

Pointe Noire (Congo Republic): Feast day for the adhering members of the Apostolic Movement

On January 26, 2020, the adhering members of the Apostolic Movement of Pointe Noire city met in the Sainte Bernadette parish for a festive day of prayer, thanksgiving to the Lord and fraternal communion.

The occasion of the meeting was seized by Fr Jean Paul Nguembo, a priest who spiritually assists the adherents. In fact, Fr. Jean Paul wanted to solemnize the reception of thirty new members, who had long approached the spirituality of the Movement. It was thus thought that the new adherents could express in an assembly form, before the parish priest, a "promise" of fidelity to the commitments of faith, morality, ecclesial communion and mission contemplated by the spirituality of the Movement, according to its statute. At the same time, the already faithful members could have confirmed their commitment.

In this way, the event was designed to foster the sense of responsibility that is assumed in living the identity of the Apostolic Movement, before God, the Church and the world. The implication of testimony and strengthening of mu-

tual communion should not also be underestimated as the expected fruit from this very event.

The appointment, prepared for weeks, was lived with joy. Having arrived in the morning from the different areas of the city and also from villages in the region, the adherents met for Mass, co-celebrated by Fr. Jean Paul himself, by the parish priest of St. Bernadette Fr. Eugène Henri Makosso and by other presbyters.

In the margins of the liturgy, the history of the Apostolic Movement in the Pointe Noire diocese has been retraced. The first seed dates back to 2004, when Fr Jean Paul Nguembo unexpectedly met Fr. Franco Bruno in Italy and enthusiastically accepted the invitation to learn about the spirituality of the Movement. With the collaboration of some lay people, he testified to it in his country, so much so that groups of adherents were formed in different dioceses and the Episcopal Conference welcomed its presence through a document in 2008. Several times, over the following years, the Congo Apostolic Movement received the encouraging visit of Fr Francesco Brancaccio, President Cesare Rotundo and other lay people.

In the city of Pointe Noire, the mission centres of the Apostolic Movement are the parishes of St. Kisito and St. Bernadette, where adherents meet every Monday at 6.00 pm for a moment of prayer, while a training meeting is held once a month. In three other parishes of the diocese the Movement is being formed.



As perfect as your heavenly Father is

Our heavenly Father is perfect in love. He has given, gives, will give Christ Jesus Crucified, Risen and Ascended to heaven for the redemption, salvation and justification of every man. He has given, donates, will give the Holy Spirit so that He is the one that transforms us into new creatures. He has given, donates, will give the Church, in her Pastors and Ministers, so that they bring the Holy Spirit, the grace and truth of Christ Jesus into the world, to make each son of Adam her true son of adoption. He gave, gives, will give the earth and what is in it so that every man can receive what is necessary for him to live a life worthy of a man. There is nothing that is not a gift of God. Man too is a gift that God gives to man, because he wants him in his communion, he wants him life of his life for eternity. All the Heavenly Father has done, does, will do for man so that he can reach this communion of eternal life. It is revelation of the Lord Jesus: "God loved the world so much that he gave his Only Begotten Son, so that anyone who believes in him may not die, but has life in his name". The Father has given everything, this is his perfection. In the Son he gave all of himself and the Holy Spirit. Nothing remains for him to give.

Jesus asks his disciples to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect. If they want to obey this command of Jesus, they must always have their gaze fixed on their Master and Lord. Just as the Father gave Christ for the salvation of humanity, so every disciple of Jesus must let himself be given by the Father in Christ, with Christ and for Christ, for the salvation of his brothers. Read according to this truth, the

whole Sermon on the Mount acquires a new flavour. It acquires the flavour of the gift of our whole life to the Father so that he may be the one to dispose of it to make it a sacrifice and a burnt offering for the salvation of every other man. If everything must be given to God, even the body so that it is crucified, everything else must also be given. Anything else must be made an instrument to love. As Christ gave his life for the salvation of the world and not of some people, race, language, tribe, the disciple must also give his life for the salvation of every man. Just as Christ did good to all, without any distinction between man and man, sinner and saint, just and unjust, so too the disciple must always do good to all, without distinction.

To love like the Father, to serve brothers like Christ Jesus, we must be in the Holy Spirit, moved and guided by him. The Father loves in the Holy Spirit. The Son became the servant of the Father in the Holy Spirit. If we are not in the Holy Spirit we can never love like the Father and never be servants like Christ Jesus. But when are we in the Holy Spirit? When we are in the Word of the Lord, when we obey it. Obedience to every Word that came out of the mouth of God and was written for us is the first way to start loving. Then the Holy Spirit bestows his gifts, manifests what our vocation and mission are, assigns which ministry we must carry out and always in him, with him, for him, we can love like the Father and be servants like Christ the Lord. Mother of the Redemption, Servant of the Lord, teach us to give us to the Father, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, as you did.

Msgr. Costantino Di Bruno

Movimento Apostolico

Non-profit Apostolic Movement Weekly.
Free distribution. Publisher: Apostolic Movement
Responsible Director: Costantino Di Bruno.

With ecclesiastical approval of the
Archbishopric Curia of Catanzaro-Squillace.

Authorization no. 75 of 8-2-1990 of the Court of Lamezia Terme.
Directorate, Editorial, Administration: Via B.Musulino, 23/E, Catanzaro.

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Printed by the press office of the Apostolic Movement

"IT'S A SERIOUS RISK"

Reflections from the homily of H.H. Francis on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord (06.01.2020)

In the homily on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, the Pope, reflecting on the figure of King Herod who - by deception - tries to use the Magi to be able to harm the Child Jesus, puts every Christian in front of a risk from which it is necessary to keep away: «It is a serious risk: using God rather than serving God. How many times have we exchanged the interests of the Gospel with ours, how many times have we cloaked what was convenient for us in religiosity, how many times we confused power according to God, which is to serve others, with power according to the world, which is to serve our own selves!» (Homily)

Let us ask ourselves: when does man use God instead of serving God? When he passes his will over to that of God. In fact, if man always keeps himself in the "true" will of God - which is that manifested in His Word and interpreted according to the faith of the Church founded on Peter - he serves God. Instead, when man places himself outside the will of God, he uses God. If man lives a life interwoven with the Gospel, he serves the interests of the Gospel. On the contrary, if man places his life outside the Gospel, he serves his own interests. Here is why we must always compare with the Gospel, because only the one who lives it serves God and takes care of His interests.

I think it is appropriate to consider how everyone can fall into this risk, therefore also those who have embraced the spirituality of the Apostolic Movement. When does an adhering member of the Movement fall into this risk? That is, when does he use God and his work rather than serve God and his work? This occurs when, instead of remin-

ding and witnessing to the Gospel, he devotes himself to something else, trying to change the very purpose of the Movement. How can the adherent of the Movement avoid this? Always remaining in the "true" plan that God has on the Apostolic Movement, which is that of reminding the world of the Word of Jesus, always in obedience to the Church and her Pastors. Whoever disobeys the Church of Christ does not serve God, he uses God. Whoever does not let himself be guided by the Church does not serve the Movement, uses the Movement.

The Pope goes on saying: "At the beginning of the year we rediscover adoration as a requirement of faith. If we know how to kneel before Jesus, we will overcome the temptation of going everyone straight his own way. In fact, worshipping is making an exodus from the greatest slavery, that of the self. Worshipping is putting the Lord at the centre so that we are no longer centred on ourselves. It is giving the right order to things, leaving the first place to God. Worshipping is putting God's plans before my time, my rights and my spaces» (Homily).

Every Christian, and therefore also every adhering member of the Apostolic Movement, must live this adoration which consists in putting the plans of God before his own, indeed in making the plan of God his own plan so that he can fully realize it. Jesus too gives us this great teaching by overcoming the third temptation, in which Satan asked him to worship him: «Go away, Satan! In fact, it is written: The Lord your God, you will worship: you will only worship him" (Mt 4:10).

Father Alessandro Severino

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

JUST AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT
(VII SUNDAY O.T. - YEAR A)

I AM THE LORD (Lev 19.1-2.17-18)

Man is truly man, if he is always from the will of his Lord, Creator and God, with the perfect obedience to his Law, to his Voice and to every Word that comes out of his mouth. If he obeys, man lives. In disobedience there is death. God gives man himself as a perfect example to imitate. God is merciful, compassionate, full of forgiveness, full of charity, just and holy. Man too is called to be merciful, compassionate, full of forgiveness, full of charity, just and holy. How will he imitate his God? Loving his neighbour with the same love with which he is loved by his Lord. God loves everyone and he must love everyone, regardless of race, language and lineage. God forgives and he must forgive. God does not know evil and man must not know evil either. God is supreme justice towards all and man must also be perfect justice towards all.

YOU TO CHRIST (1Cor 3,16-23)

What changes with Christ in relation to love of the neighbour. If the Christian belongs to Christ, if his Lord and God is Christ, he too must love as Christ does. Christ loves with the offering to the Father of his life for the redemption and salvation of every man and the Christian also must offer Christ his life, so that he may make one sacrifice with his own, to be offered to the Father for redemption and salvation of every man. Christ Jesus passed on our earth doing good to every man and even the Christian must consecrate his life merely to the good towards all. There must be no dissimilarity between Christ Jesus and the Christian. If there is dissimilarity, the

Christian is not yet entirely of Christ, to put his life at the service of Christ for the redemption, salvation, conversion and sanctification of his brothers. It suffices to turn his gaze on Jesus Crucified and the Christian will know if he is entirely and only of Christ Jesus.

BUT I SAY TO YOU, OFFER NO RESISTANCE TO ONE WHO IS EVIL (Mt 5,38-48)

Whoever wants to live the Sermon on the Mount according to full truth, must always keep his gaze on Jesus Crucified. He, God, the Only Begotten Son of the Father, the Word who in the beginning was God and through whom everything was created, He who is the light, the truth, the life and the grace of every man, annihilated himself, making himself obedient to the Father until death on the cross. He did not oppose the wicked person. He is all delivered to him to be nailed to the wood. He gave him his tunic and cloak. He made two miles carrying the heavy wood of the cross. After this, he also asked forgiveness from the Father by excusing and finally died for the remission of his sins, his justification and salvation, which however might only happen in repentance, in conversion and in faith in the Gospel. Seeing his Master, who consecrated his whole life to the love of redemption, salvation, eternal life, justification and peace live and die, the Christian cannot but live a perfect imitation. Jesus was entirely of the Father. Even the disciple must be all of Jesus to be all of the Father.

by the theologian,
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