

SPIRITUAL LIFE COMMITTEE

Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity

Monthly Reflection for December 2006

Happy New Year!

Rev. Francisco Gomez, ST

May the Lord bless you and protect you. May He make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you His favor and give you peace!

A wonderful scene that I have been a witness to, and probable many of you as well, runs more or less like this: It's the first day of the year and a young family enters the church building. With a certain quiet determination, as of someone who wanting to fulfill a sacred task, husband and wife and children kneel before the altar. A moment of silence, a shared prayer and then the wife blesses husband and children. The family then, their simple act of thanksgiving accomplished, leaves the church – a happy spring in their step. This scene is labeled by many as a “cultural curiosity”, but for others, and I include myself, it's an invitation to reverence before a genuine manifestation of faith. I too draw close to the altar and kneel, pray, give thanks and ask for a blessing. I know God's kindness; I know he will grant a blessing.

This reminds me of the Founder's words, I remember them more or less like this: “May the desire ... the need to kneel and pray be always found in the Family. There may be many “beautiful” moments of prayer, but a prayer that goes beyond any risk of sentimentalism happens when there is nothing left to do but fall on one's knees and pray. In such a moment, nothing else counts; absolutely nothing. Only the groan of a prayer that is pronounced with that devotional knowledge that gives comfort, Our Lord, Abba, listens and will never abandon us.

The year has come to an end, 2006 gives way to 2007; we have much to be grateful for. We need to pronounce an act of thanksgiving before the goodness that God has transmitted through our elders. In many of them there is a limp and unsteadiness to their step, but God remains strong and present. We need to pronounce an act of thanksgiving

before the goodness that God has transmitted through those courageous brothers of ours that continue to open new paths for mission. We need to pronounce an act of thanksgiving before the goodness that God has transmitted through the youngest members; they may as yet know little but have much to teach us. We need to pronounce an act of thanksgiving before each dark night experience; perhaps it's in darkness when God does his best work.

After the act of thanksgiving, comes the petition. As we begin the new year, it is important to ask our Lord for a blessing that will help us, first and foremost, in the task of being disciples of Christ and thereby allow the Kingdom's light to shine a bit brighter in this world.

In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we come to the fullness of time that is always longed for. This becomes the defeat of all evil, the ransom paid for all humanity, the return from exile, the beginning of a New Creation. At long last, image and likeness of God! Because this is what Christ accomplished, it becomes our baptismal call not so much to do, but to live. Ours is the victory of his love, we are the elect that have been called to live this new life in fullness.

And this is primordial, we can repeat words such as "evangelization" as often as we choose along with words such as, "community," "Religious Life", "Cenacle Family", but if we have not yet come to the awareness that it is a matter of living now, the Reign of God, of being now, the place where God has established his dwelling place, beautiful and inspiring words will be only the best of intentions, and no more.

The Gospel proclaims, "As the Father has sent me so I send you", and Thomas Agustin Judge would say, "That every catholic be an apostle". The task is not so much to follow the example of Jesus, but construct upon the foundation that Jesus has established. The construction of the building has to obey its foundation: a credible loving and forgiving. To be disciples of Jesus means to make it at least a bit more possible that this world be illumined by the Kingdom's light and this means that we be creative artisans. If the "world" should insist on the dominion of power, sex and money, we will insist in irrepressible relationships of love, committed stewardship, and fidelity to only one God. This, of course, includes sharing in the pain and confusion of brothers and sisters in order for the love of God, made manifest through the cross of Christ, be a healing presence precisely in those places most in need of health and healing.¹

The places of pain and confusion are found in those hidden corners in our own lives that resist with overwhelming skill God's love; they are the places in the apostolate where we resist with righteousness collaboration with our lay brothers and sisters; they are the places where we have no time for Cenacle Family; they are very much the places where we need to move beyond an intellectual proposal that describes our multicultural identity, with all the arthritic complaints as well as bouts of adolescence, to a prophetic living out of the internationality that has already renewed us and given us new life.

Personal Reflection:

- How should we thank our Lord for what he has accomplished in us?
- In what direction does your heart tell you Our Lord is calling us as a Congregation at the beginning of this new year? How is this intuition of yours confirmed?
- Personally, in what direction is Christ calling you at the beginning of the new year? What is it that confirms this call?

¹ See, N.T. Wright, The Challenge of Jesus, Inter Varsity Press, 1999