



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 25th October 2012

Allocutio: Our Mission: To be love in the heart of the Church.

I read these words a few weeks ago: "We must continually strive to make the Church loving. Her love is to a great extent in our hands. 'It is in her souls that the Church is beautiful' says St. Ambrose. In our lives the Church ought to be good; in our lives the Christ-Church ought to love as he wishes ..."

People sometimes speak of the Church as if it were some object out there. They say about that Institution that it is not loving enough, that it does not reflect Jesus enough. But I say, "Wonderful! You see what the Church should be, you have heard God's wish. But do you not hear also in this his call to you to be that loving presence of him in his Church so that you become that Church you believe in?"

There is a deafness in us to the true word. The Church is not the Pope or bishops. It is you and I. And the call to make Christ present and to witness to his Gospel is your call and my call. That is the deafness we need to be cured of. We need to hear Jesus call to us to be the great witnesses. Would it not be great if in a thousand years time historians write that at the beginning of the 21st century Dublin became known and renowned for the extraordinary witness of the ordinary man and woman. This will never happen unless you and I hear the call from God as a personal invitation to really take his commandment of love to heart and ensure that it is not a pious sentiment but become a very real thing.

What the world so badly needs today is to see the witness of the followers of Jesus. Look how they love one another. His commandment is very clear: Love one another as I have loved you. What is this loving about? Hollywood smutch or Bollywood romance? Think of that genuinely friendly and caring respect and appreciation that you and I would love to be recipients of, which the Lord asks us to give to others as we would want to receive ourselves. It is about the way we deal with people. It is about seeing in everyone else the image of God and trying to help it shine out. It is about not judging nor condemning. It is about trying to understand and forgive. It is to see the potential in the other. It is about stopping and showing interest and care. It is about lifting the other person and encouraging them, about making them to leave your presence feeling they are a better human being. It is about still seeing the child of God in the person who hurts you. Someone said to me recently that the sign of how deep Mary's love was is that she could carry such pain in her as she stood at the foot of the Cross.

And loving people is something that has no boundaries. You can love everyone and anybody no matter where they come from, no matter what their social status or politics or tribe or nation or religion. That deep need of the human being to be loved and appreciated is at the heart of everyone, that need of the God who is love. It is so deep in people that they do respond to love.

I was just thinking that because our religion is fundamentally about sharing God's love I could still practice it even in some totalitarian State that absolutely banned religion. I can still practice it with people who do not believe in God or who are hostile to the Church. Nothing makes a deeper impression on people than that act of care and help when they are in need, no matter what. "This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you."



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There are many trappings of religion, many externals. They can only have their true value if rooted in this commandment. Otherwise what are rosary beads, scapulars or miraculous medals or holy water? All the externals could become obstacles to many people who just see the outer trappings as an expression of some looney-bin weirdoes. And if we do not hear the heart of God's word and respond to it they would be right.

A few weeks ago we heard at Mass the story of the deaf man with an impediment in his speech. And like that deaf man in the Gospel we can end up having an impediment in our speech. A speech impediment makes it hard for people to hear. True and clear speech is when people can hear properly. But do people hear the heart of the Word of God from us? If they only see the outer trappings and do not see and hear in us the real living out of God's commandment to love one another as he has loved us they will only hear an impeded speech from us.

As I recall the theme of Pope Benedict's homily on the day he was inaugurated Pope had to do with the deserts in our world. God is calling on us to turn the modern deserts into a fertile land of God's love. It is a land parched of peace and love. God is not asking others out there to change this but he is asking you and me to become his agents.

So how can we change and be the channels of his love? How can we be cured? Because love may be blocked in our hearts by past hurts or fears and so on. And sometimes, when we look at the Cross and see what it meant for Jesus, we can be put off too if that is what love demands.

But look at the Gospel passage about that man with the deaf condition who had an impediment in his speech. What happened? People brought the man to Jesus for healing. And whether it be ourselves or someone else deficient in love we must bring him to Jesus imploring his help. "Lord Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me a sinner".

Then what does Jesus do? Like he did for that man he may want to take us aside to a quiet place. We need to be taken away from the madding crowd into some quiet place here we can hear one message that cures us all: the place where Jesus communicates his love to us. The more we ourselves become aware of his love the more we learn to love. Often we like to stay in the place of the noise, the radio blaring, the activity, because we are afraid of ourselves. Often the quiet of prayer is where we contact in a most painful way our own littleness, our own meanness, our insecurities. But also in that place we learn too our own humanity and also the human heart of everyone else as we are brought to put aside the protective masks we wear, often masks to hide us from ourselves. But there too the Lord teaches us how lovable we are and how lovable too is everyone else.

In the quiet of her convent St. Thérèse, Patroness of the Missions, searched to hear what God was asking of her. She wondered if she should be out there in the world as an active missionary, into the Grafton Streets of her own town or to Hanoi in Vietnam. But as she prayed and reflected she heard one call, one vocation: I must be love in the heart of the Church. And what she discovered she discovered for each one of us. You and I are called to be love in the heart of the Church.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill