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VATICAN - AVE MARIA by Mgr Luciano Alimandi - God alone saves us

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - “Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they are? Can any of you, however much you worry, add one single cubit to your span of life? And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin; 2yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the wild flowers growing in the field which are there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you who have so little faith?” (Mt 6, 26-30).

The words of Jesus through the centuries reach our day with irresistible power for all hearts open to His Truth. How often we observe the birds in the sky or the flowers in the fields and wonder at the beauty of their colours and precise details of their shape, “planned” in every detail. Yet, distracted as we are, we often fail to think that those colours and original shapes, that life in miniature in front of us, is one of the most powerful lessons creation offers about the Creator who is also our God: He looks after each and every one of us!

Jesus recalls this and says: “look how your heavenly Father feeds the birds and clothes the grass in the fields”. If we take these words seriously, it would be enough to see a sparrow pick up a crumb of bread to realise: even that crumb of bread is provided by Divine Providence and if that crumb was organised by the infinite God, then there is nothing He would not do for us who are called to live eternally with Him?

If God gave such beautiful colours to his flowers, all the more will he adorn with supernatural beauty a soul who entrusts itself to Him, and so lives of His grace? Sacred Scripture tells us clearly that the root of all man's suffering, is that he wanted to do without God, he chose to ignore the fact the entire universe exists thanks to Divine Providence. Man's pride has gone as far as to make him think he can replace of God, in areas such as bio-ethics when the latter ignores the laws laid down by the Creator: “The progress of science and technology in the area of bio-ethics is transformed into a threat when human beings lose the sense of their own limitations and, in practice, claim to replace God the Creator” (Benedict XVI, Discourse 13 May 2006).

Creation however cannot follow man in this rebellion against the work of God and continues to serve the Creator. This is why the Saints, for example Saint Francis of Assisi, had great respect for creation, animals, the elements of nature, fire, water. In everything they gave praise to God and thanked Him for his fidelity despite the infidelity which men spread everywhere.

To man who offends the Creator, nature continually responds with an example of obedience to God's laws. Occasionally nature appears to “rebel”, not against God but against man who rebels against the Lord.

Man feels powerless, unable to dominate, but dominated by violent natural forces. How many examples in the history of the Church demonstrate that tragedies can be avoided only with God's grace: for example when the lava of a volcanic eruption stopped on the edge of a town, or a tempest ceased before it was too late. All these “miraculous” cases accomplish the words of the psalm “our help is in the name of the Lord who created heaven and earth e terra” (Ps 123,8), spoken by God's humble people who turn to Him with trust.

The Holy Father Benedict during his recent pastoral visit to Santa Maria di Leuca and Brindisi, urged the whole Church to turn with trust to Mary that God may protect the world “from storms which threaten the faith and true values”: “From this part of Europe which juts out into the Mediterranean Sea in between the East and the West, we turn once more to Mary, our Mother, to ask her to “show us the way” – Odegitria –, giving us Jesus, the Way of peace. We ideally invoke her with all the different titles with which she is venerated in the Shrines of Puglia, and especially here in this ancient port, we pray to her the “port of salvation ” for every individual and for the whole of humanity. May her maternal protection always defend your city, your region, Italy, Europe and the world from storms which threaten the faith and true values; may she help the young generations put out to sea without fear, to face with Christian hope the voyage of life. Mary, Port of salvation, pray for us!” (Benedict XVI,

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Angelus, 15 June 2008). (Agenzia Fides 18/6/2008)

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