**Year XXXIV n. 8 April 9, 2017**

**As though the potter were taken to be the clay**

When man stands as the potter of himself, not only does he make himself after his own, but also of other people’s hearts. Even God and all that comes from God: law, commandments, worship, religion, truth, light, morality, justice and eternity, is made according to his heart. Today, man has also established to give himself nature according to his will. Everything is the result of the clay and not of the potter. It is a disaster.

The prophet Isaiah proclaims the falsity of such a reversal. When man makes his worship it is a sign that has made his God. When man makes his God he will always make the man after his own heart. When the clay takes the place of the potter, it transforms and puts everything on its lathe: "*Since this people draws near with words only and honours me with their lips alone, though their hearts are far from me, And their reverence for me has become routine observance of the precepts of men, Therefore I will again deal with this people in surprising and wondrous fashion: The wisdom of its wise men shall perish and the understanding of its prudent men be hid.*" What is the first fruit of the clay that takes the place of the potter? It turns wisdom into foolishness and all understanding is eclipsed.

Let us give ourselves an answer with great sincerity: *"What wisdom is there in a people that writes laws of death and not of life? What intelligence is there in a nation unable to think the good for its children? What wisdom prevails on earth today, if all wealth produced by human hands is used for vices and to create unspeakable suffering? Which virtue governs us, if we cannot even read the history that takes place before our eyes and reveals to us our inefficiency even before a small event? What great insight moves us, if we are also able to deny the truth of our nature in its physical being? Is there only one thing that is governed by us with wisdom, intelligence?"* It would be enough to observe the disaster that our decisions generate in humanity, to understand that it is not of the clay to make the potter.

The Lord leaves no room so that the clay can pretend to do be the potter: "*Woe to those who would hide their plans too deep for the Lord! Who work in the dark, saying, "Who sees us, or who knows us?" Your perversity is as though the potter were taken to be the clay: As though what is made should say of its maker, "He made me not!" Or the vessel should say of the potter, "He does not understand."*This is the folly and ignorance of the clay: it wants to be the potter of itself. It wants to deny the very existence of its potter. Might it be able to shape itself? Never. It is clay. Will it be able to model others? Impossible. It always remains clay. It can destroy, but not model. It can kill, but not rise again. It can ruin itself and creation and might never give life.

Life is given only by the Potter and Potter is only one: the Creator, the Lord, God. For great mercy and pity towards the clay ruined by the clay, the Lord descends with power in our history and resumes his place in the workshop. The clay must recognize that it is only clay: "*On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; And out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. The lowly will ever find joy in the Lord, and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the tyrant will be no more and the arrogant will have gone; All who are alert to do evil will be cut off, those whose mere word condemns a man, Who ensnare his defender at the gate, and leave the just man with an empty claim*" (Is 29.13 to 24). God's mercy is always great. The Lord does not descend in history to let the clay remain potter. This is false mercy, false piety and compassion, false justice and truth, false hope and religion.

Our God comes down in history to take back his place as Potter. He comes to hold the clay tight in his hands and give it the form established by Him from eternity. Today, even in the Christian world much confusion and spiritual disorder reign. Many are the children of the Church who, having been made potters of their clay, no longer want God as their potter. They do not want to be placed by God in the lathe of his Word, Law, Commandments and Gospel. The refusal attests that the Christian wants to be made by himself. Since today we want to be without Commandments, it is a sign that we want the whole life in our hands.

God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Word and Sacraments, we want everything at the service of our will. We want to be completely unhinged from any relationship with the divine Potter, whom we need only to be placed in our service and according to our will. We are well past the Tower of Babel. They all did not understand each other, there. Today, we do not even want to understand the other. Our pride has reached such depths of spiritual depravity as each to be seen the only potter in the world. As the only potter I make my own God, my Christ, my Holy Spirit, my church, my sacraments, my faith, my religion, my present, my eternal future and I want every other person to let himself be made by me.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, help Christians at least not to fall into this very sad temptation. We are not the potters of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of the Church and of her sacraments. Make us humble like you so that the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, is the One to make us according to His eternal truth.

***Father Costantino Di Bruno***

***"Increase our faith"***

Reflections from H.H. Francis speech to the parish priests of the Diocese of Rome (03/02/2017)

*"“Lord, ‘increase our faith!’” (Lk 17:5). This cry sprung up spontaneously from the disciples as the Lord spoke to them of mercy and told them that they must forgive seventy times seven times. Let us make this cry our own — “increase our faith!” — as we begin this conversation. Let us ask this in the simple words of the Catechism, where we read: “To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the Word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be ‘working through charity,’ (Gal 5,6; cf. Jas 2.14 to 26), abounding in hope (cf. Rom 15:13), and rooted in the faith of the Church” (n. 162)"* (Speech).

To explain how this growth occurs, the Pope uses three words, thus indicating three fixed points from which to start and to be kept in mind in everyone's life, so that the growth of the faith does not stop, thus avoiding to fall into that resignation, despair and discouragement, to which we are all subject in times of trouble. These key points are: memory, hope and discernment of the moment.

The memory puts us in a history of salvation, then within a faith founded on the promises of the Lord. Hope is the anchor set in Heaven, in the transcendent future. The discernment of the moment, consists in seizing in the present moment the concrete good that I can do, and the way the Lord wants it to be done. By analogy, we can compare it - Pope Francis says – to what the Apostle Paul says in Galatians about *"faith which becomes active through love"* (Gal 5,6). In other words, the Pope says: *"faith is confessed in practice, leaving ourselves, being transcended in adoration and service. Faith progresses when, in the present moment, we discern how to concretize love in the possible good, commensurate with the good of the other. The first good of the other is being able to grow in faith."*

Faith as charity cannot be enclosed in concepts or rational knowledge, which form our Wisdom luggage. *"It is constitutive of faith to be “operative”, active, just as it is for charity. And the touchstone is discernment. Faith, in fact, can fossilize by protecting the love it has received, turning it into a museum piece. Faith can also vaporize into a projection of desired love, turning it into a virtual object that exists only on a utopic island. The discernment of real, concrete love is possible in the present moment as it works for the good of someone most dramatically in need, and this makes faith active, creative, and effective."*

Therefore, starting from the memory (faith) and hope key points, through a discernment of the moment, we must ensure that our faith becomes dynamic, active, proactive, resolving problems, therefore, operational in the concrete choices of everyday life. However, for many faith is like an accessory to be worn on occasions required by circumstances. Instead, Pope Francis teaches that through discernment everyone can make his faith alive.

Discernment presumes that one questions himself on his own life, compares with the word of God, so as to grasp the crust that history has deposited on us and that must be removed. The devil, for his part, does not sleep, rather *"like a roaring lion, walks about, seeking someone to devour"* (1 Peter 5.8), like a thief goes in search of souls to steal. The devil tries to pry there where we are weaker, so he tries to steal the joy of the gospel, and with it also the present, making us fall into a defeatist, resigned and fatalistic mentality. Hence the admonition of Pope Francis to reflect and concretize the possible good in favour of the other, so that faith may grow day by day, but also from faith to faith.

The Pope takes as an example of this teaching the life of the apostle Peter, he shows how Peter was constantly tempted, has fallen several times into temptation, but these falls have not only had the negative outcome of Peter's defeat, who in his "sin" every time noticed how true the word of the Master was and instead how much inconsistent were his certainties. From every fall, Jesus helped Peter to his feet, and so Peter has come to love and to trust fully in the Lord. In his speech the Pope shows how in the Apostle Peter temptation has always been manifested, and Peter is always hard fought to follow his Master, being in a position to do more and more new acts of faith. After his falls Peter *"understands this "dynamics" of the Lord and his pedagogy, he never fails to discern at all times, what act of faith he can do in his Lord. And in this he makes a mistake."* The Pope, after the example of Peter, wants to understand that even in the life of each of us we arrive at the crossroads of choice, where you have to decide: for Christ, or for ourselves.

As it happened with Peter, the same does in each of us, every day you can experience this inner struggle between the disciple who likes the teacher and wants to follow him and therefore do his will, and the personal self that wants to emerge, and therefore to make our securities prevail in us and thus assure our will.

The falls of Peter, are to indicate human frailty, our weak point, the point where the tension between the good we desire - to love and follow the Master - collides with the history in which we live, which also has its weight and its power of attraction, sometimes made even more compelling by the sirens of temptation.

After every fall Jesus has always helped Peter to get up and to grow in faith. Let us pray to the Lord Jesus to know how to love and follow him, learning from the example of Peter, to believe that his Word is always true and that it always takes place, in time and eternity. Let us also ask for help to the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption: She, too, often found herself in the situation of not understanding immediately what her Son did or asked, but the Gospel attests that She kept these words and pondered them in her heart. Let us also learn to pray and to know how to wait so that the events of the Lord are fulfilled even for us in our history and with his time.

*Father Vincenzo Moniaci*

**THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE COVENANT**

**(Palm Sunday Year A)**

**MORNING AFTER MORNING HE OPENS MY EAR  (Is 50.4 to 7)**

To reflect, meditate, read according to the Holy Spirit, the passion of Jesus, we must enter into his heart and from that abyss of love understand everything. We learn quickly that the heart of Christ is not the key to read the mystery. The key is another heart: that of the Father. It is the Father who has sworn eternal love to man. It is he who has decided to give his Only Son for the redemption of mankind. It is He who from moment to moment in the Holy Spirit says to Christ what to do and how to move. It is He that governs his whole life. With the incarnation Jesus entered into the hell of man's sin. He must cross it entirely, but always looking towards the Father, listening to him, without ever being distracted. He offers the Father his whole body, burned by the flames of the sin of the world, and for this offer the Father can save all who believe in Christ and will welcome him as their only Saviour and Redeemer.

**BECOMING OBEDIENT TO DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS (Phil 2,6-11)**

Christ God is destroyed in his Person, he is annihilated and made obedient to the Father even unto death on the Cross. As it can be seen, in the hymn sung by Paul, there is a total absence of men. The relationship is between Christ and the Father. If for Christ Jesus men disappear, even for the disciples of Christ men must disappear. They too must only look at the Father and to Him pay all obedience, even to martyrdom of the cross. Moaning, grumbling, jealousy, envy, anger, or motions of pride end up. We must only do what the Father asks us. For this we need an uninterrupted listening to Him in the Holy Spirit. The land is a big temptation that wants to hinder us in the journey of our obedience. In our heart only one desire must live: being only of the Father, being neither of ourselves nor of anybody else. Jesus was only the Father’s and no one else’s. He is concerned only about obeying the Father.

**SHED ON BEHALF OF MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS (Mt 26.41 to 27.66)**

In the Upper Room, sacramentally Jesus sheds his blood for the forgiveness of sins. On the Cross he really, physically pours it. He pours it voluntarily during Supper and on Golgotha. He is offered, consumed, made holocaust of expiation and redemption, communion and love sacrifice for humanity. And Jesus does all this for pure obedience to the Father. Even we, his disciples, are invited to enter this voluntary offer logic to the Lord. Before the man decides our Crucifixion, we have already offered to the Father to be crucified. In Christ, through Christ, with Christ, becoming his true holy body, we make the same offer of Jesus to the Father. Thus, the Eucharist becomes the seal of our will to make of our body an offering pleasing to God for the redemption of the brothers. The mystery of the Eucharist is great. With it we are sealed in the Father's will for an obedience full and perfect as that of Jesus. Then the Father will be the one to know by what means to lead us so that the gift made in the Eucharist becomes the real gift of our bodies and our lives.

**THEY HAVE TAKEN THE LORD FROM THE TOMB**

**(Easter Sunday - Resurrection of the Lord)**

**THIS MAN GOD RAISED (ON) THE THIRD DAY (Acts 10,34a.37-43)**

Resurrection, other than a Christological event, is a very high theological reality. God sends his Only Son to earth to offer the man true salvation: returning on being in the truth of his image and likeness with his Creator. The man did not believe in this offer, he preferred to remain the man in the image of Satan. He testified this will by killing the Author and Creator of true life. The Father intervenes with his Holy Spirit and gives life back to his Faithful Servant. He transforms his body from flesh into light, clothes him of his own glory, raises him above the heavens and constitutes him Judge and Lord of all things. He establishes him the one and only way for man to go to Him and He to go to man. Here is the great anthropological significance of the resurrection. Whoever wants true salvation, to be a man according to God, might do it only in Christ. Otherwise one remains a man according to Satan, subservient to his power and slavery.

**FOR YOU HAVE DIED (Col 3,1-4)**

The baptized person attests that he is really dead in Christ, if he leaves the works of the flesh to accomplish the works of the Spirit, if he abandons sin and lives of perfect obedience in the kingdom of light. But Christ not only died, he has risen and ascended into Heaven. Being the baptized the true body of Christ, he also in the body of Christ ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. From heaven he must show how the will of the Father is accomplished: bringing his body till up the cross and offering it for the redemption of mankind. If a Christian does not carry out the life of Christ in his body, does not become *"sacramental and real incarnation"* of Him on earth, there will be no salvation for humanity. Salvation is from the living body of Christ which is the Christian. The theological anthropology must necessarily be the Christ anthropology, that is Christ's life fully lived by the Christian, that is true body of Christ and must be real life of Him.

**SAW THE STONE WAS REMOVED FROM THE TOMB (John 20,1-9)**

Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb early in the morning to complete the work of embalming the body of the Master. The surprise is great when she sees that the stone had been removed from the tomb. She thinks that Jesus was stolen. Jesus had not been stolen. He had resurrected, just as the Lord had foretold in the prophetic scriptures. Rising, all the ancient promises of the Lord are fulfilled. Jesus is truly the Messiah, the Saviour and the Redeemer of his people. If he is the true Messiah, he is also the Saviour and Redeemer of every man. In him the Father has decided to bless all nations. Not only in Him and through Him, but also with Him, becoming us one life, one body, one truth and one mission. Since the resurrection is real, the fulfilment of the prophecies is real, the mission of Jesus is true; Jesus is true in every word, he is also true in every gift of grace and truth. All the ancient Word of God is in Jesus. In Jesus it is entirely accomplished, in every prophecy. In Christ all has been fulfilled, everything is fulfilled. The Father has to give nothing more to man. He gave everything in the Only Son.

**Catanzaro: Dialogues on family and society**

The authoritative presence of our Archbishop, Mons. Vincenzo Bertolone, animated the last of the five dialogues on the relationship between family and society, read in the light of Pope Francis *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). The meeting took place Sunday, March 12, at the MUSMI conference room in Catanzaro, as an advanced training event organized by the Diocese in cooperation with the Apostolic Movement. The interesting speeches, able to review critically the stereotypes that often afflict this theme, were of Frs. Domenico Concolino and Franco Isabello. Fr. Francesco Brancaccio, Episcopal Vicar for Culture, was the one to moderate the meeting. The drawn conclusions have been entrusted to our Archbishop.

Fr. Domenico pointed out how love is known to affect the time of unbelief, bringing a seed of hope, and above all starting, not from darkness, but from the light of truth that must guide every family. In this sense, perfect love is found in Genesis 1-2, where the presence of one of God’s beautiful and pure works, (the one that precedes man's sin), is observed. Now, it is at this light, it is starting from this pristine beauty that you have to read history, often made of wounds and disobedience. It should not be the opposite way. The family must be founded again starting from the truth that God has imprinted in it. In fact, only a holy family might have positive effects even on society (*AmorisLaetitia* 52). The theologian has lingered on some texts: the Letter to Diognetus, which speaks of the persecuted first Christian communities, the Letter of Peter (1 Peter 3.11 to 16) the *Iuvenescit Ecclesiae* (18)

The speech of Fr. Franco Isabello, head of the diocesan Pastoral Family, was inspired by chpt. 9 of Amoris Laetitia and Psalm 22, noting how the family is the sanctuary where God dwells. The priest has taken the image of Jesus groom who gives himself entirely in the Eucharist and that, as such, he is the icon of family spirituality: the bride and groom, in fact, have to "give themselves" to each other. Then, it is important, to rediscover the prayer and Sunday Mass. We must love forever and who loves generates life with a daily life of love and sacrifice.

Finally, Msgr. Bertolone concluded the event, thanking the people present and the organizers for their efforts in forming consciences, a properly ecclesial task. The bishop showed how today, families are little favoured. For this reason, it is urgent to rediscover their beauty, considering that marriage is similar to a patient embroidery that lasts a lifetime, and where love, sacrifice and donation intertwine. Every family should be a school of humanity, of education to the virtues, of transmission of the faith, even though at times, limits are experienced in it. Many of them are caused by the crisis of shared values ​​and the rampant confusion. However, you must not be afraid to propose human values. Our pastor has finally underlined the originality of *Amoris Laetitia*, unique magisterial text that is the work of two synods and explicitly encouraged the theologians present, Frs. Francesco Brancaccio and Domenico Concolino, to plan other training events where the theological voice is compared with the anthropological one on the theme, this time, of the conscience as the inner place where the voice of our God always echoes.

*Anna Guzzi*

**RISE... LORD...**

Only you, O Lord,

we must praise and glorify.

Only to you we have to lead our brothers.

You are, O Lord,

Word of eternal life.

We cannot be made in the image of another man,

it is a blasphemy,

it is a sin to end up into hell.

Rise, O Lord,

in our hearts,

so that we put you in first place,

we sanctify ourselves in you

and become true children of the one Father.

You want your wisdom

to be light on our path,

the sacraments strength,

your Gospel guide,

your eternal and endless love support and life.

Rise, O Lord,

in our hearts

and ensure that we live only for you.

We cannot allow to glorify ourselves.

Only you,

the Lord,

the Almighty,

the Saint,

our God,

are the Lord to be loved, worshipped and served.

Lord, help us.

Every day we must begin,

we are weak, but we love you,

the road is still long,

the goal distant,

but you make us of goodwill

and forgive us our sins,

our miseries,

our multiple inabilities.

Help us to die to ourselves,

to our passions,

to every desire of vainglory,

of conceit and selfishness.

Holy Mary, our Mother,

help us to resurrect with Christ

to a new life...

We beg you...

***Maria Marino***