



VATICAN - AVE MARIA by Mgr. Luciano Alimandi - Seeing as Jesus "sees"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - How different is the Lord's way of looking at the earth and its inhabitants, compared with our way which rarely sees beyond appearances! Conversion of heart means learning from Jesus to see things His way which is totally different from the way of the world. To follow Him means to look where He looks, to focus on what comes from His love rather than what comes from our own self-love, which is 'short sighted' by nature. Learning day by day from the Gospel means looking further than our own selfish limits, looking in the same direction as Jesus with the aspirations for goodness, truth and beauty contained in his Word. Commanding us to love one another as He has loved us (cfr. Jn 13, 34), he is also asking us to see one another in a new 'way', in the way of love. This is the task for every Christian: to live His word-commandment, to live it with love, making it alive and new.

"I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you". I can only love others in His way if I 'see' others as He sees them. If I judge them, condemn them, I am not looking as Christ does, I am blind, and see them as inferior to myself: "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the great log in your own?" (Lk 6, 41)

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God" (Mt 5, 8). A pure heart, a heart which loves God and forgets self, looks in the same direction as Jesus and sees in others His own likeness, dignity and wonderful potential for doing good, even those somehow 'buried' under the dust of sin, which disfigures man but can never rob him of his dignity as a child of God.

In the parable of the prodigal son, better renamed of the "merciful father", the father and the other brother who remained at home with him, see the return of the 'lost' son weighed down with sin (cfr Lk 15, 18-19) in quite a different way and they reach quite different conclusions: the merciful father rejoices because "because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found" (Lk 15, 24), whereas the elder son has no compassion whatsoever, he is "angry" (Lk 15, 28); his was unable to "see" with the eyes of his father. He criticises his father's joy which he cannot understand, convinced of his own point of view. Probably if he had seen his brother before his father did, he would have stopped him from entering; but this did not happen. In this beautiful parable Jesus makes it clear that the first to see the prodigal son was the father (cfr Lk 15, 20)!

How comforting it is to know that the Father is on the look out, he sees us coming from afar! And He looks at us with unimaginable gentleness! This knowledge will give us the strength to see others and to treat others with 'loving mercy' and kindness.

Every day we should ask the Holy Spirit to give us the grace of the same sentiments as Christ: gentleness and patience, humility and kindness. Then we will be as St Paul asked: "make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2, 2-5), "since what we aim for is not visible but invisible. Visible things are transitory, but invisible things eternal" (2 Cor 4, 18).

The Holy Spirit is ready to give us this love, but we have to ask for it in prayer as the Pope told young people at the recent World Youth Day in Australia: "Yet this power, the grace of the Spirit, is not something we can merit or achieve, but only receive as pure gift. God's love can only unleash its power when it is allowed to change us from within. We have to let it break through the hard crust of our indifference, our spiritual weariness, our blind conformity to the spirit of this age. Only then can we let it ignite our imagination and shape our deepest desires. That is why prayer is so important: daily prayer, private prayer in the quiet of our hearts and before the Blessed Sacrament, and liturgical prayer in the heart of the Church. Prayer is pure receptivity to God's grace, love in action, communion with the Spirit who dwells within us, leading us, through Jesus, in the Church, to our heavenly Father" (Benedict XVI, homily 20 July 2008, Sydney).

The Blessed Virgin Mary always looked at Jesus and so she always looked in the same direction as He did and noticed therefore when the wedding couple at Cana had run out of wine (cfr. Jn 2, 3). Her intercession was decisive for that miracle worked by the Lord, and it is decisive for all the miracles He works in our own lives. She is the Mediatrix of graces and our Advocate before God. To the Mother of divine Mercy we consecrate our life and we entrust ourselves to her with filial confidence. With Mary as our mother we will always be safe, close to God! (Agenzia Fides 23/7/2008)