**Year XXXIV n. 18 August 27, 2017**

**Without sincerity and without righteousness**

Wanting to translate what the Lord says to his people, we can paraphrase it this way: *"It is really necessary that you end up in hell, from which you no longer get out, for you to be convinced that my Word always takes place? Must you experience the physical, moral and spiritual destruction of humanity for you to believe that what I say is always accomplished with infallible punctuality? Must you prove the saddest misery and also the loss of your freedom, even of your life, so that you can trust me?"* God said that life is in the Commandments. Its blessing and prosperity of the people are also in them. Do you really need the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple desecration, the death of its best children, the deportation and long slavery in Babylon to know that once uttered the Word of God fulfils what it says?

The people did not believe in the ancient words of their Lord. Now their God announces them new ones, never heard before and not even conceivable by

human mind, for they are against history itself: *"Things of the past I foretold long ago, they went forth from my mouth, I let you hear of them; then suddenly I took action and they came to be. Because I know that you are stubborn and that your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead bronze, I foretold them to you of old; before they took place I let you hear of them, That you might not say, "My idol did them, my statue, my molten image commanded them." Now that you have heard, look at all this; must you not admit it? From now on I announce new things to you, hidden events of which you knew not (Is 48: 1-22).*

Why does the Lord announce to his people what he is about to do? The end is only one: so that it opens to faith in his every Word. The people serves God, worships him, but with religion and superficial bonds, without sincerity and without righteousness. Sincerity demands that what is on the lips is also in the heart. Instead, the lips say one thing and the heart thinks opposing things. The lips acclaim the Lord, the heart follows and runs after idols and all immorality. Righteousness says perfect conformation of conscience, will and desires to the holy law of the Lord. Righteousness has also disappeared from the people. People live but without any relation to the Word. It's as if people and Word had never met. The Word is foreign to the people. The people are strangers to the Word.

The Lord educates his people to reflect, meditate and think so that it never doubts the truth of his every Word. Yesterday the Word said what would have happened and punctually it happened. The people is in exile, out of its land. It did not believe in the Word heard. Now the Lord announces the liberation from slavery. He does not say when it will take place. He says it seventy years earlier, that is, at the moment of deportation. He says it before, because when it will have taken place, the people finally gets convinced and opens to faith, that is, believes that life is in the Word, death is out of it. Blessing is in the Law. Out of the Law there is no blessing and not even life.

Must we transform our land into a cemetery to be convinced that his Word is the only source of life? Do we have to witness every death to believe that the abandonment of the Gospel leads to degradation in the heart of man and its non-government? Must we turn festivals into mourning, holidays into tragedies and free days into great weeping, to find out that without the blessing of God there is no joy, peace, serenity and rest? Must we be enveloped by everlasting flames to learn that life produces both a fruit of eternal bliss and one of curse, despair and fire from which there is no more exit?

Here is the great teaching of our God: *"Look at your present without the Word. You will find out that it is without the blessing of your Lord. It is a sad, gloomy present, with no joy, no serenity, no hope and of anguish. Get convinced that his Word is true. Enter it. Build your life with it. You will see that everything is clothed with novelty. Despair becomes hope, sadness joy, mourning a feast and death life."* But there is a second teaching of our God: *"Knowing that the Word that announces the present is true, even the one announcing the future is true. True is the Word that announces Paradise and true is the Word that announces hell."* If man wants, he can make the difference between a life lived in the Word and a life without the Law of the Lord.

As yesterday the Lord was the one who helped his people to be formed in the true faith, today it is the disciple of Jesus the one who must lead every other disciple and the whole world to believe in the Word of the Gospel. Then, if a disciple becomes a false prophet and transforms or annuls or eludes the Word, declaring it untrue, he condemns both his brothers of faith and the whole world to death on earth and in eternity. Everything is for the faith of the disciple of Jesus.

Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Woman of the most pure faith. You believed and eternal life was made flesh in your bosom. Ensure that we, too, as disciples of Jesus and your children, believe in the Word, so that even through us true life spreads on earth and never dies. Mother, you will give us your faith and we will become bearers of true life among men by bringing the true Word.

***Father Costantino Di Bruno***

**Life offered to the Father for the neighbour**

Reflections from *Motu Proprio* "Maiorem hac dilectionem" of H.H. Francis

With the *Motu Proprio* "Maiorem hac dilectionem", the Holy Father Francis wanted to introduce a new "case of point" of the procedure of beatification and canonization, in addition to the existing criteria, namely "the offer of life". The Pope, in simpler terms, has opened the way to the possibility of declaring "blessed" and "holy" those faithful who, driven by charity, have offered their lives for the neighbours, freely and voluntarily accepting a sure and premature death: *"Those Christians who, following closer the footsteps and teachings of the Lord Jesus, have voluntarily and freely offered their lives for others and have persevered until death in this regard are worthy of special consideration and honour. It is certain that the heroic offering of life, suggested and supported by charity, expresses a true, full and exemplary imitation of Christ and therefore deserves the admiration that the community of the faithful usually reserves to those who have voluntarily accepted bloody Martyrdom or exercised Christian virtues in an heroic way" (Maiorem hac dilectionem).*

The offer of life for one's neighbour must be placed at imitation of the one carried out by Christ: "No one has greater love than this: giving his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). To correctly understand the way Christ has "offered" his life for his friends, for his neighbour, it is necessary to look at Golgotha ​​and understand the cross according to the teaching of all Scripture and the tradition of the Church. The death of Christ on the cross is the expression of the delivery of all of his life in the hands of the Father: "Father, *into your hands I commend my spirit*"; and when he had said this he breathed his last" (Lk 23:46). Therefore, that of Christ constitutes the offer of the whole life to the Father and this was "total" not only because he received the seal of death, but because he saw in the crucifixion the culmination of an attitude of total availability to the divine will that characterized each moment of his earthly existence. Therefore, the filial life of Christ, found the fulfilment and perfecting of the consecration of the whole life to the Father, in the cross.

Therefore, first of all the offering of Christ was an offer to God, to the Father, but was also an offer "to" the Father "for" the neighbour. In fact, Christ gave himself to the Father so that the Father could receive his "sacrificed", (made-sacred), life on the cross and make a gift to the man of that same life received and transfigured in the glorious resurrection. This oblating circle, from the Son, in the Spirit, to the Father and from the Father to the Man, in the Spirit, has not only been realized on the cross, but already throughout the entire existence of Jesus. In fact, Christ during the days of his Earthly life, gave constantly the Father his life in the willingness to welcome, in the Spirit, all his wishes and will in every circumstance and, according to what the Father commanded, that is, in obedience to his command and modes arranged by him, He could thus be given with love to man, a love of eternal salvation that, according to different needs, was concretised now in need of teaching, now in a miracle of healing, now in comfort, now in a call to conversion and now in an intercession and request for forgiveness.

Thus, the communion of life between Father and Son, made in the Holy Spirit, was translated into a mission of salvation for man, but the determining point for the fulfilment of this circle of love and salvation was constituted by the offering of the personal freedom that the Son addressed to the Father, that is, from his obedience to the will of God which, as such, was recognized and witnessed as the only source of grace for himself and man, the only principle of determination of what is good, true and right, for himself and for the neighbour.

Therefore, sacrifice must be directed to God and to God alone. It is the gift of one's own love, that is, of one's own will and freedom, that they may be determined by the will of God in favour of the neighbour for his greater and truer good.

In defining the concept of "perfect sacrifice," St. Augustine already said: "True sacrifice is every work that allows us to join God in a holy community and that has as its end that good that makes us truly happy. Consequently, not even the love that drives us to man is a sacrifice, if it is not realized due to God. Even if it is accomplished and offered by man, sacrifice is always a divine reality" (*De Civitate Dei* X, 6).

From what can be deduced, in order to have the strength and the courage to deliver personal life into God's hands, so that He can make a gift of it to man for his salvation, a growing measure of faith, charity and hope is necessary. In faith man is made humble because he "sees" and recognizes God the Father the only one up to whom to determine what is truth, goodness, holiness, justice, mercy and love for himself as well as for the neighbour. Man is moved by charity, to deliver his own availability and full freedom to Christ as the only mediator and revealer of the Father, so that he is the one to make present, through ours, his only offering to the Father for the salvation of his neighbour. In hope, man discerns everything, works everything and sacrifices everything, for the one and only desire to be united to God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. The content, intensity and mode of the personal offer to God for the salvation of the neighbour must be sustained by such hope: that is, the hope of having Christ and of being possessed by Him; hope that the next, the friend, may have Christ and that Christ may possess him in turn. Without this hope, every offering becomes foolish, because life is offered up to its loss only to obtain a greater good and nothing is greater than man's life than the divine life that is part of Christ. No good is more urgent for one's existence and for that of every other man, except Christ and Christ alone, the only Utmost Good, Life from the Life of the Father offered to every man who will want to receive him.

Virgin Mary Mother of Redemption obtain for us the grace of wanting to be totally of God, invoke for us the humility of recognizing your Son as the one and only mediator of good and truth, ask for us the Spirit of intelligence to understand the ways and modes through which to make of the personal life a gift of God to the neighbour.

***Father Emmanuel Rotundo***

**UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH**

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

**WHEN HE OPENS, NO ONE SHALL SHUT (Is 22: 19-23)**

This is the work of our God: utmost vigilance so that anyone who wants can access the sources of his salvation. This acting of the Lord is his constant in history. A man cannot hinder the path of his light on our land. No one can prevent that his design of love and mercy is destroyed forever. For this God works on two fronts: He removes from the history of salvation its destroyers, raises strong and resolute people, whom He himself guarantees with his divine assistance. If there was no such a constant in God, there would be no salvation for anyone. The powers of darkness and evil would be able to eliminate from our land every trace of divine light. God intervenes, shows his omnipotence, keeps alive the path of his salvation, gives every man the grace of being able to be saved. It is true for all: every branch from the Lord could be cut off from the true vine.

**OR WHO HAS BEEN HIS COUNSELOR? (Rm 11,33-36)**

God's ways through which salvation is carried out on our earth are always mysterious, impenetrable and unpredictable. Why the salvation of the pagans must come from the Jews is a mystery. Why the salvation of the Jews must come from Gentiles is also a mystery. But for all, salvation comes through faith in Christ Jesus. The mystery is proclaimed in the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Spirit, poured out by those who announce it and it is welcomed. In the Holy Spirit received in the sacraments of the Church, one understands it. When you are without the Holy Spirit, even if you announce the Gospel, it is not welcomed. The disciples of Jesus will always have to be filled with the Holy Spirit. If they are devoid of him, the Word is without the Spirit. There will be neither acceptance nor subsequent understanding of the mystery. Disciple, Word, Holy Spirit must always be one. There is no life in separation because there is no welcome.

**I WILL GIVE YOU THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Mt 16: 13-20)**

In the Words of Jesus there are *"prophecies"* and *"certainties"*. Two relate to Peter and two are valid for his Church. The Church of Jesus is only that founded on Peter. *"You are Peter, and on this stone I will build my Church."* There are no other Churches of Jesus. The other certainty that guarantees this Church is contained in the words: *"The gates of hell will not prevail over her."* On every other Church, the doors of the hell might prevail. We have the absolute certainty that they will never prevail over the Church based on Peter. We know that Peter is a foundation, but he is not the only one. He is the visible foundation. The invisible foundation is Christ Jesus. The third foundation, according to Paul, is the prophets and the Apostles. The second prophesied certainty about Peter is his key power. He can loosen and tie. What He dissolves, is dissolved in the heavens. What He binds is bound in heaven. It is a power conferred in the Holy Spirit to always exercise in the Holy Spirit. On this certainty, every son of the Church founded upon Peter must raise the building of his faith.

**TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME**

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

**I WILL SPEAK IN HIS NAME NO MORE (Jer 20: 7-9)**

Jeremiah is a prophet of the living God. Because of the Word he is exposed to every persecution. He is even wanted to be dead. He is the only one who brings the light of the Lord to this dark world. Darkness springs all against him, it wants him to announce no more and to no longer speak in the name of his God. He gets dejected, his fragility and his smallness are pushing him to abandon the mission, he wants to retire. His words are clear: *"I will not think of him anymore. I will no longer speak in his name!"* This is his purpose, the result of his human fragility. But then he felt that the Word was in him like a burning fire. He wished he could keep it, but he could not. It had to get out of her mouth with a real explosion. The prophet is left neither to his weakness, nor to his fragility and nor to his limitation. The Lord calls and constitutes him the instrument of his Word. He is just from the word of his God. He lives for the Word.

**DO NOT CONFORM YOURSELVES TO THIS AGE (Rm 12: 1-2)**

If the Christian has to offer his body to the Lord, he must keep it in purity, in moral beauty and in the sanctity of the Word. Never might a body delivered to sin be offered. For this reason the disciple of Jesus must be of perfect discernment. In everything, he must know what is good, holy and pleasing to God. For this reason he will have to separate himself from the thoughts of the world. He will have to stop seeing according to the world in order to always see according to God, that is according to his Word, his Law and his Gospel. He sees according to God who has the thought of Christ as his one and only Law of Life. One wants according to God, beginning with the scrupulous observance of the Commandments. They are the first thought of God, but also the foundation from which to begin to acquire the thought of Christ Jesus. Whoever is out of the Commandments, even one, might never arrive to the thought of Jesus Christ and find himself outside the Gospel.

**YOU ARE AN OBSTACLE TO ME (Mt 16: 21-27)**

Jesus reveals to his disciples what the Father's thought is about his mission. Peter approaches him and tells him that this must never happen. Jesus answers with a strong word: *"Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."* At this moment Peter is a true tempter. Jesus extends his humiliation to every disciple. Whoever wants to go after Him must deny himself, take his cross every day and follow him. As Jesus Christ took the cross because this was the thought of God on his life, so every disciple must take God's thought because this is the cross for his life. He who thinks according to men is always a Satan for his brothers. Every disciple must be clothed of the same strength and firmness than Jesus. He must say to anyone who were tempt him so that he abandon the thoughts of God: *"Away from me, tempter! You do not think according to God, but according to men. Your heart is not according to God, but according to the world."* Everyone is obliged to know the will of God, giving all obedience.

**OVER A THOUSAND YOUTH AT THE "III MEETING OF YOUNG PEOPLE - GIM 2017" OF THE APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT**

On August 5th, the visit centre "A. Garcea" in Mancuso Village, hosted "III Youth Meeting - Gim 2017"of the Apostolic Movement, in the Sila National Park (Taverna).

There were over a thousand young people coming from Calabria and some Italian and foreign locations.

The thought of Pope Francis written in the letter to the youth in view of the Synod: "A better world is also built thanks to you", guided the event.

It was up to the President of the Apostolic Movement, Caesar Rotundo, to welcome all the participants, bringing greetings from the founder Maria Marino, to whom a strong applause was devoted. A greeting was also addressed to the one who inaugurated the annual youth meetings, Dr. Cettina Marraffa, also author of many musical and sacred works. There followed the greetings of the central secretary, Anna Maria Mazza, of the diocesan ecclesiastical assistant Fr. Francesco Brancaccio and of the regional ecclesiastical assistant Fr. Gesualdo De Luca, who also made present the proximity and prayer of the Catanzaro-Squillace metropolitan Archbishop, Msgr. Vincenzo Bertolone.

Among the institutions present there were also the mayor of Taverna, Sebastiano Tarantino, the Commander of the Carabinieri of the Department of Biodiversity of Catanzaro, Colonel Nicola Cucci, accompanied by Captain Angelo Roseti.

The enchanting natural landscape of the Little Sila National Park was able to give everybody hours of joy and fraternity corroborated with the help of prayer, led by Fr. Michele Fontana and by the reflection dictated by Fr. Davide Marino, who deepened the theme of the meeting by also welcoming questions from the people present. A dialogue on faith that has invited the future protagonists to rediscover the centrality of Christ, the One who always has something to say to the heart of humanity through his Word of Love. Everyone has been invited to know how to value the gifts and talents in the Lord's light to be able to face difficulties and turn away sins that too often stifle the construction of a better world where young people must be true protagonists. A possible journey that must know about planning, commitment and sacrifice and discernment. A message of hope that the young people have savoured also through the lyrics and music of the singer and songwriter Fr. Franco Bruno, present at the event.

In the afternoon the meeting continued with the animation and the concert prepared by the young people.

For the Apostolic Movement, that has been carrying out the charisma of "reminding the Word of the Lord to the world that has forgotten it" since 1979, young people represent the hope of the Church, the active subjects and true protagonists of evangelization.

*Father Giovanni Scarpino - www.calabriaecclesia.org, August 6, 2017*

**Youth Meetings**

**The Youth Meetings** are organized by the Apostolic Movement as a summer opportunity for communion, prayer and reflection, in continuity with an ordinary journey of Christian formation and witness that involves young people throughout the year. In the form of festive events, they intend to encourage young people to "connect" with the messages, suggestions, intuitions and expectations addressed them by the present-day life of the Church. The first editions were held at **Serra San Bruno** (2012) and **Paola** (2013). Since 2015, the appointments have been named **GiM** (Youth in Motion): 1 August 2015 in Palumbo Sila (KR); On August 3, 2016, at the amphitheatre of the Sila National Park in the Monk Locality in Taverna (CZ), in harmony with the theme of the WYD dedicated to "Blessed are the merciful." GiM2017 was thought in tune with the preparation phase of the **Synod of Youth**, following the theme: "A better world is also built thanks to you" (Pope Francis).