

COMPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

HOMILY

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Closure of the General Congregation 36

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Readings : 1 Jn 4, 7-16 ; Ps 144 ; Mk 16,15-20

At the end of a powerful experience of discernment we feel a sense of vertigo when faced with what should come after. We feel the difficulty of giving life to the choice made, of being converted to the way of proceeding that expresses the decision of following the breath of the Holy Spirit.

The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius sets the “Contemplation to Attain Love” as a transition into everyday life. A contemplation that resonates strongly in the first letter of the Apostle John, which we have just heard. God wishes to be known as the one who is Love. Therefore, He is made present to humanity in sending his Son, a gesture of love that gives us life, the only true life to which we aspire. God the Father puts into practice the two observations Saint Ignatius makes at the beginning of the contemplation: “Love ought to be shown more in deeds than in words,” and “Love is an exchange where each one gives everything he has and is.” The Lord has given himself completely, even to death on the cross, and remains with us daily until the end of the world, because he has given us his Spirit. Saint Ignatius invites us to ask for gratitude for so many gifts received, and so to move us in order that we too might give of ourselves entirely—in *all things to love and serve the Divine Majesty*.

This is the phrase that has guided our sessions in the Aula of the Congregation. Christ on the cross was present in our labors, to bring the discernment beyond our reasoning, our liking or disliking, in order to arrive at the consolation of being in harmony with the will of the Father. Jesus on the eve of his Passion went to the Mount of Olives and struggled in his prayer until his sweat became like drops of blood in order to accept the consequences of his mission, so far from what to him might have been gratifying or acceptable. Likewise, we were shaken by the testimony of our brothers in situations of war and so we were moved by love to cry out as one: "*Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, O Lord, I return it. All is yours: dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this alone is enough for me.*"

In this General Congregation we also re-lived the experience of God’s love, made present in ways so varied, in our personal lives and in our body as companions of Jesus. Yet again, the

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abundance, variety and depth of his gifts have overwhelmed us. Everything we experienced was grace, free gift and surprising.

The discernment process of the Society gathered as General Congregation confronts us with the challenge of becoming ministers of reconciliation, in a world that did not stop turning during our deliberations. The wounds of war continue to deepen, the flow of refugees increases, the suffering of migrants crush us ever more, the Mediterranean has swallowed up dozens of people in the two months we have spent together. Inequalities between peoples and within nations are the sign of a world that scorns humanity. Politics, the “art” of negotiation so as to put the common good above particular interests, continues to deteriorate before our eyes. These particular interests, in fact, masked under the guise of nationalisms, elect leaders and make decisions that block the processes of integration and action as citizens of the world. Politics struggles to provide a humane way of making reasonable decisions, and renouncing appeals to the impositions of the powerful. The deep desire of the mothers and the children everywhere in the world to be able to have a life in peace, with social relations based on justice, seems to wither in the midst of conflicts and wars for reasons that corrode the love that makes life possible.

Our discernment leads us to see the world through the eyes of the poor and to work with them so that true life may grow. It invites us to go to the peripheries to seek to understand how to globally address the entirety of the crisis, that denies minimum living conditions for the majority of humanity and threatens life on planet Earth, in order to open a space for the Good News. Our apostolate is, therefore, necessarily intellectual. The merciful eyes, which we received by identifying ourselves with Christ crucified, allow us to deepen our comprehension of all that oppresses men and women in our world. The signs that accompany our proclamation of the Gospel are those which correspond to casting out the demons of false understandings of reality. This is why we learn new languages, to grasp the lives of the different peoples and share the Good News of salvation for all. If we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and our minds to the truth of God’s love, we will not drink the poison of ideologies which justify oppression, violence among human beings and the irrational exploitation of natural resources. Our faith in Christ, who died and rose, enables us to help out, along with many other men and women of good will, to help lay hands on this ailing world and to help in its healing.

Let us go then to preach the Gospel everywhere, consoled by the experience of the love of God who has gathered us into one as companions of Jesus. As with the first Fathers, the Lord has been propitious to us in Rome, and sends us to every part of the world and to all human cultures. We go in confidence because He works with us and confirms with new signs our life and mission.

(Original: Italian)