father exalted him above all other names for eternity.

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING AMID THE CLOUDS (Ap 1,5-8)

Jesus promised it. One day He will return on the clouds of heaven. Today we contemplate him crucified, humiliated, spat, mocked, outraged, insulted and we make fun of Him. We see him and we want to remove him from our cities and from our history. Today he puts it next to men making him equal to them. Tomorrow he will not come in the humility of the flesh, he will not be hidden in a clay tent. He will come in his divine and eternal majesty, greatness and glory. He will come as Lord and Judge of the living and the dead. He will come and everyone will have to give him account not only for the rejection, the outrages and the satanic combat

against his cross. But he will also have to give him account for every thought, action, work and omission concerning to the will of his Father; will known either through the conscience or for the preaching of the Gospel. Even those who have changed, transformed and annulled his Word will have to give him account. Today, it is the time of faith. Tomorrow, it will be the time of vision. Today, it is the time of the Crucifix. Tomorrow the time of glory. Today, it is the time of insults, tomorrow it is the day of judgment.

ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS? (Jn 18: 33b-37)

Pilate investigates to know if Jesus really is the King of the Jews. Jesus answers him with a phrase which means: If I were king like any king of this world, you would know it. If you do not know it, it means that I am not king like the kings of the earth. Jesus is king of another world, of another kingdom. He is the king of a kingdom that every day must be built, edified and raised in every heart. His kingdom has only one mystery to accomplish: wresting every soul from the prince of the world that holds it captive, a slave to sin and death, to be brought into light, truth, grace and obedience to its Father. Jesus builds up the kingdom by making himself a witness of the truth. He will give the supreme testimony from the cross, when he will attest to the whole world, for all eternity, that life belongs to his Father and it must be given him according to the modalities established by him. Who is the true kingdom of God? Who testifies with his life that he belongs only to his God.

by the theologian,
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