

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Secular Institute *Regnum Mariae*

Homily at the Mass of Thanksgiving: (fr. Angel M. Ruiz Garnica, OSM)

August 8, 2009

Texts from Saturday of the 18th week of Ordinary Time: Deut 6, 4-13; Ps. 17; Mt 21, 21-22; Mt 17, 14-20

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart

In today's first reading, Moses calls on the people of Israel, the people of God freed from slavery, to remember what God has done and continues to do for it. Consequently they must love Him with their whole being: *Hear O Israel, the Lord, our God is one! Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with all thy strength (Deut 6,4).*

In the context of Jewish tradition this is an extraordinary revelation. From the very first books of the Old Testament there is no talk of loving God only of fearing and serving Him. But here Moses is calling on the people to love God – almost like what Jesus, the new Moses, says to his disciples: “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.” (Jn 15,15). The Lord our God is one! You will love Him *with your whole heart, your whole soul and all your strength (Deut 6,4)* – that is with your whole being. This is not just today but all the days of your life *when you are seated at home, when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deut 6,7)*. Lest you forget the commandment to love God you will attach these words *to your hand as a sign, they will be a pendant hanging between your eyes and you will write them on the doorposts of your house and on your entryways (Deut 6, 8-9)*.

This, my dear Sisters, is the choice you have made as consecrated women, as women who have entered into a covenant with God. You have chosen *God as the Highest Good (RdV 28)*. You have chosen to live *in deep and constant communion with Him (RdV 28)* to love him without reservation, *with your whole heart, your whole soul and all your strength*, all the days of your life, everywhere: at home, in the office, at prayer and at work.

You will love your neighbor as yourself

We must never forget that Jesus added a second imperative to the great commandment to love God (Cf. *Deut 6, 4; Mt 22,37*). This new commandment is inseparable from and similar to the other one, as John writes – *if anyone says he love God but hates his brother, he is a liar. Whoever does not love his brother whom he sees cannot love God whom he does not see. This is the commandment he has given us: whoever loves God will love his brother (I Jn 4, 20-21)*. In today's Gospel Jesus shows us what it means to love one's brother. He heals the young epileptic and frees him from his sickness and from the evil one (Cf. *Mt 17, 14-18*). He calls on us to do the same.

This, dearest Sisters, is the choice you have made as consecrated women in the world, as disciples of Christ who came “*not to be served but to serve*” (*Mt 20, 28 (RdV 39)*), to be open and welcoming (*RdV 38*) knowing that the gifts you have received must be shared with the brethren (*RdV 17*) and aware that you will be judged by your love (*RdV 38; Cf. Mt 25, 31-46*). Supported by the love of Christ and free of defensiveness and prejudice you encounter others with simplicity and openness (*RdV 52*).

Have faith

Unfortunately we, the disciples of the Gospel, often have *little faith* (Mt 17, 20) in practicing charity with our brothers or in carrying out the commandment to love God and our neighbor. Because of our *little faith* we have a hard time struggling against evil, being understanding and merciful or seeing beyond the faults of others, seeing their good points. Because of our *little faith* we have a hard time extending our hand to serve or help others, opening our house to welcome and listen to others. Because of our *little faith* we have a hard time joining our hands in prayer and trusting God. Because of our *little faith* we believe our small good works for the common good have no influence in the social life of the city, the country or the world and consequently we do nothing. Jesus calls us to a greater faith: *If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain (Senario!) move from here to there and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you (Mt 17, 20); if you have faith and do not doubt ... whatever you ask for in prayer you will receive (Mt 17, 21. 22, Gospel verse).*

Dearest Sisters, in these fifty years the charism of your Institute has grown and spread beyond these borders to other continents. The Institute may not have been ready to go abroad, you hadn't foreseen this development but with faith and courage you have gone to foreign lands ... and the good results are already apparent. Do not cease to trust in God who through Fra Luigi M. Poli and your founding sisters gave birth to this Institute. Have faith always. Go forward, trust in God for whom nothing is impossible (Cf. Mt 19, 26; Lk 1, 37). You bear the light of Christ and His Gospel and you are guided by the grace of the Spirit who *blows where he will (Jn 3,8).*

Eyes fixed on Our Lady, the Queen

Today we are celebrating the feast of St. Dominic who founded the Order of Preachers, an Order which has had close links with the Order of Servants of Mary since the very beginning. St. Peter of Verona (+1252) acknowledged the Seven Holy Fathers' authenticity of life in Florence, 1242. It is possible that he told them to wear the same habit as the Dominicans – only in black – and to follow the same *Rule for the Servants of God* by St. Augustine. It was a Dominican pope, Benedict XI (+1304) who definitively approved our Order in 1304. Constantine of Orvieto (+1256) one of the earliest biographers of St. Dominic assures us that he was devoted to Our Lady and had entrusted to her care as Queen of Mercy and special patroness the Order of Preachers. For us Servants of Mary Our Lady has been even more. The Blessed Virgin was and remains – as the author of the *Legenda de Origine* puts it – *our special refuge, our singular mother and our particular Lady (LO 7).* Like our Seven Holy Fathers we are well aware of our *imperfection* and we turn humbly to her, the *Queen of Heaven, the most glorious Virgin Mary with all the love of our heart. She is our mediatrix and advocate. She reconciles and recommends us to her son (LO 18).*

Dearest Sisters, you have chosen to celebrate your jubilee here on Monte Senario, the cradle of our Order, the spiritual fatherland of the Servite Family. Here we find the relics of our Seven Fathers and celebrate their memory. Your secular institute, like our Order and like the Church itself is "Our Lady's home." In your institute and in each of your homes may the Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, reign. May the example of the Virgin Mother who received the Word into her flesh becoming His mother and disciple reign. May you echo the Virgin's generous response to God's plan: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your word" (Lk 1, 38). Echo those words of the caring Mother at the Wedding Feast of Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2, 5). May Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who prayed with the disciples in the upper room (Cf. Acts 1, 13-14) reign in every home.

Congratulations!