**Year XXXIV n. 5 February 26, 2017**

**The earth is polluted because of its inhabitants**

It is the truth revealed by the Lord. The earth is defiled by human sin. From pure it becomes impure. From an instrument of life, it is made an instrument of death by man's sin. For some horrendous sins it vomits its inhabitants. It does not tolerate that its soil is trampled on. It rebels against them and rejects them: *"Do not defile yourselves by any of these things by which the nations whom I am driving out of your way have defiled themselves. Because their land has become defiled, I am punishing it for its wickedness, by making it vomit out its inhabitants"* (Lev 18.24 to 26). In Jeremiah we find the same cry: *"Thus says the Lord: What fault did your fathers find in me that they withdrew from me, Went after empty idols, and became empty themselves? They did not ask, "Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, Who led us through the desert, through a land of wastes and gullies, Through a land of drought and darkness, through a land which no one crosses, where no man dwells?" When I brought you into the garden land to eat its goodly fruits, You entered and defiled my land, you made my heritage loathsome"* (Jer 2.5-7).

In Isaiah the Word of God resounds with great firmness: *"The earth mourns and fades, the world languishes and fades; both heaven and earth languish. The earth is polluted because of its inhabitants, who have transgressed laws, violated statutes, broken the ancient covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants pay for their guilt; Therefore they who dwell on earth turn pale, and few men are left"* (See. Is 24.1 to 23). The relationship between sin, defilement and rebellion of the earth against the man is undeniable. It refuses to accommodate the man and give him its precious fruits. He would feed only to continue to disobey his Lord and God.

This truth of sound ecology is announced by the Creator in the very act of the first sin, *"To the man he said: "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, "Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return"*" (Gen 3,17-19).

If the Word of the Lord is true - personally I think it is very true, very current, without any change in the centuries - there is only one conclusion to be drawn. The ecological problem cannot be solved without removing the cause that brings it into being. If the cause is man's sin it is the sin that needs to be removed from the earth. When it comes to sin, the transgression of the Law of Sinai, of the Ten Commandments and all other provisions of both the Holiness Code (cf. Leviticus cc. 19-21) and the Sermon on the Mount (Cf.. Mt cc. 5 -7) is meant. We cannot treat the ecological question as a problem of mere immanence. It is terribly a matter of the highest transcendence and it concerns the purest truth of God, the only Lord of the earth and of 'man. The problem moves with great evidence from the earth to man.

Today life is destroyed, the family is deleted, nature is ravaged, human relationships are often based on tyranny and arrogance of one against the other. Neither are we any longer able to dialogue for the search of a truth outside of us. Everyone has declared himself a universal truth for every other man. We are without a human ecology anymore, because we are deprived of every divine, supernatural, eternal ecology, from which every other ecology depends.

Today, man is not only the greatest destroyer of all time of his ecology, every day he adds new chapters of destruction and devastation of himself. The heavenly Father has sent his Son so that he took us back into his eternal ecology, but today, the man declares several times that he does not want any outside intervention in his history. He became the absolute master of life and death, of earth and time. Rejecting the only *"Healer"* of man, he deprived himself of the way so that it can solve his problems on earth. Here is then that the sad song of Hosea becomes actual: *"There is no fidelity, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land. False swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery! in their lawlessness, bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and everything that dwells in it languishes: The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and even the fish of the sea perish"* (Hos 4,1-3). A people without true Word of God is a people without land. God is the life of the people, the people are the life of the earth. A people without life, leaves the land lifeless. If the people do not draw their life in God, they will never be able to give life to the earth. But if the earth does not receive life from man, it might never give life to man.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, convince the disciples of Jesus that never might true ecology be irrespective of true Christology. It is utmost folly to think of solving the ecological problems of the earth without the person through whom it was made and redeemed. Either we go back to Christ according to truth or man remains with no truth and the earth without any life. Mother of God, help us.

***Father Costantino Di Bruno***

***Vocation: a mystery of love entrusted to the Church***

Reflections from the Speech of H.H. Francis at the convention of the CEI Office Pastoral of Vocations (5.1.12017)

"The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few! Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest" (Lk 10,2). One of the prayers that Christ entrusted exclusively to the Church, to her special care and attention, is that of vocations to priesthood. As the *Pastores Dabo Vobis* reminds us "Without priests the Church could not live [...] the command to proclaim the Gospel and to renew daily the sacrifice of his body given and his bloodshed for the life of the world" (PDV 1 ).

As a Christian cannot live without Sunday, so the Church cannot live without the priesthood instituted by Christ. The action of the priest is great and important: through him Christ continues to be offered to men for their salvation. His mission among the people of God entrusted to his heart and to his personal growth is immense, sublime and beyond all human comprehension: "The priest's lips must keep knowledge, and from his mouth teaching searched, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Mal 2,7). If every member of God's people really acquired awareness of the importance of this ministry for his salvation and his mission, not every day, but every hour, he would constantly turn his prayer to God for the birth of new vocations for the kingdom of heavens. Though, we sometimes pray for vocations more "by habit", without the insistence of the widow of the Gospel, without the faith of the centurion, without the intrepid zeal of the early apostles. Every Christian community should engage in daily demand for this gift to the Father in heaven (cf. *Discourse*).

Besides prayer - the main way for the emergence of new forces to the Gospel - we must not neglect the accompanying ways for the care of vocations. The vocation ministry is primarily "an encounter with the Lord! When we accept Christ, we live in a decisive meeting, which sheds light on our existence, it pulls us out of the anguish of our little world and makes us become disciples in love with the Master" (*Speech of the Holy Father*, 21 October 2016). It is necessary first to make every young meet with Christ, allowing a real, alive and authentic encounter with Him, offering the personal testimony of life: "To be credible and be in touch with young people, priority must be given via the listening, knowing how to "waste time" in welcoming their questions and their desires. Your testimony will be more persuasive if, with joy and truth, you will know how to tell the beauty, the amazement and wonder of being in love with God, men and women that live with gratitude their choice of life to help others leave an new and original imprint in the history" (*Speech*).

The most eloquent "call" to priesthood can only come from those who have already experienced the joy of being called and responded personally to it. Not only the priests and consecrated persons can call new workers in the vineyard of the Lord. The laity also with their loving witness of life and active participation in the life of the Church, can offer a clear sign of the importance of consecration for the kingdom of heaven. A heart touched and renewed by the grace of God will be able to attract new hearts to Christ Jesus and will always know how to find new forms and new ways to *proclaim and remind* the mystery of the vocation of every man: "Let us feel moved by the Holy Spirit to identify with courage new roads in announcing the gospel of vocation" (Speech).

Next to the prayer and joyful witness of an evangelical life that express the "exit" of the faithful into the world, two more important verbs are remembered by the Holy Father for a careful pastoral of vocations: *seeing and calling*. We must learn "to see in the spirit" the expectations and difficulties of young people, to discern carefully the charismas and desires aroused by the Spirit in their hearts. Sometimes we do not realize the wealth of grace liberally sown by God in each of them. The saint educators knew not only to perceive the state of mind of a boy in a few moments - a sign this of a profound harmony with the Spirit - but they knew also how to direct to authentically evangelical choices. You have to know how to *share* the journey of the young, *understand* their expectations, hopes and difficulties and *accompany* them with confidence to the One who know how to offer sure answers.

In addition to being able to *glimpse* the seeds of vocation spread out by God in the midst of his people, it is also necessary *to call* as Jesus did other disciples, "passing along by the Sea of ​​Galilee, he *saw* Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea; in fact, they were fishermen. Jesus *said* to them: "Come after me, I will make you fishers of men'" (Mk 1,16-17). Without this direct, explicit call, God's seed is likely to stay under the ground and never sprout. We must not be afraid to show young people this ways of sanctification, for it is in the gift of one's life to God that every man reaches his authentic and perfect realization.

Therefore, a vocation is a gift, a mystery and a mission. It's a *gift* to be asked to the Father for every vocation is a fruit of the grace that acts invisibly in hearts. It is a *mystery* that encompasses all called to lead them, in ways that only the Lord knows, to a free, full and mature response (cf. *Mk* 4:27). It is a *mission*: every baptized, priest and consecrated person is called to attract, through the sanctity of life, other people of good will to collaborate in the mystery of salvation.

The Church's prayer for vocations is directed to God also for those who have already embraced the priestly mission. Every day we are *called to pray* for the holiness of priests so that they may proclaim and show the real beauty of the Gospel in a true and genuine way.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption and Queen of the Apostles, grant to the people of God, holy priests who know, with words and deeds, how to attract to the mystery of Christ Jesus, who, even today, never ceases to knock at the heart of many young people in order to be able to continue to love the world with his own heart and his Word of life.

***FATHER SALVATORE BILOTTA***

**NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS**

**(VIII Sunday O.T. Year A)**

**I WILL NEVER FORGET YOU (Is 49.14 to 15)**

Jerusalem sees her end and complains against the Lord, accusing him of having forgotten her. Promptly the Lord tells her that he will never forget. He cannot, because he swore her eternal love. A mother can forget the creature she carried in her womb. The Lord will never forget the Word given. His oath remains stable more than the heaven of heavens. When we are going through a valley of loneliness, despair, death, immense misery, all spiritual and material poverty, destruction and devastation, one only can be our certainty: God has not forgotten me. If I go back, he will receive me and introduce me to his home. The door of the heart of God is open. Until the time of our death you can always enter through it. With death the door is closed. If we did not enter when we were alive, we remain excluded for eternity. The fault is ours alone.

**SERVANTS OF CHRIST AND STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD (1 Cor 4.1-5)**

It is right that every man has a clear knowledge and belief of what he was made by God. If we lack this knowledge, we are the bane of the world. We do things against his will, his spiritual gifts, his ministry, his charismas and talents. In the Holy Spirit Paul knows who he is. To the Christians of Corinth he asks to see him, respect him, look for him, listen to him as a servant of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God. If it is a servant of Christ, his ministry is dictated by Christ and not by the will or by the needs of men. If he is an administrator of the mysteries of God, he must devote himself to the things of God and not of men, or the earth. He must listen to Christ, go where Christ sends him, say what Christ wants him to say, do what Christ asks him to do. He must administer Christ in his mystery of grace and truth. Every other thing shall be his own, only if Christ or His Holy Spirit will ask him it.

**YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON (Mt 6.24 to 34)**

Every man must be just and always from the will of his Lord. All things of the earth, even a grain of sand, must be used in obedience to God, for He is its owner. This law applies to rich and poor, healthy and sick, young and old. Every moment of our time and all of our body must be lived according to the will of the Lord. Time and our bodies are the Lord's. Wealth is very similar to everything else is owned. It must be lived by God's will and never ours. Serving wealth instead means that it is our lord and we are its slaves, servants and subjects. It is a sin against the dignity of man, created to not be a slave to no creature, either inanimate or animate. God alone is Lord of man. No one else is his Lord. When wealth leads to its adoration, man falls into the most grievous sin of idolatry. He offends the Lord because he deprives him of his glory. Only if the man is a true servant of the Lord, he will be lord over things. If he is not the servant of the Lord, he will always be a slave of matter and of vice.

**IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD**

**(First Sunday of Lent Year A)**

**YOU CERTAINLY WILL NOT DIE! (Gen 2,7-9; 3.1 to 7)**

Man lives by the Word of God, as long as he remains in it. He comes out of it, he dies. The snake, which is the most cunning of all the beasts, tempts Eve. He prophesies her that his word would have made her a divine being, in all similar to her Creator. The woman accepts it in the heart and gives it realization, disobeying the Lord. For her not the word of Satan, but God's is not fulfilled. Today the false prophecy seems to have conquered all hearts. What is the result? Not only the spiritual, but also the physical death of peoples and nations. Every day we see this death river overflowing and we continue to listen to false prophecy. In addition, many of the true prophets of the past, today have become subtle and ambiguous false prophets. How can one be defended against such cunning? Reminding us that between the Word of God, Jesus Christ, his Gospel and the word of every other man, whoever he is, the Word of God must always be chosen. It is the only Word of life.

**THROUGH THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE (Rm 5.12 to 19)**

Paul puts Adam and Christ Jesus in an antithetical parallelism. For all of mankind Adam is the father is death, while Jesus is the source of life. But we are not born naturally from Him. We are born in him through the Holy Spirit, in the waters of Baptism. While Adam is father by nature, Jesus Christ is the source of life for our will. We welcome the Word, we let ourselves be immersed in baptism, we become new creatures, we remain in the newness of God, but always by living in His Word. As children of Adam we are in death. As regenerated by the Holy Spirit, we are in the life of Christ, if we live in the Word of Christ. The grace of Christ, the fruit of his obedience, is so big as to save the whole world. But who is the one saved by Him? Only whoever accepts the Word of preaching and in Him lets himself be made new creature by the Holy Spirit, living for every day of his life in the Word of Jesus.

**TO BE TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL (Mt 4,1-11)**

Christ the Lord is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. If he does not overcome the temptations, does not recognize them, does not unmask Satan he might never teach men how to know him, expose him and overcome him. The entire life of Christ is of the Father because he is from the Father. If Christ had separated from the Father, he would have remained a lifeless God, with no mission, no redemption and no salvation. What is today the temptation with which Satan is attacking the Church? Separating her from truth, from the Word, from the grace, from the Holy Spirit and from the will of Christ, in order to make the Church without Christ. If the Church's children fall into this temptation there is no salvation anymore. The Church receives life, the Word, the light, the Spirit and the Father from Christ. Being separated the Church from Christ, she becomes an instrument of death and never more of life. As Christ is life from the Father, so the Church is life from Christ and the Christian life from the Church. Separating from the Church, Satan separates from Christ, from the Spirit and from the Father. Separating the Church from Christ, he separates her from her eternal life mission.

**Congo: Visit of an assistant priest of the Apostolic Movement**

*At the invitation of local bishops, between late January and early February 2017, Father Francesco Brancaccio travelled to Cameroon and Congo, to bring a guide and comfort support to members of the Apostolic Movement and some parishes. Here is a testimony that comes to us from the Congo.*

Father Francesco arrived in Pointe-Noire 1 February 2017 at 4p.m. We enthusiastically received him, as an authentic "apostle" of the Apostolic Movement. He stayed in the parish of Christ the King.

On Thursday morning, he met with the Vicar General, as the Bishop was in Brazzaville to welcome the Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who arrived on a mission.

The evening at 5: 30p.m. the meeting of the members of the Movement with Father Francis was held in the St. Bernadette parish. Father Francisco has offered the overall presentation of the movement and its charisma, and urged all members to the testimony of conversion and responsible mission in the parishes. The atmosphere was wonderful. The envoy brought us the news of the Movement and the greetings of the Inspirer Maria Marino, for whom we prayed. It was an authentic communion between Catanzaro and Pointe-Noire. To this end, the pastor of St. Bernadette had organized refreshments for all members in the forecourt of the parsonage.

On Friday a trip to Tsessi, in the Mayombe forest, was scheduled to meet with members of the Movement in my parish, dedicated to "Our Lady of Redemption." The meeting and mass were expected at 1, but unfortunately, due to serious unforeseen events, we were able to arrive only at 6.15p.m.. Father Francesco was moved by the faith and love of the members and parishioners, who had all remained to await the arrival of the missionary of the Gospel. Even children from 3 to 5 years of kindergarten were still there waiting for him. Since the arrival, the welcome given to Father Francesco was unparalleled. A sign of God’s love in the hearts of his children. During the Mass, the envoy sent the cordial greetings of the members of the Movement of Catanzaro. He also strengthened the faith of those present, encouraging them in their mission of being authentic witnesses of the Gospel. He recalled the existing partnership between his parish and Tsessi, whose testimony is the support that his community promotes and donates for our kindergarten.

At the end of the Mass, the choir performed a song composed for the Catanzaro Apostolic Movement. Fr. Francis was happy to see the work of God grow in Mayombe and in Pointe-Noire. He blessed the Lord for this cause of joy. All's well what ends well, as they say and we took to the road and were back in Pointe-Noire at night. The Virgin Mary has accompanied us during the trip, made on a dangerous road.

Saturday at 9 a.m. we accompanied Father Francesco back to Pointe Noire airport, from where he took the flight to Cameroon. Oh, Father Francesco was brave and his mission for Africa is increasingly strengthened.

We greet fraternally the Inspirer, her daughter Cettina, the president Cesare, Mons. Costantino, the assistant priests and all the members. May the Lord continue to support and bless their work.

When the bishop returned, I gave him an account of this mission and I have brought a message of Father Francesco. He confirmed joyfully his very favourable appreciation and all his satisfaction for the mission of the Apostolic Movement in his diocese.

Père Jean Paul Nguembo

**TO PIERCED CHRIST...**

Your eyes,

wet with tears and joy,

look with love at the crucified Christ.

Your ears listen to his words,

hear his wonders.

Your heart belongs to pierced Christ.

His love helps you to go on,

moves you in every direction,

makes all suffering, all pain yours

causes you to help the brother that suffers,

that needs you.

In your soul

you have imprinted the Calvary of Christ.

Everyday

you put his cross on your shoulders

and go on.

You tolerate it all and excuse it all.

In prayer,

together with the Blessed Virgin,

you turn to God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit,

you always ask for light and truth.

Your will be done, O my Lord;

ensure that every creature becomes little for you.

You are afflicted.

In the Spirit vision

you understand the man condition:

he does not want to repent,

he wants to remain a prisoner of sin.

You feel hunger and thirst for justice

and in prayer you invoke the Guardian Angel

so that he supports these ungrateful creatures.

Jealousy, envy, lies upset you.

But there nothing you can do,

if your Lord does not come to your help.

With all your love you go...

You go where the Lord shows you the way.

Sometimes you have to shake your sandals.

The creature of the Father does not want to know the truth.

The ambiguous and the liar feels he emerges victorious,

but you go and suffer and in suffering

you offer for the redemption of the world.

"Father, if you will,

turn this cup away from me.

Nevertheless not my will, but yours be done".

***Maria Marino***