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# VATICAN - AVE MARIA by Mgr Luciano Alimandi - Never lose sight of Jesus!

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Christian spiritual life is founded on communion with the Lord Jesus: desired, sought, invoked, celebrated, proclaimed. In other words, the more we empty ourselves and make room for Jesus with trust and love the more our soul grows in the life of grace.
This is testified throughout the Gospel: “if anyone wants to be a follower of mine let him renounce self, take up his cross and follow me” (Mk 8, 34) “wherever I am, there my servant will be too ” (Jn 12, 26). These and many others words of Jesus in the four Gospels, define the statute of our belonging to Him. It is not for us to decide what is important in our “sequela Christi”, because it is all decided by Jesus and this has been faithfully testified by the Church down through the centuries.
Only those who put into practice the Gospel are truly sanctified; they are the ones who “follow the Lamb wherever He goes ” (Rev. 14, 4). There must be no mistake over what is essential in life, because, if the essence is missing, then only appearance remains. The essential is written in the Gospel, with no need for “if” or “but” on our part. The essence of Christianity in fact consists in the life, words, deeds and whole teaching of Jesus which remains forever!
Christ's living presence in the Church through the centuries, fulfils His promise: “Lo I am with you, until the end of time ” (Mt 28, 20). What is so captivating about the life of a saint, such as Francis of Assisi, is his love for the real historic Jesus of the Gospels. And only this Jesus, whom the Church has proclaimed for two thousand years, gives taste and light to the Christian life in every epoch.
Francis, who founded his Order, rules and discipline on the Gospel, urged his friars with these words: “Be faithful to the words, life, teaching and the holy Gospel of the One who deigned to pray for us to his Father and to make Him known to us” (Regola del 1221). In his Testament, written shortly before his death, Francis wrote: “no one taught me what to do; God Most High showed me how to live the Holy Gospel ”. “To live according to the Holy Gospel”, this is the programme of every saint, the essence of holiness, the secret of happiness!
In personal and community life, in the parish or a religious family, everything must refer to the Lord Jesus. We quickly tire of everything and everyone, but woe to us if we tire of the Lord Jesus, because He alone can put us back on the right path, forgive our sins, rekindle our love for others … it is really true “without Jesus we can do nothing ” (Jn 15, 5), at least nothing worthwhile!
Unless a soul is anchored to Christ, it spins crazily in the void, dragging others in the orbit of world affections, earthly interests, commitment of work not aimed at God's glory, but ruled by the logic of profit … This is why Jesus warns us of false guides (Mt 15, 14). St. John of the Cross says there can be three blind guides for the soul. He gives first place to “ spiritual directors” who do not lead the soul to God because “they fail to understand the paths of the spirit and their prerogatives”, secondly he speaks of the “devil”: “being blind, he wants the soul to be blind”, in third place he puts the “soul”, who “not understanding herself, troubles and hurts herself.” (Fiamma Viva d’Amore).
How easy it is to lose oneself in the labyrinth of opportunities which present themselves to our freedom! Every day we risk making serious compromises with decisions which first may appear not grave but as time passes, unless rectified by repentance and conversion, lead us to deviate from God's way.
We know very little about Judas and how he “came” to betray Christ, perhaps when he first began to walk with Jesus he made only small compromises with the world, with his pride, compromises certainly not unknown to Jesus or to Satan. Then gradually Judas made more and more compromises digging a gulf between himself and Jesus. In this gulf of desperation, dug with his own freedom wrongly used, Judas, in the end, capitulated: “night had fallen”, we are told by the Gospel of John after “taking the morsel” Judas left the Upper Room to betray the Son of God (Jn 21, 27)!

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We often wonder at the tragic decisions taken by people we know, but we see only the 'terminus' not see the initial compromise which deviated freedom along paths ever more distant from the Gospel. If God's mercy is infinite, it is also true that human freedom is unconditioned to the point that there is a hell: man truly has the power to reject his God for ever.

No wonder then that the great saints such as Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, aware that man has the freedom to deviate from the ways of Jesus, felt the urgent need to consecrate themselves unreservedly to Our Lady, entrusting her with their freedom, becoming her 'slaves'. This term underlines the acute need of a person who longs for God to "bind himself for ever" to the one creature, who never strayed from the paths of the Gospel and who is the icon of perfect discipleship of Christ: the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother! May our heart never tire of saying again and again to Mary, "Totus tuus ego sum". (Agenzia Fides 12/11/2008)

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