

MESSAGE TO THE ORDER FOR THE FEAST OF ST. TERESA 2010

With the celebration of St. Teresa's feast we begin the second year of our preparation to the fifth centenary of her birth, year dedicated to the re-reading and meditation of *the Way of Perfection*. On this occasion I feel the need to be with you, dear Brothers and Sisters of the great Teresian family, both religious and lay, and remember the importance of this task. Of course we all have so many other appointments that might seem more important and urgent, but I believe none of them is so essential for "the care of our vocation" and growth of unity in our family. As it happens with prayer, the reading of Teresa may not always be savoury and satisfying. There will be days when her words appear distant from the problems of our world, or too elevated in comparison to the poverty of our daily life, or difficult to interpret and live with the result that we feel tired listening to them. There is nothing strange or scandalous in all this: it belongs to the fatigue of the journey and conversion. But, beyond the taste or emotion of the moment, the very desire of listening to our Mother and considering ourselves her disciples has an immense value. It means recognizing that to live our vocation we have a road to be trodden, a fatigue to be affronted, a truth to search for delving within ourselves, fathoming the divine mystery that lives within us and in which we live. And only she who has preceded us opening to us the road can guide us faultlessly in the tangle of the solicitations and in the jumble of voices of the present time.

If we consider with enough honesty the reality of our religious life, if we are ready to admit its voids and incoherences, the loss of hope and love which often characterizes it, a return to St. Teresa and to her teaching becomes an insuppressible demand, because there lies our joy. How could we be happy if our vocation and mission, instead of being a vital force that moves us from within, were to become a heavy and unmotivated yoke to be borne with? Yet this happens sometimes and it is painful to notice that often we look elsewhere for that sense and joy of life which the Lord has placed in the treasure of our charismatic identity. An identity with which we are called everyday to be more unified, challenging the external, but specially the internal, voices that repeat to us that all that is scandal and foolishness.

We know that the point of departure, I would say "enkindling spark", of the *Way of Perfection* is exactly this one: a loving dialectics with the world, a desire of fighting for the human beside Jesus Christ against the enemies of humanity. The enemies are sometimes evident and macroscopic, but quite often they are invisible, microscopic, like worms and viruses that lay snare against one's spiritual health. I like to read the *Way of Perfection* as a therapeutic book, written for healing the soul. The soul is born for living in its centre, which is Jesus Christ. All that hinders, weakens or obscures relation with Him (which is at the same time relation with oneself) is sickness and deviation, compromising its balance and growth. When Teresa speaks of prayer, she doesn't speak of it as a simple act or a spiritual exercise. Prayer for her is the expression of a healthy soul, of a body that breathes freely and receives energy from its source of life. It is the normal expression of one who believes. A most committed spiritual life leads, as to its final aim, to recite the *Our Father* with full adhesion of mind and heart – her comment in the last sixteen chapters of her book bears witness to this.

What is then the perfection which the way taught by Teresa tend to? It is the one that calls God "Father" not simply with lips, but with the abandonment of a little child that allows itself to be

carried by his father's arms. With a substantial difference though, namely: this father is not only mine – as childish jealousy would wish – but is “our”, and therefore his embrace doesn't close me in an exclusive relationship with Him, but unites me at the same time with the community of brothers and sisters. Perfection therefore is to be so adult as to be able to pronounce as one's own the words that Jesus pronounced talking of God: *Our Father!*

I pray to Mother Saint Teresa that the reading of the *Way of Perfection* bring us really to move towards this end, helping to correct any deviation, eliminating whatever slows or weighs down, but specially to “keep the eyes fixed” on Jesus, so that we can learn from Him what it is to be children of God who is Our Father.

Fraternally

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