



VATICAN - AVE MARIA: Mgr Luciano Alimandi - Man is not the master of eternity

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - How many talents we have received and continue to receive from the Lord; who can ever count them? Beginning with the gift of life, our existence on this earth is studded with “gifts-talents”, natural and supernatural, entrusted to us by the good Lord, first of all for our good, that we may make them bear fruit, by living them and putting them at the service of the Giver of the gifts and our neighbour.

As the Holy Father Benedict XVI said, talents multiply when they are given to others: “yes, the gift Christ give us is multiplied when we share it! It is a treasure to be spent, invested, share with everyone, as we are taught by that great administrator of the talents of Jesus, St Paul the Apostle ” (Benedict XVI, Angelus 16 November 2008). Talents can be multiplied: “prayer” by praying; “faith” when we witness; “love” when we love; “consolation” when we console; “mercy” when we forgive... The list could continue and become very long, because the Lord is never “restrained”, as we are, in giving and, above all, in giving Himself. His only limit is to have no limit. It is his creatures who with the choice of life, decide to multiply or bury the talent-gifts He offers them with such forbearance and magnanimity.

“Lord what do you wish me to do”? How much discernment is necessary to discover the talent of a “vocation”? This one, after the talent of life, is the most precious of all, because, if we take the right path, the path for which the Lord created and called us, then the gifts He has reserved for us, which He has written in the history of our vocation, will develop precisely in the measure of this call. If a young man realises in his heart that the Lord is calling him to the priesthood and, after much prayer, sees that this is the central “talent” of his life, and he decides to follow Jesus, on his path he will see for himself how much fruit that talent will bring for himself and for everyone. And what is the best fruit, the most desired fruit? Jesus himself! He is the goal of our talents. Whether called to the priesthood or another vocation, all Christians have one final and absolute goal, the Lord Jesus. Benedict XVI, again commenting the parable of the talents during the Angelus meditation said: “the Word of God this Sunday ... speaks of 'man about to go abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them' (Mt 25,14). The man in the parable represents Christ, the servants are his disciples and the talents are gifts which Jesus entrusts to them. Therefore these gifts, besides natural qualities, represent the riches which the Lord Jesus left us as a legacy, that we may make them bear fruit: his Word deposited in the holy Gospel; Baptism, which renews us in the Holy Spirit; prayer - the 'Our Father' - which we lift up to God as sons and daughters united in the Son; his forgiveness, which he commanded us to carry to all people; the sacrament of his Body given up and his Blood shed. In a word: the Kingdom of God, which is Jesus in person, present and living in our midst”.

Jesus is the Talent par excellence. He gives himself to each of us in baptism, and we decide whether or not to let Him grow in our life, like the vine joined to a branch: “ As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. ” (Jn 15, 4). Jesus teaches us the secret for making the Talent and talents bear fruit: “ If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me ” (Lk 9, 23). If on this path we want to be 'cunning that is, to live our belonging to Christ only in appearance, then: there will be no fruits; our friendship with Jesus will not flourish; we will never be 'captured' by Christ, indeed we will try to capture Him; we will not be 'servants', indeed we may even take the place of the master, the master of our life, and the life of other people ... With such selfish logic we will run off track, because no one can deceive God.

The Gospel tells us that on several occasions the Scribes and the Pharisees sought to deceive Jesus, thinking that he was a fallible man like themselves. They were so terribly wrong. We can deceive others and even ourselves, but not the Lord! Our life will speak and we shall be judged for our deeds: if we have given our life, our vocation and our talents to Jesus, for our salvation and the salvation of all souls, then from Him we will receive the eternal reward; if we have been miserly with ourselves, with the gifts received, if we have buried our vocation, then, like

the rich glutton, we will suffer in torment (cfr. Lc 16, 19-31).

How many words of Jesus tell us about the reward given to the just and the punishment reserved for the evil! We cannot deceive ourselves: God is merciful, but He is also just: “because the standard you use will be the standard used for you” (Lk 6, 38). Besides this passage on God's justice we could cite many others and we would be speechless to hear how we will be judged.

The true measure for Christians, for our decisions, our desires, is eternal life, which starts here on earth. The things of heaven must be the foundation of things here below, because they are the things which decide the goodness of the latter, not vice versa. It is God who will judge mankind at the end of time, even though here on earth, it is often men who pass judgement on God! This is why Christians cannot fail to invoke divine mercy, every day for themselves and for all men and women, turning to the Mediatrix of the human race, the Most Blessed Virgin Mother, with the words of the Ave Maria: “... Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen!” (Agenzia Fides 19/11/2008)