



FEBRUARY 2012

“... I entrust my call to your Motherly heart ...”

Invocation to the Holy Spirit

G. Come, **Spirit of Wisdom**,
detach us from the things of the earth and instil in us love and taste for the things of heaven.

T. *Holy Father in the name of Jesus send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

G. Come, **Spirit of Understanding**,
brighten our mind with the light of eternal Truth and enrich it with holy thoughts.

T. *Holy Father in the name of Jesus send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

G. Come, **Spirit of Counsel**,
make us docile to your inspirations and guide us on the way of salvation.

T. *Holy Father in the name of Jesus send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

G. Come, **Spirit of Fortitude**,
give us strength, constancy and victory in the battle against our spiritual enemies.

T. *Holy Father in the name of Jesus send forth your Spirit and renew*

the face of the earth.

G. Come, **Spirit of Knowledge**,
be the Teacher of our souls and help us to put your teachings into practice.

T. *Holy Father in the name of Jesus send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

G. Come, **Spirit of Piety**,
come to dwell in our heart in order to possess and sanctify all its affections

T. *Holy Father in the name of Jesus send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

G. Come, **Spirit of Holy Fear**,
reign over our will and grant that we may be always ready to suffer any pain rather sin.

T. *Holy Father in the name of Jesus send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*

Let us pray

May your Spirit come, Lord, and transform us interiorly with His gifts: create in us a new heart so that we may please You and do Your will. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The Word of God

From the First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians 3:1-13

“When we could not bear the waiting any longer, we decided it would be best to be left without a companion at Athens, and sent our brother Timothy, who is God’s helper in spreading the Good News of Christ, to keep you firm and strong in the faith and prevent any of you from being unsettled by the present troubles. As you know, these are bound to come our way: when we were with

you, we warned you that we must expect to have persecutions to bear, and that is what has happened now, as you have found out. That is why, when I could not stand waiting any longer, I sent to assure myself of your faith. I was afraid the Tempter might have tried you too hard, and all our work might have been wasted. However, Timothy is now back from you and he has given us good news of your faith and your love, telling us that you always remember us with pleasure and want to see us quite as much as we want to see you. And so, brothers, your faith has been a great comfort to us in the middle of our own troubles and sorrows; now we can breathe again, as you are still holding firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you, for all the joy we feel before our God on your account? May God our Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, make it easy for us to come to you. **May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all the saints.”**

Reflection

As a true “father” Paul prefers to remain alone in order to confirm the Thessalonians in the faith and give them strength in trials. For this reason he sends Timothy “brother and collaborator” in the spreading of the Gospel. It is true, tribulation is part of the “ordinary” life of a community but it may even lead to discouragement instigated by Satan and thus render “useless” the hard work of the Apostle.

Timothy has now returned and Paul is truly consoled, better still he is “alive”. In fact, he has received a piece of “good news”: the faith and love of the Thessalonians “resist”, so too the heartfelt communion with the Apostle.

We must thank the Lord and hope to encounter Him soon so as to complete our

journey of faith. Nothing remains but to pray, asking God to complete in us mutual love and universal love. In this way, our hearts will be firm in holiness and will not fear when the Lord returns. This is what Paul wishes for his community: that it may live in charity and be found full of holiness when it meets the Lord. Life is a continual preparation for our encounter with Jesus.

And how do we live our faith?



Lay Canossian Association

- Reading and reflection:
- Statutes n°11-12, p. 22-23
- Reflection may be enriched by the proposed readings that follow.
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- “The Association is composed of people baptised in the Catholic Church who participate in the Canossian charism ... The lay person who decides to belong to the Association declares his commitment in one of the two modalities...”
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- The “**PROMISE**” of the Lay Canossian to tend towards Christian perfection” is one of the modalities of commitment. What does “promise” mean:
- **To PROMISE** is one of the key terms used in declarations of love. **To promise, in Biblical language, means to pledge one's own talents and fidelity**, to be sure of the future and, at the same time, arouse in one's partner the dedication of the heart and the generosity of faith. God reveals His greatness by the way He promises and by the certainty which He has

that will never delude. For God, to promise means already conceding it. His greatest gift is Jesus, the promised Messiah, in whom "all God's promises have their 'yes'" (2 Cor 1:20), He himself being the bearer of all new promises, the realisation of the Kingdom of God and the Father's promise: the Holy Spirit. By possessing the Spirit, Christians possess all the promises (cf. At 2:38).

- It is only in the name of the gift of the Spirit that we can dare to make a promise of commitment to the perfection of Christian life which is expressed through witness. This style is mentioned in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:
- "The fidelity of the baptized is a primordial condition for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the Church's mission in the world. In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians. "The witness of a Christian life and good works done in a super-natural spirit have great power to draw men to the faith and to God.". (CCC n° 2044)
- "Because they are members of the Body whose Head is Christ, Christians contribute to building up the Church by the constancy of their convictions and their moral lives. The Church increases, grows, and develops through the holiness of her faithful, until "we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ". (CCC n°2045)

- "By living with the mind of Christ, Christians hasten the coming of the Reign of God, "a kingdom of justice, love, and peace." They do not, for all that, abandon their earthly tasks; faithful to their master, they fulfil them with up-rightness, patience, and love. (CCC n°2046)
- The second modality of commitment is the **Prayer of ENTRUSTMENT**. What does entrusting oneself mean? Entrusting or consecrating oneself, according to Biblical and Theological revelation, takes on these meanings:
 - Already in the Old Testament, God stipulates, on Sinai, His Covenant. This must correspond covenant makes Israel a people consecrated to the Lord, that is it belongs to Him and experience his power and holiness, but belonging to God demands that the people distinguish themselves from other nations through their observance of rules of cult and their moral code. Thus, with Baptism the vital consecration to God must correspond to the consecration that unites the baptized person to Christ and makes him/her participate in His Mystery of death and resurrection. This consecration is expressed by an existential cult, that is, the transformation of one's own life in a gift offered to God. All the other aspects of Christian life, such as cult, morality, mission are included in total offering to God.
 - The Gospels present the **person of Mary as being deeply connected with the covenant and the consecration** of God's people. Mary's yes shows an attitude of readiness, obedient acceptance, faith and total entrustment to

God and His plan of salvation. Mary places herself at the service of the covenant with God, in Jesus Christ. At the hour of the cross that indicates the shedding of Christ's blood of the new and everlasting covenant, Mary is given as a mother to the early messianic community, represented by the disciple Jesus loved.

- Entrustment is a call, a grace, an action of God that touches and transforms the human person in depth. Openness to the Holy Spirit is at the base of an active collaboration which operates within the Christian and leads him/her in an itinerary from baptism to glory. A Christian is one who allows himself to be animated by the Spirit, to be loved by the Father and be united to Christ. The gift of self to Mary has the aim of making oneself open to the Spirit and docile to Grace. It has value when it helps to live Mary's spirituality characterised by radical poverty, receptivity, availability, acceptance of God's plan, that is the spirituality of the Lord's poor ones. The attitude of a disciple regarding the gift of Mary implies openness, self giving, availability, acceptance, trusting and loving faith. (cfr Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia edizioni Paoline pag. 394-410)
- Entrusting self to Mary also requires faithfulness to the church: "In accordance with the eternal plan of Providence, Mary's divine motherhood is to be poured out upon the Church, as indicated by statements of Tradition, according to which Mary's "motherhood" of the Church is the reflection and extension of her motherhood of the Son of God. According to the Council the very moment of the

Church's birth and full manifestation to the world enables us to glimpse this continuity of Mary's motherhood: "Since it pleased God not to manifest solemnly the mystery of the salvation of the human race until he poured forth the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the Apostles before the day of Pentecost 'continuing with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren' (Acts 1:14). We see Mary prayerfully imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation. And so, in the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: Mary at Nazareth and Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem. In both cases her discreet, yet essential, presence indicates the path of "birth from the Holy Spirit." Thus she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit-present in the mystery of the Church. In the Church too she continues to be a maternal presence, as is shown by the words spoken from the Cross: "Woman, behold your son!"; "Behold, your Mother." (Encyclical Redemptoris Mater n°24)



Organization of the Lay Canossian Association

Reading and reflection:

Statutes n°16-22, p. 26-29

Reflection may be enriched by the proposed readings that follow.

"The fundamental principles guiding the functions and relationships within it are co-responsibility, interdependence and complementarity."

- "We return to the biblical image of the vine and the branches, which immediately and quite appropriately lends itself to a consideration of fruitfulness and life. Engrafted to the vine and brought to life, the branches are expected to bear fruit: "He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit" (Jn 15:5). Bearing fruit is an essential demand of life in Christ and life in the Church. The person who does not bear fruit does not remain in communion: "Each branch of mine that bears no fruit, he (my Father) takes away" (Jn 15: 2) Communion with Jesus, which gives rise to the communion of Christians among themselves, is an indispensable condition for bearing fruit: "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). And communion with others is the most magnificent fruit that the branches can give: in fact, it is the gift of Christ and His Spirit. At this point *communion begets communion*: essentially it is likened to a *mission on behalf of communion*. In fact, Jesus says to his disciples: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (Jn 15:16). Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate

and mutually imply each other, to the point that *communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion*. It is always the one and the same Spirit who calls together and unifies the Church and sends her to preach the Gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). On her part, the Church knows that the communion received by her as a gift is destined for all people ... In the context of Church mission, then, *the Lord entrusts a great part of the responsibility to the lay faithful, in communion with all other members of the People of God*." (Christifideles laici n° 32)



To Relive the Spirit of Jesus Crucified

Magdalene invites us to **contemplate Christ Jesus** in the act of offering Himself to the Father and to humanity. At the foot of the Cross, beside Mary, we participate intimately in the sentiments of Christ and we let ourselves be pervaded by His Spirit of sanctity who transforms us "according to the action of the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18) into new creatures. There is no place on earth where one can more easily and efficaciously draw to oneself the fullness of Divine Love, if not at the foot of the Cross.

There, Mary becomes the Mother of the Church, there Magdalene became the Mother of our Family, there each one of us becomes a daughter and a son of Charity. **The fount of Love gushes forth from the opened side of Christ.**

And just on the Cross, after having given us Mary, the dearest person He had on earth, He bowed His head, and gave up His Spirit.
(cf Jn 19:30)

“Do not detach yourselves from the Cross,” Magdalene tells her daughters, “... a sermon from the Crucified Lord is worth much more than an entire Lenten sermon,” because “... since He whom God has sent speaks God’s own words, and God gives Him the Spirit without reserve.” (Jn 3:34). But the Father wishes us to ask for the Spirit with the insistence and the confidence of children. And the Holy Spirit is the love that animates the life of the Father and the Son and the promise of Christ to be a permanent indwelling of our hearts.

“The Father will give you the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father; He will be my witness ...” (Jn 15:26). “God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts (Gal 4:6) capable of guiding us to the complete Truth” (Jn 16:13). And the whole truth is this: “To know you, the Father ... and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (Jn 17:3).

To know the Father means having the same experience that Christ Himself had of the Father. The Lay Canossian is called to live and experience this wealth of knowledge. It is a foretaste of the experience of eternal life, lived now on earth in the obscurity of faith.

All this means “to aim at” and “to be imbued with” the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Father alone, according to His Plan of infinite Mercy, can introduce us into this great and mysterious reality. Christ has also said that when He will be lifted up from the earth, He will draw all humanity to Himself (cf. Jn 6:44). And all those who will let themselves be drawn by Love Crucified will form “one spirit with Him” (1 Cor 6:17).

Christ, the Word of the Father, took flesh in the womb of the Virgin of Nazareth and became like man in everything.

Christ is the New Man. Mary is the New Woman, the channel of grace. The way of entry for the Word and the way of return to God in Jesus Christ. The path of conforming to Christ and Mary passes through the Cross. Each one of us becomes like Christ and Mary when he/she receives the Word that purifies

and introduces him/her into the mystery of His death and resurrection.

M. Elda Pollonara



Criteria for Selection of Candidates

Magdalene of Canossa, who had initiated the “Training Courses for Teachers” two years earlier, thought that youth willing to be Tertiaries could be easily recruited among the participants:

“any person of good conduct, whether a virgin or a widow, can be enrolled as a Tertiary of this Solidarity”

In the complete Plan she had sent to Rome through Monsignor Zoppi, she specified:

“... the writer wishes to welcome not only virgins and widows, but also some married women, thus following, though afar, the modality of the seraphic Father Francis of Assisi with regard to his Tertiaries....”

Magdalene describes in detail the **directives to be adopted when selecting people to be Tertiaries:**

“Among the Youth attending the Institute let them choose some of tested piety, most solid way of thinking, and really eager to live a truly Christian life.”

Modalities of acceptance and enrolment were simple:

“After testing them for some time and instructing them on the goal of this Institution and how to achieve it, if they are eager and disposed, the Superior should get them to be enrolled in the Solidarity of the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy ...”

Our Foundress also establishes the **Spiritual Commitments, necessary for their personal sanctification and their apostolic commitment:**

. *Every day they will recite seven Hail Marys to the Sorrowful Heart of Mary to obtain a holy life and death and for the conversion of sinners ...*

. *Each one will try to attend Mass every day and reflect, according to one's ability, on the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy and on the Passion of Jesus*

. *If her family allows it, they will introduce the custom of the recitation of a third part of the Holy Rosary, and on Saturdays will replace it with the recitation of the Chaplet of the Sorrows of Mary Most Holy.*

. *If possible, they will receive the Sacraments on the Feasts of Mary Most Holy, including the two feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.*

. *she will wear very simple modest and also decent clothing, according to her social status.*

. *she will try as much as possible to witness to her faith and promote union in her family by imitating Mary in patience, docility, meekness and gentleness.*

All this ought to be done not only in order to sanctify oneself, but also to be enabled to freely practise the Works of Charity of the Institute.

Maria Nicolai



Questions for reflection

- Do we have full knowledge of the gift of the Spirit we have received and His workings?
- Witness is “the strength of attracting people to faith and God”. It is not always like this. What are the causes?
- Entrusting self to Mary is a special grace. Are we aware of this? Why is it that so many of our Canossian friends do not belong to the Association by means of the promise or entrustment?
- Entrusting self to Mary means committing self to live her spirituality. Which characteristics do I see in

myself more easily and which are difficult for me?

- Is there synergy among the Coordinating Teams at various levels? How can communion and collaboration be improved?



Final Prayer

O Mary, Mother of Charity,
who at the foot of the Cross
accepted me as your daughter/son,
today I entrust myself to your goodness and
intercession as a Lay Canossian.

I entrust to your motherly heart
my call to sanctity,
my daily commitment in my family,
at work and in my relationships.

Let me be attentive and available,
so that I may serve You in my brothers
and sisters with humble charity,
especially the least and the poor of today.
May I reveal the Father's love and care
in every encounter with others.

Mary, you who drew the spirit
of patience, docility, meekness and
gentleness from Jesus, generate in me
the spirit of Your Son Crucified.

May all my life be lived
according to the spirit which You have
given to St. Magdalene of Canossa,
the Spirit of the Greatest Love.

Amen.





Personal Notes

Central-West Africa

D.R. Congo . Angola . Sao Tomé
Togo .



Let us always remember our resolution of the
Vº 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:**

- Overcoming fatalism
- End of wars
- political equilibrium
- end of corruption
- work for young people
- medical assistance .Hospitals
- adequate salary
- better life conditions
- respect for rights
- respect for the dignity of children,
young people and women
- education, schools
- catechesis and human, Christian and
religious formation

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

**Let us not forget ...
Let us remember them ...**

