

Spirituality of Incarnation & incarnation of a spirituality

I came to know the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Betharram in the Central African Republic, but I acquired a deepening of the spirituality of the Order during the time of the Novitiate.

Our Founder, Saint Michael Garicoits, was always attentive to the religious and human values of his time. Our Founder was a great educator, spiritual director and rector of the Seminary and, today he is still a valid model of life, especially in a society such as ours, confused by the frenzied or feverish rhythms, having no great ideals.

In order to know this Master of Christian spirituality who was always animated by an ardent apostolic spirit, it is necessary to know his thought and his works. The Saint recognizes that love is the supreme value to carry out his ideal, in fact, he will say: "Give me a heart which truly loves. Believe, relish the things of God, run, fly following on the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Love, behold, this is what guides man; behold this is the secret spring which is necessary to discover... If this is lacking, there is nothing one can do". (D.S. 111-112)

This reality of love soon assumes a concrete aspect, his commitment in the pastoral ministry wins over many faithful, even those who were more indifferent come back to the Church. He dedicated himself with great commitment to the poor, especially those who did not have even the indispensable minimum, and he did it even sacrificing his scarce finances. And thus, this apostolate allowed him to heal body and soul. The sick were also the object of his solicitous care and among these there were numerous conversions, no obstacle could stop his great zeal, especially for the agonizing, and his long horse rides to take the Sacraments to the dying or to the victims of work, were famous.

The love which Saint Michael nourished for neighbor was not an idealistic love, but an active one, that love which implies fatigue and forbearance, which teaches us especially that God does not want us to be only spectators of his action, even though we admire him, but he wants us to be protagonists. This was the great concern of the Saint: to transmit this message to the first religious who lived with him during the first years. Father Etchécopar writes: *His purpose, in founding the Institute, was to form and to group men who were thirsty for the love for the Heart of Jesus, penetrated by his sentiments, consecrated to his interests.*

Saint Michael became aware of the great love which God had for men, a love which has no ridiculous price, but which has been manifested by sending his only begotten Son into the world, to be the attraction of his divine Love, the model which manifests itself in the Rules of Love...

Love is the impulse which allows the religious of Betharram to see the spiritual and material needs of the society in which we live. In Africa, where I have worked as a volunteer during five years, I have seen how our priests can commit themselves in the apostolate and human promotion only because they are animated by this great love which the Founder has made known and because of the radical living of the Gospel. Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties and sometimes lack of success or failures, the dangers caused by the political instability of this nation, our religious continue to keep our Charism alive in this part of the world which is forgotten by our society.

During the time when I was a volunteer in Africa I made the experience of forgetting self for the good of others, in order to find myself, and starting from this knowledge is when I decided to live in communion with the Eternal Love and I felt free to respond to the Love with love.

At present I find myself in Bethlehem for my journey as a religious and I continue to allow myself to be challenged by this Charism to live in constant communion with Christ, who through his Incarnation, death and resurrection, has given new life to the world, trying to cooperate with the Son of God, attentive to listen to men and attentive to the cultural, social and religious values of the place where I find myself, trying patiently to recognize the signs of the Kingdom of God (Cfr. R. of L. 16).

The Mystery of the Incarnation, according to which Jesus has shown us the Face of the Invisible, has opened for me a different perspective within daily life, which calls me to make the experience which should lead me to commit myself within the world, the personal conviction of which and the fidelity to it should be rooted in the Gospel.

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