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PIO XI

IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1ST OF NOVEMBER ALL SAINTS' DAY
REFLECTION | TESTIMONIES | PRAYER

Do not be afraid of holiness ... Do not be afraid to set your sights higher

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Gaudete et Exultate 32.34



Webinar in preparation for the feast of All Saints on November 1, 2020

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I greet all the participants fraternally in this day of preparation for the feast of All Saints, it is clear that we are wondering what holiness is, with the temptation, as Pilate did, to turn our backs on a question that is somehow strange and alien to the daily life of most of God's people. There is a general presumption that it is a matter reserved for few, with the conviction that it is something that has nothing to do with the world we live in. It is worth asking whether it is not convenient to put the periphery at the center, because "Evangelization is the task of the Church. The Church, as the agent of evangelization, is more than an organic and hierarchical institution; she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God." (EG 111).

We could attribute this reductionist and negative position on holiness to a vision that is too closed and exclusive at times, perhaps distorting the genuine sense of the ecclesial tradition, of which there are numerous testimonies, with an apologetic and excluding position, of the world in general and religions in general. The Second Vatican Council, heir to the most genuine tradition, centered the question when it affirms that the Church is "the sacrament of salvation", that "Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race,"(LG1).

Moreover, "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men" (Our Aetate 2).

In the baptismal perspective, the radical equality of all those called to be part of the Church, the Council affirms: "all Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will. In this temporal service, they will manifest to all men the love with which God loved the world."(LG 41).

The road taken in the post-conciliar period is very rich in reflections and especially in testimonies of the concreteness of this appeal throughout the world, to men and women of all races, of all peoples and of countless beliefs. Allow me to refer to the Latin American tradition, aware that we

must enrich our gaze with the experiences of many of our peoples. The Medellin document states that "in the Church all are called to holiness, both those who belong to the hierarchy and the laity and religious; holiness which is realized through imitation of the Lord, out of love". Everyone must strive to attain holiness by living charity according to the characteristics of his or her state of life" (12:1). Aparecida, in a luminous paragraph, notes that "holiness is not an escape into the intimacy of religious individualism, nor an abandonment of the urgent reality of the great economic, social and political problems of Latin America and the world, much less an escape from reality in an exclusively spiritual world" (Aparecida, 148).

This call is transmitted to us, in a simple but profound way, in the silent and insufficiently appreciated exercise of our humble catechists. In them the closeness of the Gospel message becomes adoration. "Because to worship is to prostrate oneself, it is to recognize in humility the infinite greatness of God. Perhaps one of the greatest perversions of our time is that we are proposed to worship the human, leaving the divine aside. "You will worship only the Lord" is the great challenge in the face of so many proposals of nothingness and emptiness. To adore is to look with trust at Him who appears worthy of trust because He is a giver of life, an instrument of peace, a generator of encounter and solidarity" (Jorge Mario Bergoglio, "in your eyes is my word", pp. 259 and 260).

Leaving aside the much and good that has been transmitted to us by Saints Paul VI and John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, time brings us to Pope Francis. To be baptized means "to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way." (EG 114)

Much more explicitly, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Francis gives us a more pressing, fresh and stimulating call to the universal call to holiness. It will be made explicit by the speakers at this meeting. He asks us to place it in the context of today's world. It opens the horizon to the "saints next door". "Nor need we think only of those already beatified and canonized. The Holy Spirit bestows holiness in abundance among God's holy and faithful people, for "it has pleased God to make men and women holy and to save them, not as individuals without any bond between them, but rather as a people who might acknowledge him in truth and serve him in holiness".^[3] In salvation history, the Lord saved one people. We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in a human community. God wanted to enter into the life and history of a people. (n. 6). It is a sweet appeal to all of us to assume, not as isolated individuals but as members of a concrete community, the task of being light and salt, holy heralds of certain hope of transcendence and solidarity. It is the small gestures that multiply the activity that sanctifies.

That is why we must be attentive to temptations, to deviations that require permanent discernment in the light of the Master. I think that for all of us it is necessary to pay attention to some notes, simple but demanding, very human and therefore very close to the face of Jesus: resistance, patience and meekness; joy and sense of humor; daring and fervor; in community; in constant prayer. It is holiness within everyone's reach, without distinction, with each one emphasizing with transparency and constancy in being sowers of good with a spirit of

reconciliation and a Samaritan attitude. This is achieved through constant struggle, vigilance and discernment.

The culmination of this call to holiness was given to us by Francis in his recent Encyclical "Brothers All. Assuming charity from the categories of fraternity and friendship disconcerts some, but it attracts most, because with open doors all cultures and all religious expressions find space in a globalized world amid the shadows of a closed world. We must have the audacity to think and create an open world in the light of the moving parable of the Good Samaritan. In the midst of the pandemic that paralyzes the world and demands to recreate, to recompose the criteria we believed ourselves superhumans with, we must rethink politics, promote a new culture of dialogue and social friendship, generating paths for new encounters based on truth and forgiveness. This is the task to which the religions of the world must contribute.

Dear brothers and sisters, the celebration of the Feast of All Saints is an incessant call to take on the task of making the music of the Gospel resound with joy, tenderness and reconciliation. This is our task with the help of grace. We are not afraid to row higher. Let it be so.