

Homily for the renewal of the profession of FMA

Rom, 12, 1-13; Mk 10.24b-30

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today our community rejoices over the renewal of their religious profession that these Sisters will make, who – as we heard in the first reading – offer their lives as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, as spiritual worship. They do it because they have felt called by Jesus to be with him, follow him and share his passion for the Kingdom. Each one of them endorses the offering of Jesus himself to the Father: “*Here am I Lord, I come to do your Will*”. And they do so, after one or more years of consecrated life, because they have understood that it is better to be attached to God than to cling to one's own possessions and because God always gives more than what is expected of Him.

This is what they themselves wanted to understand with the renewal of their profession as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians when they chose these texts from the Word of God for the celebration.

I focus only on the page of the Gospel of Mark, after a good and rich young man who initially asked how to achieve eternal life, faced with Jesus' demand to sell everything he had, give it to the poor and follow him, became sad and left. Faced with this rejection of Jesus' invitation, what Jesus commented to his disciples must have sounded quite paradoxical to them: the goods that one has, because God has granted them and they show his benevolence, can end up possessing their owners. When not even by following Jesus does one have the strength to leave everything, it is impossible to be his disciples. Goods will not be lost, but joy and Jesus will be. In fact, the rich young went away saddened. My dear Sisters, you have well understood that wealth without Jesus is saddening; poverty with him maintains joy.

Like Peter, you value so much how much you have lost by following Jesus, that you hope to see yourselves one day rewarded for it. Like him, you believe you have passed the test in which the rich man succumbed and you have some form of future and definitive compensation, since you opted to have him as our only asset. You are aware of the magnitude of our resignation and expect a commensurate retribution. “*We have given up everything and followed you.*”

In his response, Jesus tells the disciples, and you, that it will be enough that they have left something, to multiply it a hundredfold and give them eternal life to inherit. The change in perspective is evident. Whoever was concerned about the prize for his already made resignation is promised not only to multiply what he or she left by a hundredfold but, above all, "another" treasure in heaven.

His retribution exceeds what would seem fair, fulfilling all expectations. The disciples will overflow with that little they have renounced and, even more crucial, they will not have to do much more to come into possession of eternal life: it will

be given to them as an inheritance. The salary of now, although generous, is limited: "*a hundred times more, in this time*", but in the future "*they will inherit eternal life*." Only eternal life really compensates for following Jesus. And this is what today, like the first time, Jesus promises you for having left everything and followed him, my dear Sisters.

This is the '*beauty and the value of the consecrated life*'. It fills with *joy, happiness* and *personal fullness* the life of those who accept the call of Jesus to follow him. What a difference of the situation of the rich young man who preferring to keep his goods became sad and left.

Rediscovering and witnessing to the *beauty of the consecrated life* therefore, my dear Sisters, signifies approaching the 'primal experience of your being consecrated, as an unforgettable experience of love that has gripped you, conquered your hearts, and empowered you to leave everything to follow and imitate the Beloved Lover, our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, because it is He, who has filled you with a joy that is both great and beautiful and which no one can ever steal from you. It is this encounter with Jesus, which gave you an immense dynamism to your lives, and set you on your feet, made you go out of yourselves and drove you in your service to the young people.

The *beauty of your consecrated life* depends, in other words, my dear Sisters, on being a witness of joyful life, an expression of the Love of God, only one able to fill the deepest aspirations of the human heart, which expands naturally over to reach the brothers and sisters whom we have received as a gift from God in the community and mission. It is this love which leads us to a total giving of ourselves.

The only thing that is worthy of faith is, therefore, Love. Love is the source of your life and vocation and forms the content of your life of witness and your mission and serves as the final destination at the end of your existence here on earth: "the inheritance of the eternal life", as Jesus has promised to those who have accepted to give up to all and follow Him.

All this means that the biggest challenge and at the same time, the great opportunity to achieve this joy, happiness and fulfilment consists in the understanding of vocation as a gift from God, who has called you to be with him, not as servants but as friends, to love as he loved you and to yield lasting fruits that make you His disciples, to share in His perfect joy (cfr. Jn 15).

Vocation, thus means, the experience of being looked at with fondness, being loved personally, being called by name and be sent out with His authority. "*You did not choose me, but I chose you*" (Jn 15:16). Love is therefore, the starting point, the path to follow, and the goal to be achieved.

This understanding of the vocation, not just as a personal project but as a 'God's dream' for us, frees us of the many temptations: to live it as a temporary commitment, to fulfil it part-time, to interpret it to suit our convenience, suited to our own timing, tastes and deadlines.

If at the beginning, there existed only God as the First Love, it is only right and just that we must all return towards this First Love. This should be done in an intimate manner, to familiarize ourselves with Him, to share his friendship, to learn the secrets of the Kingdom and language of the Gospel, to transform our minds overthrowing all our petty projects to orient ourselves. It is thus a privilege to assimilate the values of the Kingdom and, above all, to think, to feel, to love, to react as Jesus did, with the heart of the Good Shepherd, with your hearts filled with mercy towards the immense suffering of your brothers and sisters, specially the young people, to thus finally enter into the logic of the cross.

Dear Sisters, we rejoice with you for the choice of renewing your total surrender to God and to the young people whom He himself will want to entrust to you. We thank you for being for us today a Word with which God speaks to us, inviting us to know how to make Him our greatest treasure, our most precious pearl. We invoke the Holy Spirit upon you so that he continues to configure you with Christ in the footsteps of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. May Mary Immaculate Help of Christians be your mother and model in the listening, docility and collaboration with the Holy Spirit to carry forward the wonderful dream of God on you and on the whole Institute. Amen