



## January 2012

### ***“... fire that spreads...”***

#### **Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

##### **Come, Holy Spirit**

Come, Holy Spirit! Come!  
May your Love fill my heart  
with the riches of your abundance.  
May You become in me the source of life,  
your immortal life.  
But how can I present myself to you  
without being totally willing,  
docile and open to your outpouring?  
Lord, speak to me. Tell me  
what must I do?  
I listen carefully to the gentle whisper  
of your Spirit  
so I may understand  
what your plans are for me,  
so to open myself to the mysterious  
invasion of your mercy.  
Help me to give you my life  
Without asking questions.  
It is a gesture of love and of trust,  
that moves you to break into my existence  
since you, Lord, are so generous.  
Anastasio Ballestrero

#### **The Word of God.**

##### **Gospel of Matthew 5:1-12**

“Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill.  
There he sat down and was joined by his  
disciples. Then he began to speak. This is  
what he taught them: **“How happy are the**

**poor in spirit;** theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. **Happy those who mourn;** they shall be comforted. **Happy the gentle;** they shall have the earth for their heritage. **Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right;** they shall be satisfied. **Happy the merciful;** they shall have mercy shown them. **Happy the pure in heart;** they shall see God. **Happy the peacemakers;** they shall be called sons of God. **Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right;** theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. **Happy are you** when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in Heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.”

#### **Reflection**

The Gospel of Jesus, the good news, is proclaimed to the poor and not to the rich, to the weak not to the powerful. This is God's precise choice: the proclamation of the Gospel, the presence of Jesus and his mission are announced purposely to the poor and not to the rich. The rich come to know it as a consequence, indirectly, not because of divine choice. The rich and powerful already have their gospel in the laws of trade; they already have their political and military "Messiahs", their heavenly reward of well-being and riches. Jesus does not announce his salvation to those who already feel saved and safe because of the earthly goods they own. Jesus proclaims justice for the poor: God's justice will protect them, says the Bible, like a sacred cloak, covering and healing every wound and fear. It is true that Jesus had his preferences: he presents himself, proclaims, speaks, consoles, prefers, heals and cures the poor and the miserable. Jesus has an evident preference for the poor, probably because the rich already have their god.

(taken from "La verità libera" of Spoladore)



## Mission of the Lay Canossian

### Reading and Reflection:

#### Statutes n°9-10, p. 20-21

The reflection may be enriched by the following readings.

##### 1. "... living and witnessing the Gospel in every field: the world of work ..."

- "When men and women provide for themselves and their families in such a way as to be of service to the community as well, they can rightly look upon their work as a prolongation of the work of the Creator, a service to their fellow men, and their personal contribution to the fulfilment in history of the divine plan." (Gaudium et Spes n°34)
- The aspects of work on which the theology of Vatican II reflected are:
  - a) Work prolongs creation and represents the active collaboration of the believer in the redemptive work of Christ;
  - b) Work promotes the person, makes people altruistic and, in this way, contributes to the building of God's Kingdom on earth;
  - c) Work is ambivalent because in situations of exploitation and the excess of technology it alienates the person rather than helping him/her in self promotion and

salvation. (cf. Lavoro, Dizionario Teologico Interdisciplinare, Marietti)

- The Christian ethic regarding work should be guided by these points:
  - a) *right-duty to cooperate in humanizing work:* make work a personal and personalizing reality, focusing attention on the person of the worker rather than end product;
  - b) *right-duty to work and permit each person to see work as a vocation:* a Christian must be aware that through his work he collaborates in creation and the service of his brothers and sisters. It is urgent to create social conditions which help to overcome unemployment and "concealed labour";
  - c) *right-duty to balance working activity with periods of rest:* oppose certain exaggerated tendencies to over activity and consumerism which deny a day of rest. (cf. Lavoro, Dizionario Teologico Inter-disciplinare, Marietti)
- Another aspect to be considered is that which concerns professional ethics, that is, the ethic of full commitment, seriousness in work, competence to which every worker is called, but a Christian must be so in a special way. Professional ethics include the criteria by means of which a worker and a believer carries out choices in the professional sphere. The essential values that guarantee human dignity to the person as a human being, brother/sister and child of God, must not be denied.



## **2. ... culture, politics, economy ...**

### **• Responsibility and participation**

"Participation" is the voluntary and generous engagement of a person in social interchange. It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. Participation is achieved first of all by the care taken for the education of his family ... As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life. The manner of this participation may vary from one country or culture to another. As with any ethical obligation, the participation of all in realizing the common good calls for a continually renewed conversion of the social partners ... Much care should be taken to promote institutions that improve the conditions of human life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church n°1913-1916)

### **3. "... it is in particular, in the family, that the Lay Canossian expresses his most important commitment ... "**

### **• The Christian family**

"The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task." (Catechism of the Catholic Church n°2205)

### **• Duties of children**

"... the respect of children, whether minors or adults, for their father and mother is nourished by the natural

affection born of the bond uniting them. It is required by God's commandment. Respect for parents (filial piety) derives from gratitude toward those who, by the gift of life, their love and their work, have brought their children into the world and enabled them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace. " (Catechism of the Catholic Church n°2214-2215)

### **• Duties of parents**

"The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children, but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation... Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule." (Catechism of the Catholic Church n°2221-2223)

### **4. "The mission of the Lay Canossian is that of living the Canossian spirituality ... in the reality in which he lives. It is also characterized through ... a commitment "ad gentes..."**

Laymen cooperate in the Church's work of evangelization; as witnesses and at the same time as living instruments, they share in her saving mission ...

... In those lands which are already Christian, laymen cooperate in the work of evangelization by nurturing in themselves and in others a knowledge and love of the missions; by stimulating vocations in their own family, in Catholic associations, and in the schools ... that they may offer to others that gift of Faith which they have received gratis ... But in mission lands

let laymen teach in schools, administer temporal goods co-operate in parish and diocesan activities, and organize and promote various forms of the lay apostolate, in order that the faithful of the young churches may be able to take part as soon as possible in the life of the Church ... They should cooperate in a brotherly spirit with other Christians, with non - Christians ... having before their eyes the fact that "the building up of the earthly city should have its foundation in the Lord, and should be directed towards Him". (Ad Gentes n°41)

- "The future missionary is to be prepared by a special spiritual and moral training. For he must have the spirit of initiative in beginning, as well as that of constancy in carrying through what he has begun; he must be persevering in difficulties, patient and strong of heart in bearing with solitude, fatigue, and fruitless labor.... Imbued with a living faith and a hope that never fails, the missionary ... gladly spend all and be spent himself for souls (Ad Gentes n°25).
- "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the



ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men." (Nostra Aetate n°2).

## The Spirit of Love in Jesus Christ

Magdalene is a woman thirsting for love and love is the first value in her relationship with God. But the impact of such an intuition is, first of all, a gift.

**"Love is from God"** says St. John (1 Jn 4:7). "God has given us the spirit of love" (2 Tim 1:7), and the Spirit is the consubstantial love of the Father and the Son.

There can be no intuition of love, nor an act of faith in God who is love, unless the grace of the Father is first present. **Charity and faith**, says St. Paul, come from God the Father. (cf. Eph 6:23)

And God the Father gives us this grace through the Word made flesh.

Jesus Christ is the meeting point of the Father's love. (cf. 1 Tim 1:14)

**"Love is in Jesus Christ."** (2 Tim 1:13)

Magdalene fixes her eagle gaze on the person of Christ, the God-Man, and sees in Him the infinite power of the love of the Father. For her, the Spirit of love is not only in Jesus Christ, but *"the Spirit of Love is the spirit of Jesus"*. (UR p. 245)

"I will send the Holy Spirit to you." (Jn 16:7), Jesus tells His disciples. "He will glorify me, since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine." (Jn 16:14)

And Magdalene throws open her heart to the invasion of the Spirit of Christ which is the **Spirit of infinite love**.

*"He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him."* (Jn 14:21) Christ revealed to Magdalene the spirit of love that characterizes His

natural outcome of that very love the Father relationship with the Father and with all His brothers and sisters.

**Jesus expresses His love for the Father in terms of obedience.** “I love the Father and do as the Father has commanded me.” (Jn 14:31)

No love can be credible or trusted if it is not shown in the sacrifice of one’s own free will. The degree of obedience measures, in fact, the degree of love. Magdalene perceives this interior attitude of availability in Christ. In the Word Incarnate, love for man is the has for His Son:

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.” (Jn 15:9) And to know how Christ loves us, it is enough to contemplate Him hanging on the Cross: **“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lays down his life for his friends.”** (Jn 15:13)

**The Crucified One is the visible revelation of the love of the Father for all humanity and for each one in particular.** In the Crucified One, Magdalene grasps not only the spirit that animates Him, but also the interior attitude as well as the heart overflowing with love that He pours into her, made new and filled by the Holy Spirit.

The spirit of love in Magdalene is that of Jesus Christ and it is also that which must be visible in our life, in our family life, our work place, in the Parish community, in the political and economic ambit. “Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.” (Rm 8:9).

(The Path of identification with Christ Crucified.)



## Devoted to the Most Holy Mother of Sorrows

Magdalene of Canossa, declared Mary Most Holy and Sorrowful as “Foundress and Mother” of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity and dedicated the Institution of the Tertiaries to her. The Tertiaries are the Foundress’ token of gratitude to Mary who is honoured especially with the title “Sorrowful”.

Before the drawing up the sketchy Plan, Magdalene burst out in passionate praise to the Mother of God describing how the Lord has glorified her throughout the centuries even through wonderful intervention and signs and that the Church acknowledged her as the loving Mother who hastens God’s mercy:

*“... By her humble supplication she hastened the happy moment of the descent of God’s Holy Word in her womb ... with her deepest longings ... the solemn descent of the Divine Comforter on the early Christians.”*

In God’s plan, Mary is a help for the whole Church, the universal shelter of the faithful, *“for the Lord wants her ... to be like the rainbow Noah had seen between the sky and the earth – the rainbow foreshadowed her. On seeing that rainbow Divine Justice was appeased.”*

Magdalene decided *“to set up ... a Sodality of persons who, as Tertiaries of Mary, most Holy and Sorrowful, might practice and spread such devotion ...”* in order to endear their devotion to Mary Most Sorrowful and to implore for God’s mercy.

**True, authentic devotion to Mary must be an imitation of Mary to be lived concretely**

**The Tertiaries ought to practise some virtues proper to the Daughters of Charity, like docility, patience, meekness, gentleness not only in view of their own sanctification, but also because these virtues are indispensable in dealing efficaciously with the youth.**

**The Tertiaries' spirituality is the spirituality of the Daughters of Charity: both from the same root, are born of love and imitation of Mary Most Holy beneath the Cross.**

The Tertiaries are called:

- . to empathize with the countless sorrows of the Queen of Martyrs
- . to remind people of these Sorrows
- . to prevent and blot out in oneself and in others the cause of her Sorrows, that is, sin
- . to spread in the world the devotion to Her and to the cause of Her Sorrows, that is, the Most Sacred Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Magdalene contemplated Mary next to Christ Crucified. Mary was inseparable from Him in love and in sorrow. She is the Mother of Charity beneath the Cross who revealed to Magdalene the unfathomable riches of the love of Christ and led her to take His love as the inspiration of all her Institutions, of the Tertiaries, too, whom she had started in November 1824.

From June to August 1825, Magdalene visited three times the Marian Shrine of Caravaggio. It was at that time that she decided to instill into the hearts of the Tertiaries the devotion to the Passion of Christ and to the Sorrows of Mary, as a token of gratitude for the many graces she had received from Our Lady.

Magdalene remembers, on a second visit to Caravaggio:

*“... as I prayed before the Blessed Sacrament ... I was reminded of the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives. I understood that the Tertiaries should start the reflection on the Passion from this point.”*

This strong urge to let the Tertiaries reflect on what Christ had suffered in His Passion is a clear indication of Magdalene's deep longing to extend her zeal for the Redemptive Mystery of Christ to any new initiative.

Magdalene's letter to M. Faccioli, Superior of St. Stephen's Convent in Milan, belongs to this stretch of time. Magdalene insisted: *“Remember your Spouse abandoned in the Garden of Olives and willingly, keep Him company, because He cannot be comforted in His Agony if we get sad for trifles.”*



### Questions for reflection

- Which fundamental values contribute to ethics in the world of work?
- How can the needs of our society be brought to light and be resolved in a concrete way in our daily life?
- Is my family really a place in which I am always willing to “serve the Crucified One in the crucified ones”? What impedes my service?
- In which sense is faith a gift for me? How can I make others recognise this dimension?
- How can evangelization and dialogue be respected in mission countries and/or in our countries which are evermore inter-cultural and inter-religious?

### Final Prayer

**O God of infinite love,**

You desire to save all people and lead them to know truth, see how great the harvest is and, through your goodness, send workers so that the Gospel may be proclaimed to every creature and your people, gathered together from all nations, walk in the way of salvation. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

**Amen.**

(Ambrosian Missal)

## Personal Notes

### North East Africa

Tanzania . Kenya . Malawi

Sudan . Uganda . Egitto



Let us always remember our resolution of the  
V° International Congress:  
**“I recommend to you my Beloved Poor.”**

During this month, let us remember  
especially this Canossian Province.

**Let us offer God, Father of the Poor, our  
sacrifices and prayer for these brothers and  
sisters in their needs:**

- primary education
- pure water
- adequate housing
- new roads
- assistance for street children and orphans
- material and spiritual support for families
- medical and health assistance
- evangelization and catechesis
- formation of the youth

**Let us once more take up Magdalene's invitation to love our beloved poor with a big, big heart, in imitation of Mary's big Heart who, on Calvary, offered the life of Her Only Son.**

*Let us not forget ...*

*Let us remember them ...*

