



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - September, 2006

Fundamental Rule 10 – Spiritual Infancy & Holy Poverty

Introduction

*“...our Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with the announcement and with the sign given by the Angel to the Shepherds, allowed himself be found as a Baby wrapped in cloths = placed in a Crib (manger) = therefore, for love of our Lord Jesus Christ we are obliged **to perfect in ourselves spiritual infancy** ... in this the distinctive characteristic of each member and of the entire body of the Congregation must be the spirit of perfect observance; we must become as **children in the poverty of the Crib by reflecting Holy Poverty in our Houses, rooms**”*

(cf. OOC III, p. 44)

Here, in the northern hemisphere, the period of returning from summer vacation, coincides for many of us, with the resumption of everyday, routine reality; these words of St. Vincent allow us to reflect, they invite us to have a new momentum of holy enthusiasm for our tasks and responsibilities.

In a spirit of spiritual infancy we entrust all of our preoccupations to Divine Providence, sure that our Father will attend to those aspects of our daily reality that can seem too big for us (curing and healing, consoling and strengthening...).

In the Crib Jesus became present among humanity; we are also like the Crib, we have the important task of making his love present among us, of making his life and presence felt, we are simply called to be like *children in the spirit of the Holy Poverty of the Crib*

And so: *“...I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to*

everyone: the Lord is very near. There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4,4-7)

Let us pray with, and reflect on, the Word of God:

Psalm 146 (147, 1-11): A hymn of praise

Ecclesiasticus 14, 20-27: The happiness of the wise man

Judith 16, 1-15: The song of Judith

Luke 10, 21-24: The Good News revealed to the simple

Matthew 18, 3-4: The greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Let us meditate, together with St. Vincent, on the gratuitous nature of the Love of God

“...but God does not get angry because we are unable to equal his Love, he does not expect it of us. He himself has made flowers as small as the point of a pin, and he has made fireflies which have that light that is there and then is not there; and he does not get angry that those flowers are so small and that the light of the firefly plays hide-and-seek; on the contrary, he both loves and conserves each of them. The tiny flowers and the weak fireflies are precious to him who is infinite Mercy in the same way as his infinite Wisdom is well used when it is used for me. Oh my Lord, you would be happy, if my love were as big as the light of a firefly or as big as a flower that is no bigger than the point of a pin. But you have not even had this. You created me, but what good has it been for you to have given me eyes to inebriate me with sights and sounds and a heart capable of saying ‘yes’ to you?

And yet you have persisted and persevered in loving me; you became man, just like me, and you died for me. But was it worth your while to have died bleeding on the Cross and to have given me your Body and your Blood? O my Lord, do you realize that you love a rag? Is it worth while to love a rag?

Yes, it is worthwhile! This is infinite Love: to make a wedding garment out of a rag! Oh my, my Lord!” ((F.Amoroso SAC- Il poema dell’amor di Dio secondo S. Vincenzo Pallotti, Roma, 1985, pag.50-51.)

Let us pray in the words of an enclosed monk

A meditation and prayer: (cf. **Matthew 18,3**)

“On becoming a child”

- “...Jesus, help me to become a child in order to enter into your Kingdom which is for the small and the simple.
- Make my glance as clear and transparent as a child’s: may it look lovingly on all creatures.
- Eyes that brim over with serenity, kindness, without malice, without calculation.
- Give me the trustfulness of a child who runs towards his father without taking notice of where he puts his feet.
- May I become as defenceless as him, vulnerable, only eager and hungry for Love, for goodness and for peace.
- And so nobody would be afraid of me, and I would be tranquil just like a child, safe in the arms of its mother (Psalm 130,2).
- To be simple, which is to live with the fundamental essentials, to be without affectation, without duplicity, not to be preoccupied with appearances and with the possible criticisms of others.
- To be myself, just as I am, in the good and with my limitations, sincere, transparent, both within and without, incapable of excuses and justifications.
- Yes, naive, but in the sense of having a limitless and repeated trust in man and in his possibilities, in his hopes of overcoming evil.
- Like a child, capable of silence, to be unimportant among “the important” who argue and who debate; what can be “gained” from a child?
- Like the child, so courageous as to prefer the toy to play with (which is ‘free’) rather than the nearby jewellery of solid gold which does not

mean anything to him (the insubstantiality of idols: worth less than a penny).

- One who loves the sun, flowers, colours, life, the small things, the light, and one who is not of the darkness, of the shade or of every other kind of shadow.
- To be completely rooted in the present, to seem like one who is spellbound, so light, without worries, without anguish either for the past or for the future.
- And then, to make peace immediately after a discussion a misunderstanding or a falling out.
- A peace that is so true, so new, so complete that it forgets everything so much so that the bad moment disappears as if it never existed.
- Better friends than before.
- To be an angel in painful situations with a smile and with a tenderness that alleviates, relaxes and consoles.
- Like a child, to live almost without time, without deadlines, to be free (and not be a slave of anything or of any person).
- And finally, above all, under all, to have an inborn understanding with God, with you, Jesus, within the heart, your heart ...”

A reflection from the 2004 Lenten Message of Pope John Paul II

“This year’s theme - *“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.”* (Mt 18:5) - invites us to reflect on the condition of children. Today Jesus continues to call them to himself and to set them as an example to all those who wish to be his disciples. Jesus’ words call upon us to see how children are treated in our families, in civil society, and in the Church. They are also **an incentive to rediscover the simplicity and trust which believers must cultivate in imitation of the Son of God, who shared the lot of the little ones and the poor. Saint Clare of Assisi loved to say that Christ, “lay in a manger, lived in poverty on the earth and died naked on the Cross.”** (*Testament, Franciscan Sources*, No. 2841).”