agenzia fides
Fondata nel 1927
Organo di informazione delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie
http://www.fides.org

VATICAN - AVE MARIA by Mgr Luciano Alimandi - Jesus looks deep into our eyes and 'calls' us

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The Word of God we hear at Sunday Mass should accompany and illuminate us all through the week so that revealed Truth, found especially in the Gospel, may continue its path of light in our hearts. Last Sunday we heard the Gospel of the calling of St Matthew. As soon as he heard the Lord say “follow me”, the Gospel tells us, “he stood up and followed Him” (Mt 9, 9). In this response we are struck by the generous impetus of the publican who without hesitation started to follow Jesus. We all know that without a cause there can be no effect and that, the latter is in proportion to the former. If Matthew's impetus was so great, how great must have been the grace of Christ's call? How intense the attraction of the Word “follow me”?

When we think of Jesus, when we re-read His Gospel and the encounter, the moment, the situation narrated by Sacred Scripture, we should always remember the exceptional "attraction" which radiated from the Person of Christ. Everything about Him was “charged” with grace: His gaze, His features, His silence … but His Word was something extraordinary, so much so that those who heard Him were amazed “and started asking one another what it all meant, saying 'Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him!” (Mk 1, 27). Anyone without prejudice who approached Jesus could not fail to notice the power of the Truth which he proclaimed and which He was! For this reason Simon Peter said to Jesus: “you have the words of eternal life ” (Jn 6, 68).

St. Thomas Aquinas, in his commentary on John, says: “now man longs for two things above all: first the knowledge of truth, which is proper to him alone; and second the continuation of his existence, which is common to all created things. Christ is however the way to reach the knowledge of truth, since he is himself the truth: Lead me Lord in truth and I shall walk in your way, (cfr. Ps 85, 11)” (from the second reading of the Divine Office for Saturday of Week 9 of the Year).

That day Matthew clearly realised that the One who was calling him possessed the Truth, that His word was different from any other word, because it gave the power of discipleship. The result of that meeting is known to all: from that day onwards his life was no longer the same: he left the tax bench for Jesus, before his personal interests he put the Messiah and this changed everything.

Down through the centuries countless numbers of persons have experienced the power of the Words “follow me”. Rather than 'saving' their life, than clinging to the 'tax bench', they chose to 'rise up' and follow Jesus and imitate his style of life. How many young men, who became priests, felt in their soul the sweet power of Jesus call to 'follow' Him and, like Matthew discarding all earthly bonds, have thrown themselves into the adventure of belonging solely to God.

Today as then, the Lord needs these sort of men willing to detach themselves from the goods of the world, from a human profession and, above all, from affective bonds, to put themselves totally at His disposal. He was free and he desires free people to follow Him, like Matthew. The vocation to celibacy “for the kingdom of heaven” (cfr. Mt 19, 12), always comes from Jesus' call and every call is a gift of His love.

Without the request “follow me” along this path, it would be absurd for a young man to renounce building his own family, having children to educate in the faith and in love of God. But if this word is heard in the depths of the soul, it would be absurd not to respond to it. This would mean renouncing the greatest treasure on earth: the ministerial priesthood, is a treasure because the priest represents Jesus and without this ministry there would be no way for us to approach the greatest of all miracles: the most holy Eucharist.

Saint John Bosco used to say “the greatest gift God can give to a family is a son who becomes a priest” and Saint Augustine used to say “the priest is the summit of all greatness”. During this month dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, many in the Church pray especially for the sanctification of priests and doing this they support priest on their way to become ever more similar to Jesus. In this spirit, it is touching to reread what St Francis of Assisi,

I contenuti del sito sono pubblicati sotto Licenza Creative Common - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.it

filled with humility and love, said about priests: “ God gave me and still gives me such faith in priests who live according to the form of the Holy Roman Church that even if they persecuted me I would still run back to them, because of their posit ion. And if I had all the wisdom of Solomon and came upon some poor little priests in their parishes, I would preach there only if they wished me to do so. And I want to fear, love and honour these and all others as my lords. And I do not even want to think about there being any sin in them, because I see the son of God in them and they are my lords. And I do this because in this world I physically see the most high Son of God only in his most holy body and blood, which they receive and they alone administer to others....” (Testament of St Francis year 1226). (Agenzia Fides 11/6/2008)

I contenuti del sito sono pubblicati sotto Licenza Creative Common - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.it