

COMMITMENT TO THE CHURCH, MOVEMENT, AND SOCIETY

Our Lenten journey takes us to the commemoration of the salvific moments of the Christ's life on earth: the remembrance of the passion, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. As we meditate on the paschal mystery we are called to reflect on "Commitment" to Church, Movement and Society. Society and movement, in some sense, are within the canopy of Church. So commitment is the point of our reflection.

What is commitment? Read Luke 23:46 and Mk 15:39. "Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" and having said this he breathed his last" (Luke 23:46). And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (MK15:39). This is the perfect model of Commitment.

Commitment is committing. In Christian life it is committing to SOMEONE, not to something. "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." It is to the Father that Jesus committed his life. Our commitment to the Church, movement, and society, must be stemming from and modeled after this committing to the Father. Let the crucifix of the Lord be the test of our commitment.

Pope Benedict XVI once said to the Cardinals, "Good intentions do not suffice ... Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential." (Holy Father spoke this in the context of ecumenical efforts of the Church, but I am deeply moved by its evocative power!) So there must be a correlation between the SOMEONE we commit to and the SOMETHINGS that flow from that commitment. Incarnation, public life, passion, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection – all the salvific acts of Christ – are the natural and organic fruits/expressions of his commitment to the Father. These were not so much the works he DID but these were *overflowing* from his commitment. His prayer in Gethsemane attests to this. "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; remove this chalice from me; yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mk 14:36) Jesus' works, therefore, were somethings that flew from his commitment. These SOMETHINGS are related to SOMEONE like "blooming to a rose, or as a peach to a peach tree, or as an acorn to an oak." (thanks to Cardinal Fulton J. Sheen). Hence what we do is not a kind of a "pious extra" but it must be the intrinsic perfection of our commitment to the Father that we consciously choose as baptized Catholics in our day to day life.

How do we measure this commitment? The centurion is the measure. "And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (MK15:39). The SOMETHINGS that we do will attract the world to the SOMEONE of our commitment. We are never the focus of the world around us. But it is again the Father. Centurion's expression is "Truly this man was the Son of God." By saying 'Son of God' it is sure that he got a glimpse of the Father. Son reveals the Father, like 'blooming to a rose, or peach to a peach tree or acorn to an oak.' "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9)

Now let us take our life contexts. We are so to say, *committed* Catholics, committed Christians, committed men and women, committed husbands and wives, committed

parents and children, committed brothers and sisters, committed priests, religious and lay, committed teams and coordinators, committed this and that, in our own little worlds. Some of us may be doing exceptionally well, or sympathetically ill. At least we desire and pray, with all our human disclaimers. It is time for us to reflect on the nature of our commitment looking at Jesus' commitment and centurion's response. Do our commitment to *this* and *that* an overflowing of our deeper and interior commitment to the Lord? Do our commitment is an 'end' in itself or a 'means' to an end? We are wrong if the former is true and are wise if the latter is true. "It is better to limp along the right road than to run down the wrong path. Although his progress is slow, the one who limps along the right road is always drawing nearer to his goal; whereas the one who runs faster and faster down the wrong path is always moving further and further from where he wants to go" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium Ioannis*).

Jesus' commitment to the Father proved him the 'Son of God.' Jesus' becoming the 'Son of God' brought in the conversion of the centurion. The desire for God written in the heart of centurion (ref. CCC 27) is actualized in Jesus' person. Do the people/world around us is able to recognize the 'Son' and the 'Father' in us as we live our lives? Second Vatican council taught in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* no. 4; "Christ, sent by the Father, is the source of the Church's whole apostolate. Clearly then, the fruitfulness of the apostolate of lay people depends on their living union with Christ ... This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is maintained by the spiritual helps common to all faithful, chiefly by active participation in the liturgy. Laymen should make use of these helps that, while meeting their human obligations in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate their union with Christ from their ordinary life; but through the very performance of their tasks, which are God's will for them, actually promote the growth of their union with him." This living our lives, with its rights and duties, with its privileges and obligations, according to the will of the Father is the challenge of our commitment as Jesus Youth. This type of commitment evolves only when we live with Christ as close as possible. It calls for meditating on the commitment of the Lord and modeling our lives after him. St. Augustine said, "Look at the beauty of the one who loves you; meditate on the One who is equal to the Father and submits to the will of the Mother: the emperor of heaven who came to work as a servant here on earth, the creator of all things living as a creature among them. Look at how beautiful is that which the proud of heart mock as a delusion: in the light of your soul, contemplate the wounds of the one who was crucified, the blood he spilled as he died, the price of faith and the ransom of our redemption. Consider the value of all these things; weigh them on the scales of love, and give to him all the love you have to give your loved ones" (*de Sancta virginitate*). This is the testament of our commitment: receiving the love of the Lord into the depths of our heart, loving him and him alone and allowing the Lord's love to overflow into and envelope the Church, movement, and society.

"Christ is Risen!", "Truly, He is Risen!"