October 4th: Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi

Gospel text (*Mt* 11:25-30): At that time Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

“You have revealed them to little ones”

Fr. Josep Mª MASSANA i Mola OFM
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the Gospel begins with a brief prayer from Jesus followed by a lesson of Trinitarian life, and it culminates in an invitation. These three things set up the spiritual portrait of the Saint we are celebrating today.

In the prayer, Jesus exalts the Father because He reveals himself in the Son to the simple and the humble: “You have revealed them to little ones” (Mt 11:25). God reveals them the depth of His Trinitarian life: “No one knows the Son, except the Father” (Mt 11:27). Getting to know the Father and the Son with the Mind which is the Holy Spirit! He is who truly knows the depth of God! Let us remember that the verb "to know" in the Bible means to love and be loved, to devote yourself to others and to possess. This mutual "Knowledge" between the Father and the Son is the very Spirit; similarly, we can also assert that the Holy Spirit is the Love, the Unity, the Encouragement, the Language... of the Father and the Son.

The Saint of Assisi is characterized by his smallness and simplicity; his humility makes him the suitable soil to receive this revelation of the Trinitarian mystery. In actual fact, his writings and primitive biographies indicate his profound experience of the mystery of the Trinitarian life. God Trinity lets him "know" HIM and he is known by God.

Jesus’ final invitation is the crowning of it all: "come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). Jesus is benevolent and humble at heart; that is why He is the repose of the humble, and also of all of us who are burdened, because we are not humble enough. With Jesus we learn humility: “learn from me” (Mt 11:29).

Pope Francis has not only the name of our Saint, but also his simplicity and humility, as we can realize from his gestures and words. Cheer up! We have before us the greatest example: Jesus Christ. And, after Him, St. Francis and the Pope.

Other comments

"These things… you have revealed them to the childlike"

Fray Valentí SERRA i Fornell
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today we hear some moving and endearing words that Jesus proclaimed in a moment of great spiritual exultation: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike." (Mt 11:25). We could say that they are His "Magnificat" of thanksgiving. The Church is pleased to listen to them every year on the feast of Saint Francis, the poor one from Assisi (+1226), a simple-hearted man, madly in love with Christ and His Gospel.

Through this Gospel text, we are invited to return to a Christian life formed by the poverty and simplicity of heart — the smallness — just as Saint Francis of Assisi did. He knew how to admirably delve into the Word of life until he found that which is most central and essential of the Christian revelation, precisely, in this "manifestation to the simple ones."

We live immersed in a world and a culture that encourages arrogant self-reliance, as if we owe nothing to anyone, as if we have no need to be saved. In this sense, we often make a fool of ourselves in the eyes of God. Therefore, the words of Saint Francis in his Canticle of the Creatures are especially timely and fully current: "Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures… Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve Him with great humility. Amen."

Today we commemorate the death of Saint Francis. His transit was the crucial moment of his deliverance. Indeed, it was while he was fully associated with the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection that he expressed to his brothers, by way of testament and challenge, the following words: "I have done what is mine to do. May Christ show you what is yours to do. Let us begin, brothers!" Yes, let us begin, brothers, to live the Gospel with joy, since God has manifested Himself to the simple ones.