

# MONTHLY RECOLLECTION

NOVEMBER 2020

## “Holiness is the Most Attractive Face of the Church”

Dear Sisters,

The Solemnity of All Saints, which we celebrate at the onset of November reminds us that the goal of our existence is not death, it is Paradise! The Apostle John writes: “it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is (1 Jn 3:2). The Saints assure us of this promise. They lived in profound communion with God during their earthly existence, seeing God’s face in the faces of the humblest and the least, and now they contemplate him face to face in his glorious beauty. In fact, every saint is a message which the Holy Spirit takes from the riches of Jesus Christ and gives to his people.

As we muse on the theme of sanctity, I would like to draw your attention to the homily preached by Pope, Saint Paul VI on 19 October 1975, the day of the Beatification of our Mother Foundress, Maria Theresia Ledóchowska along with three others. The Pope invited the faithful to grasp a triple invitation, which comes to us from all four together, like a single concert of voices. These three aspects can help us on our journey to sanctity of life.

### 1. To See the Face of Christ in our Brethren

First of all, the Pope said that these Blesseds invite us to see in every human person our own brother and sister. He said that they were not moved with compassion which is purely born out of natural reasons or sympathy, but from the light of revelation, which indicates, mysteriously present and hidden face of Christ in the faces of human persons.

It seems once a reporter watched Mother Teresa of Calcutta as she cleaned the maggot-infested wound of a man on the street, only to say, “I wouldn’t do what you do for a million dollars.” Mother is supposed to have replied, immediately, with a bit of a wry smile, “I wouldn’t either if I did not see the face of Christ in this man.” Christianity has its own calculus of value, and it is not that of the world because our picture of what it means to be human has been redrawn by Christ. We don’t choose our deepest call out of fun or excitement, but because in doing so, we love Jesus Christ.

All the initiatives that we take as consecrated persons, specially in reaching out to our neighbour, should emanate from our intimate relationship with the person of Jesus himself. The only rule for us should be the very life of our Lord Jesus Christ making him the centre of our lives. Jesus teaches us to become saints. If we seek the holiness pleasing to God’s eyes, the following biblical passage offers us one clear criterion on which we will be judged. “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:35-36). In this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate. It is a call to find the fullest meaning of all that we do in Christ alone.

- *Let us ask ourselves what impels us as consecrated persons when we take initiatives: are we urged by the love of Christ or driven by personal motives and self-interests?*
- *Are we oriented in promoting community effort or prefer to remain content with our individual projects?*

### 2. To Read the Signs of Time

The Pope then said that the Blesseds invite us to grasp the signs of the times in order to bear witness and make the presence of the Church in the world ever more vivacious. Citing the example of their lives, he said that they give us in fact the image of people who are certainly not bent on themselves in sterile egotisms or in the solution of personal problems, but who were determined on working seriously for the Kingdom of God.

Reading the signs of times means to reflect deeply on the events unfolding before our eyes and to respond to them out of mature faith. We live in a time which is highly secularized marked by individualism and there is a great possibility that we fall prey to the enticements of the world. We can get closed on in ourselves into a selfish egoistic culture, looking for our own satisfaction and comfort. When we live apart from others,

it is very difficult to fight against concupiscence, the snares and temptations of the devil and the selfishness of the world. Bombarded as we are by so many enticements, we can grow too isolated, lose our sense of reality and inner clarity, and easily succumb. Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others. Living or working alongside others is surely a path of spiritual growth. Each community is called to create a “God-enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the risen Lord”. Sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together fosters fraternity and makes us a holy and missionary community (Cf. *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 140-142).

- *Are we persons who are self-absorbed and preoccupied in resolving our personal matters closing on in ourselves or let Jesus be at the helm of our lives?*
- *Is our community a garden which nurtures holiness of life; how are we being instrumental in promoting sanctity of life in our community?*

### **3. To be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World**

Thirdly, the Blesseds invite us to become ever more aware that in the present situation, in which a new condition for humanity is emerging to be the salt of the earth and light of the world. All are called in a more urgent way to save and renew every creature, so that all things may be established in Christ and mankind in him may constitute one family and one People of God.

Salt and light are always at the service of others and therefore the Lord uses these metaphors to qualify the mission of his disciples. Salt is the component which adds flavour and enriches our food and light while letting itself consume illuminates its surroundings. The disciple is “salt” who, despite the daily failures, rises from the dust of their own mistakes, starting again with courage and patience, every day, to seek dialogue and encounter with others. Christians’ mission in society is that of giving “flavour” to life with the faith and the love that Christ has given us. A disciple and a Christian community are the light of the world when they direct others to God, helping each person to experience His goodness and mercy.

Each one of us is called to be light and salt, in our own communities, persevering in the task of regenerating the human reality in the spirit of the Gospel and in the perspective of the Kingdom of God.

- *What efforts do I make to be the salt of the earth and light of the world?*
- *What priorities have I set for myself on my path to holiness?*

Dear sisters the path of holiness is a source of peace and joy, given to us by the Spirit. At the same time, it demands that we keep “our lamps lit” (*Lk 12:35*) and be attentive. Pope Francis repeatedly reminds us that: Being holy is not a privilege for the few, as if someone had a large inheritance; in Baptism we all have an inheritance to be able to become saints. Holiness is a vocation for everyone. We are all called to walk on the path of holiness, and this path has a name and a face: the face of Jesus Christ (Cf. *1<sup>st</sup> November 2013*). Holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full. It is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life. It consists in uniting ourselves to the Lord’s death and resurrection in a unique and personal way, constantly dying and rising anew with him and reproducing in our own lives various aspects of Jesus’ earthly life: his hidden life, his life in community, his closeness to the outcast, his poverty and other ways in which he showed his self-sacrificing love. In perfect imitation of Christ our Lord and following the footsteps of our Mother Foundress let us live our lives making constant effort to see the face of Christ in others and act appropriately in accordance to the signs of time being the salt of the earth and light of the world.

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