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VATICAN - "AVE MARIA" By Mgr. Luciano Alimandi - We are the image of God

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - On the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, just celebrated, we lifted up our hearts to the One who created us in His image and likeness to be, as the Greek Fathers of the Church used to say, "capable of God"! What a wonderful creature the human person is: able to enter into communion with his Creator, to truly know Him. Saint Paul says this to the Christian in Ephesus: "you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household" (Eph 2, 19)!
To have God as our partner for life is the most beautiful "adventure" imaginable, because the Lord never disappoints anyone. He calls us share in his divine life. What is it that sometimes renders our relationship with Jesus difficult? Why does life often seem like a battle with unequal arms against the world, against others, against ourselves …?
The answer as always comes from the Word of God. If we read the Bible more carefully and the marvellous commentaries on it written first of all by the Fathers of the Church, we will find the answer to every question. Saint James with regard to the passions which agitate the human heart, says clearly: "Dear brothers, where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Is it not precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves? (...)You want something and you lack it; so you kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. It is because you do not pray that you do not receive; when you do pray and do not receive, it is because you prayed wrongly, wanting to indulge your passions.(...) Anyone who chooses the world for a friend is constituted an enemy of God. Can you not see the point of the saying in scripture, 'The longing of the spirit he sent to dwell in us is a jealous longing.'? But he has given us an even greater grace, as scripture says: God opposes the proud but he accords his favour to the humble. 7Give in to God, then; resist the devil, and he will run away from you. The nearer you go to God, the nearer God will come to you.(...) Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up" (James 4, 1 etc).
The real obstacle to communion with the Lord, to our true happiness that is, is none other than our own passion. Anything which goes against Jesus' commandment of love is a cause of disorder for man and therefore unhappiness. The sign of this, is the evil which comes from the heart, from the lips, and first of all from thought which refuses to obey God, ignores God, is indifferent to God, and thinks to do without God!
Jesus says clearly in the Gospel "cut off from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15, 5), nothing good! Only if we obey the Lord will we master the passions which fight us every day. Our troubles are not caused by "others", they are caused by our passions: pride, haughtiness, envy, jealousy, ambition, arrogance… The Saints teach us this great lesson of life: no one can take peace from the heart which has learned to master its passions. If another person wounds us with his offence it is because we are not sufficiently rooted in Jesus with love. If we were, although feeling ourselves maltreated, we would have the strength to rise above the passions and to lift our hearts to God. When the Saints were offended by someone, they even thanked the Lord because this "forced" them to exercise the virtue of mercy, and this made them more merciful and therefore more similar to God! "My brothers, consider it a great joy when trials of many kinds come upon you, for you well know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance, and perseverance must complete its work so that you will become fully developed, complete, not deficient in any way" (James 1, 2-4).
The secret of happiness, that is full human realisation, is precisely this: to be like God. There is no greater happiness than to be similar to Jesus, true Man and true God: "blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (…) Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the poor in heart for they will see God…" (Mt. 5, 3ss).
We become blessed by renouncing our passions for love of Jesus, and thanks to this love being gradually transformed into another creature, a disciple of the Lord. Only those who are like the Lord can be authentic

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disciples; the more we are like Him the more we are similar to Him! The only creature who lived perfect likeness with the Lord was without a doubt the Blessed Virgin Mary. To Her, Queen of the month of May, we entrust the path of our life that it may be a “path of transformation” in Jesus and the source of joy and peace.
The Holy Father Benedict XVI, after visiting the Shrine of Our Lady of the Guard in Genoa said, referring to the history of the Shrine: “Tradition says that when Benedetto Pareto was worried because he had no idea how to respond to the call to build a church in that place so far from the city, Our Lady in her first apparition reassured him: ‘Trust in me! You will not want for means. With my help everything will be easy for you. Only remain firm in your will. ‘Trust in me!’ Mary says this again to us today” (Benedict XVI, homily 18 May 2008).
May these words strengthen our trust, especially when it seems impossible for us to master our passions. Reciting the Holy Rosary we will receive the strength to carry on and to realise God's wonderful plan for our life: to become like Him! (Agenzia Fides 21/5/2008; righe 63, parole 933)

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