

MEDITATION

“Teach prayer by praying; proclaim the faith by believing; bear testimony by living!”

It is with these words that Pope Francis concluded his homily (exhortation to 46 new metropolitan archbishops from around the world) at the benediction of their pallium in Rome on the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul. He reminded them, in light of the readings of the liturgy of the day, how important it is for them, as shepherds to whom the Lord has entrusted his flock, to be men: of prayer, of faith, of testimony. For, these are the virtues, among others, that appeal to us today, because they had given to the Apostles and the first Christian community the courage to evangelize without the fear of death and martyrdom while facing a pagan empire.

The first Christian community was a church of prayer: It teaches us that a church is a praying church alive, solid, on the way! Indeed, a Christian who prays is a protected Christian, kept and supported, but more importantly, s/he is not alone. No Christian community can move forward without the support of persevering prayer! Prayer is the encounter with God, with God who never disappoints; with the God faithful to His Word; God does not abandon his children. The Church wants you to be men of prayer, teachers of prayer; who teach the people that the Lord has entrusted to you that the release of all prisons is only the work of God and the fruit of prayer.

The first Christian community was a community of faith. God does not take his children out of the world or evil, but He gives them the strength to overcome them. Only s/he who believes can truly say, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (Ps 23:1). How many forces throughout history have sought – and look – to destroy the Church, both inside and outside, but they are all destroyed and the church remains alive and fruitful! She remains inexplicably strong that, as St. Paul says, she can cheer: “To Him be glory forever and ever” (2 Tim 4, 18).

Everything passes, only God remains. Indeed, the Church, founded on Christ, despite many storms and our many sins, remains faithful to the deposit of faith in the service, because the Church is not the Church of the Popes, bishops, priests and not of the faithful, she is one and only of Christ. Only those who live in Christ promote and defend the Church with the holiness of their life, like Peter and Paul. Believers in Christ’s name have demonstrated that there is no force capable of defeating the one who holds the power of faith! The Church wants you to be men of faith, faith masters who teach the faithful not to be afraid of many Herods that afflict by persecution, by all sorts of crosses.

The first Christian community was a community of testimony. Peter and Paul, like all the Apostles of Christ during their earthly life have enriched the Church with their blood, have drunk the chalice of the Lord, and they have become friends of God. A church or a Christian without witness is sterile; a dead who thinks s/he is alive; a dry tree that does not bear fruit; a dry well which gives no water!

The Church has defeated evil through the courageous, concrete and humble testimony of her children. She conquered evil through convinced proclamation of Peter: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” and the eternal promise of Jesus (cf. Mt 16:13-18).

The Church wants you to be men of testimony. St. Francis said to his brothers, always preach the Gospel, and if it is necessary, also use words! (See Franciscan Sources, 43). There is no testimony without a coherent life! Today there is not so much need of teachers as courageous witnesses, convinced and convincing; witnesses who are not ashamed of the name of Christ and his Cross or before the roaring lions, nor before the powers of this world.

Pope Francis

