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10. April 2023

## Monday of the Easter Octave The Gospel saves the world

1 Cor 15:1-8

*I want to make quite clear to you, brothers, what the message of the gospel that I preached to you is; you accepted it and took your stand on it, and you are saved by it, if you keep to the message I preached to you; otherwise your coming to believe was in vain. The tradition I handed on to you in the first place, a tradition which I had myself received, was that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried; and that on the third day, he was raised to life, in accordance with the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; and later to the Twelve; and next he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still with us, though some have fallen asleep; then he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles. Last of all he appeared to me too, as though I was a child born abnormally.*

It is the Gospel that saves the world! "No one can come to the Father except through me", Jesus tells us, leaving no room for doubt (Jn 14:6). This is as true today as it was then, and its proclamation becomes all the more urgent as spiritual confusion and darkness increase!

In an interview on 5 April 2019, Cardinal Sarah affirmed: that Christians would have a duty to evangelise and that it would be an urgent task to lead the unbaptised to Christ. He clearly emphasised that Jesus Himself had given us the mandate to do so, quoting this relevant passage from the Gospel: "Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time'" (Mt 28:18-20).

Cardinal Sarah then quoted the Apostle Paul: "preaching the gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it" (1 Cor 9:16). The Cardinal, who comes from Guinea, spoke very clearly on the subject of

mission in Africa: "Missionaries came to Africa and proclaimed the Gospel. I do not know of a single case in which a missionary has been violent. But the proclamation of the Gospel is a duty". And he again makes it clear that Jesus is the only way to the Father: "Whether Buddhists, Muslims or animists, we have to evangelise each one, because Jesus is the only way to salvation. This is not about proselytising, because we do not force the pagans or the Muslims with weapons, but we offer them the way to salvation. Our religion is based on love and rejects the use of violence".

If we ourselves no longer recognise the saving power of our faith, the fire of evangelisation may die out or hardly burn at all. Of course there are many ways of bringing the Gospel to people. One of them is the silent witness of good works, the service of one's neighbour without any great show, the realisation of love in one's own heart, in order, with this love, to do good works. This is what we can do always and in all circumstances. Sometimes situations arise in which other forms of public witness are difficult or even impossible. When this is the case, the Lord will certainly continue to act with His grace. But in any case, the proclamation of the Word of God in conformity with the authentic teaching of the Church, the ardent desire and longing for others to experience salvation, to be set free from their errors and to discover the deeper meaning of their existence, is part of the Gospel.

All that we have said so far is only our perspective. And even this should be enough to kindle in us the fire of evangelisation. But how much more will this zeal burn if we try to see it from God's perspective! What does He not do for us to know Him! How far did the Lord go that men might receive salvation! If we immerse ourselves in God's love and perceive His deep longing for souls, our fire can be rekindled. Then we will not evangelise just because we want to lead men to God and point them to the way to true religion; but it will be the love of God Himself that impels us to glorify Him, doing our part so that He may find His lost sheep and so that they may open their hearts to Him and He may enter into them.

From the Cross, the Lord exclaimed: "*I thirst*" (Jn 19:28). Many have interpreted these words as a thirst for the souls of Jesus. Therefore, our participation in evangelisation means putting ourselves at the service of God's ardent longing for His children. It is the Holy Spirit who awakens in us this holy longing. Even more: He Himself is the fire of love that burns in us. Therefore, evangelisation can never be neglected, nor can the mission be reduced only to silent witness and the practice of charity towards one's

neighbour. The words of the Gospel are always of greater value than any human considerations, however good they may be.