

Friday third week of Lent. 28th March 2014

Dear Confreres:

Listening the First Reading, today we can repeat together: Among the gods there is none like you, Lord. Indeed, you are the only one who forgive our sins and the one who fulfills the amazing Eucharistic miracle, to be our strength and our nourishment. We are knocking at the doors of your heart to be filled of your mercy and love.

In the First Reading the prophet Osea invite us to conversion. The path of the way back to the God starts by recognizing our sins: like Israel who finds in God the source of all goods through difficulties. The prophet presents the fault of the people of God, not as a violation of the sacred traditions of the past, but as a refusal to find God in every day life: refusing to see God in history.

This conversion has a special meaning: it is not about ritual ablutions or about external formality, but to get into our inner silence and overcome their own pride and discover the designs of God, manifested in the events of ordinary life.

This vision of God as the source that gives life to all, leads man to obtain a correct use of goods and human resources. Indeed the conversion is the fundamental attitude of Christian solidarity with the world. It is obligatory to say that the conversion of Israel is not disinterested. Israel returns to the Lord because He's the only one who guarantees happiness and abundance.

It is a mentality that can lead to the moral of the salary and merit. You can also think of the promised reward for good works. To say that an action is rewarded simply means to say that it always has a historical dimension, that nothing is indifferent. It's all part of an evolution driven by God's initiative and providence.

The Gospel

First of all we can affirm that the question of the scribe it does not seem ill-intentioned. It was not easy to determine what is the most important commandment in the morass of laws and prohibitions that the teachers of the law had been created and that they classified those that were serious and those that were lighter. With his answer, Jesus redirected the law to its original function: to foster the encounter of God with men, and men with God and always with love. The comment of the scribe contains a liturgical interesting nuance: worshipping and living are not two separate realities, but resolve in love. No life can acquire value only liturgically, but the liturgy embraces life and becomes a "liturgy of life."

I think it was very easy for Jesus to answer the question of the scribe. The commandment was expressed very clearly in the law of Moses. In addition, idolatry and injustice were the sins constantly highlighted by the prophets. The inconsistency between the law and practice was the sin of the people of Israel. And I think that is still the sin of the Christian and the religious in our time.

How long have we heard that we must give primacy to God in religious life? That the holiness of the members is the first target set by Don Bosco for the Society of St. Francis de Sales? How many times we have seen the sterility of activities that do not come from union with God? Yet, every time we have to confess, personally and institutionally of activism that creates stress and spiritual emptiness. What are we missing? Father Viganò said: "Moving from paper to life." Father Vecchi: "We need planning mentality." We know that holiness is a gift from God, but we also know that we need a strong will and persistent effort. If we don't program seriously our spiritual work can never achieve the desired goals. This year Strenna is an invitation to "draw upon of the spiritual experience of Don Bosco." In the Retreat, the preacher invited us to think of our personal holiness as our program of

personal life and as a program of animation and government. Surely this is the real way to prepare ourselves for the Bicentennial of the birth of Don Bosco.

Moreover, at least for twelve years, we talked about Community Life as a prophecy of communion. The report of the Rector Major and the nine-page-greeting of Cardinal Braz, claims that the "fraternity" -that is the love of neighbor- remains a challenge for the consecrated life and one of the most important aspects to be considered, if we want to live radically the Gospel and our charism. We know that consecrated life is to be a prophecy of fraternity and we complain when our communities are not as we want. This is a problem that affects us and worries us. It is clear that community life is much more than sharing the same roof or the same table or the same rule of life. We are not an international organization of volunteers, or guests more or less satisfied in our homes. We hunger for community that is like those green spaces where you can breathe the God's air, where you can see humanity: those are places of encounter and friendship, acceptance and support in growing, serenity and celebration. We feel the need of people with whom to share our faith, our reason for being and working. What we think and what we experience, our problems and our hopes. It is clear what we are asking to the community, but what each of us is willing and ready to give to the community? Kennedy told Americans: "Do not think about what America can do for you, think about what you can do for America." Because the community is the result of what everyone is investing in it.

Dear confreres, let us resolve to invest in the best of us in our own community: respect, acceptance, interest and evaluation of each brother, especially of the weakest, information, dialogue and communication, delicacy, service and availability, mercy and forgiveness. Without these attitudes the human relationship will never be durable. So we can overcome the established roles for the work and to express and enjoy the wealth of the Salesian religious life and community. "What we do if it is not the expression of our community, even if it is holy, it is not salesian" (Fr Viganò).

Let us continue our Eucharistic Celebration. When each of us feels the need to give thanks to God for his unconditional love, he also feels the need to join all those who accept as brothers in Christ. The action of grace implies fraternal sharing of the same bread and requires necessarily, the missionary zeal as a supreme expression of God's love for all men.

Fr. Filiberto Rodriguez
Superior : Vice-Province of Angola