

Meditation - Gospel of John 17: 1- 11a

Tafers, Switzerland - May 19, 2015

This Church where we are today is more than a sacred space. For us Salvatorians it is a symbolic place because our venerable Founder Father Francis Jordan was buried in the center of this house of prayer for almost 40 years. From the start, Fr. Jordan was and continues to be the heart and head of the entire Society of the Divine Savior. We testify to the fact that his charism continues to be alive in so many places around the world. Just as he showed himself to be totally creative in the face of the changes during his time, today we also want to continue the dynamic energy and the spirituality of this saint of apostolic action. Our coming here to visit and pray is a sign that we want to continue the apostolic mission that Fr. Francis Jordan left us: to announce to all peoples that Jesus is the Savior.

In a nice coincidence, today's liturgy presents us with the Gospel of John, chapter 17. For us it is more than just a section of the Gospel. It is the very same section that inspired the specific goal of the Society of the Divine Savior, which is that "all people might know the one true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ." Even so, at times it seems we do not talk about this because we think we know well, even by memory, this central idea that lived in the heart of our Founder. But at times, I have the sense that this phrase has become like the safety rules that flight attendants give at the start of a trip. No one pays attention anymore because they have heard them so many times already and so we think we know them and understand them completely. We continue to read superficially this biblical text that inspired our mission in the same way. We no longer recall that this text for the Founder was like the treasure found and in which all the rest became secondary. This biblical text is where the Founder's vision and charism are rooted. For that reason we have to meditate on it always so that it becomes our way of living, so that it is incardinated in our Salvatorian way of thinking and acting.

As you know chapter 17 of this Gospel is Jesus' prayer to the Father. Like looking through a window, through this prayer we can see what is most intimate to Jesus, that is, his relationship with his Father. With the typical gesture of the one who prays, Jesus "*raises his eyes to heaven...*" and begins his dialogue using the word "Father." He does not begin with the word "I" but rather with "You." This reminds us that human life is relational. We can only have life in relationship with the "You," which gives meaning to the "I." There is no fullness of life if we live closed in on ourselves. What gives us life is the relationship with the "One and true God" who is a good Father, a Father who has loved us first. He is a God who when we seek Him, has already been seeking us and is always waiting for us. Our Founder, already had the intuition that only by means of a solid faith, a deep knowledge of God the Father and of His mercy manifested in Jesus for everyone, could the winds be overcome of the spirit of secularization that today are felt all over the world. As a result, I see as a very valid pastoral activity for the future of Salvatorians here in Europe, the creation of spaces where we are known and sought because we are "masters of spirituality." Above all because we are true "men of God" (Jordan) that help give answers to this search for meaning and transcendence that is found in the world.

Even so, the central point of the Gospel is in the phrase that inspired the Founder: *"that all people might know the one true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ."* Here again, the Gospel helps us by telling us that the One and True God cannot be known in a way separated from His Son Jesus Christ. In the face of Jesus one sees the face of the goodness and mercy of God the Father. This is the core of the Salvatorian charism: to "know and to make known" the face of God the Savior that has been shown in Jesus Christ. But it is not enough to study in order to know and to make known Jesus Christ. Pope Francis said that in order to know Jesus, one has to open three doors. *"The first door is prayer to Jesus: study alone without prayer is useless. Without prayer we will never know Jesus..."* *The second door: celebrating Jesus. "Without the celebration of the Sacraments we will not arrive at the knowledge of Jesus."* *The third door: imitate Jesus: "we take up the Gospels in order to discover there what [Jesus] did, what his life was like, what he told us, what he taught us" in order to "seek to imitate him."*¹ We can be sure of one thing: we Salvatorians here in Europe are called to open these doors. Today there are many people who do not know Jesus Christ. We Salvatorians cannot renounce our mission to help people meet the person of Jesus. Personal contact with Christ leads one to follow him and that transforms the lives of people. We should ask ourselves: through which activities and by which means are we doing this? My brothers, if we want change things, let us stop doing the same things as usual.

In the document "Vita Consecrata" it is repeated over and over that consecrated life has existed and will always exist in the Church but not necessarily in the forms we know (see n°. 3b, 29b and 63c). Reality is changing and so are we continuously changing. We were not founded in order to preserve ourselves but rather for a particular mission in the Church and for the Church. We are never alone in this mission. The Founder's spirit encourages us, inspires us, and leads to continue forward. Clouds may hide the sun, but not stop the sun from existing. It is the same with the missionary passion of Fr. Francis Jordan that shines always and lights up places around our world. Although it be "night" in many places of this continent, let us dedicate ourselves to recognize the action of the Spirit in the small gestures of salvation around us, let us be more creative and let us walk forward with the trust that was in Fr. Francis Jordan. There we will find our salt and our light!

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¹ Homily of Pope Francis at the Domus Sanctae Marthae (Rome), on 16 May 2014.