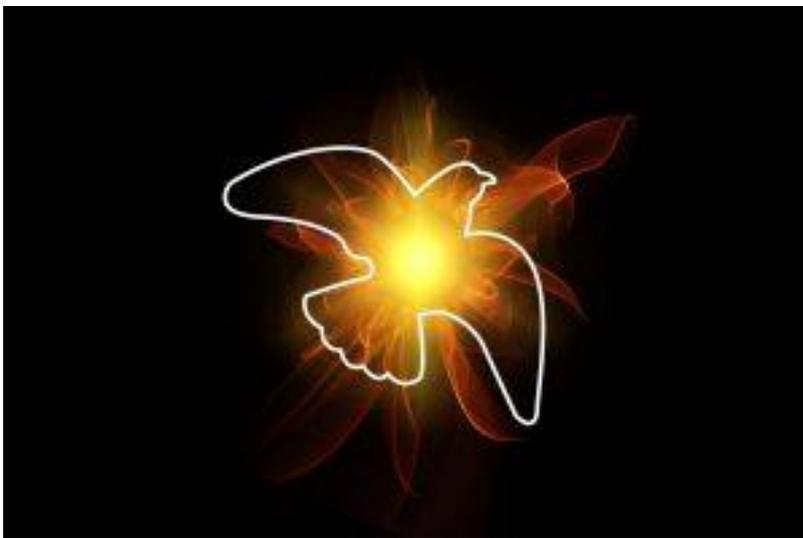


Welcoming the Word of God and Preserving the Ardor of Charity

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One of the most beautiful intentions of the “Universal Prayer” in the Holy Mass is when we pray to the Heavenly Father that “we may know how to accept the Word of God, as the Virgin Mary did, and, like her, we may preserve the ardor of charity.” Our Lady, an indisputable example for Christians, is a model of holiness and love for God. We must be like her, who taught us to live the Word and to practice charity with those who lived in situations of material and spiritual poverty.

For us Vincentians, “welcoming the Word of God” is much more than simply reading biblical passages or the Sunday Gospel in the home of the assisted. It means to enthrone, in our heart and being, the real love of Christ for humanity, in the search for the virtues essential for life in community, such as simplicity, humility and generosity. Accepting the Word is more than carrying the Bible under one’s arm: it is experiencing each alert or recommendation of Jesus, in the sense of building a just and supportive world.

“To preserve the ardor of charity,” as Mary did, is another express command of Jesus, addressed especially to all of us, Vincentians. We can never lose hope and ardour in charity, for only in this way will we achieve our major objectives: the promotion of help and the sanctification of all our fellow members. We must not neglect this aspect: either we are charitable 24 hours a day, or we pretend to be Christians.

The Church’s request to the faithful to accept the Word of God and to preserve the ardor of charity is, above all, a divine request. God, who loved the world so much, asks us to do the same, in His name, through living the Gospel and charity. It is impossible to “welcome the Word” and not give oneself entirely to the practice of charity. As James tells us: “ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”[1]

That is why there is a full connection between “faith” and “charity.” Without this relationship, faith, alone, lacks from an effective practice of manifesting itself; so does charity: by itself, it suffers from a lack of content in order to materialize itself. In other words, faith without works is equivalent to “spiritual selfishness,” and charity without faith is reduced to mere “social activism.” In no case, being children of God, baptized and missionaries, can we lose the ardour of charity nor neglect the living of the Word, at the risk of ceasing to be what we are.

Therefore, we Vincentians cannot neglect our spiritual life, so that our acts of charity are always full of evangelical depth and inner strength to transform the very exclusive situation that is lived in society. If we had a lot of faith, we could change the world (“if you have a little faith, no greater than a mustard seed...”[2]), as Christ has reminded us on several occasions. Faith and charity go hand in hand, and with them it is possible to seek the Kingdom of God among us.

Participating in Sunday Holy Mass, attending retreats and holy hours, attending spirituality events promoted by the Church or by Vincentian Councils, in addition to practicing the sacraments and commandments, are activities and attitudes that constitute sure ways for the Vincentian to be always updated and prepared for the challenges that arise in the daily action with those who suffer. Without this spiritual fuel, the Vincentian mission we undertake weakens and dies. Is that what we want?

Notes:

[1] James 2:17.

[2] Cf. Lk 17:5-7.

