

SEEK THE GRACE OF GOD

July 2019

An affirmation of life and love

In the late Middle Ages the Alchemists were striving to find the legendary philosopher's stone in order to change base metals into gold and the "elixir of life" that would prolong life indefinitely.

In our time, scientists struggle to discover the "unifying theory" that will explain the cosmos and all the laws governing it. There is a strong drive in human nature to try to look forever higher and further.



There is, however, a temptation often present in these endeavours, namely the arrogance and "self-sufficiency" of man vis-à-vis his Creator:

When in 1667 the Academy of Montmor was founded in Paris it clearly stated as its purpose the discovery "of the clearer knowledge of the works of God".

Nowadays it is considered almost unacceptable to "mix" the two "fields" of science and faith.

Man cannot live by bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mt. 4, 4)

In order to find fulfilment in our life we need both, to learn and look after our world and to seek the grace of God.

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Gen. 2, 7).

Although we are part of the earthly world we are, also, spiritual beings in the image of God. Even more: we share in the divine nature through Christ!

Our life in Christ is not a prolongation of this earthly life, neither is it an explanation of this world, but rather an affirmation of life and love.

God is a loving Father, each and every one of us has been called to the salvation (eternal life) through the cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit unites us in the Body of Christ.

Let us then work hard, with gratitude and humility, to discover more about the amazing beauty, harmony and wisdom present in the world.

Participants in the divine nature

It is with great confidence and certainty that we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. For under the form of the bread it is the Body that is given you and under the form of wine it is the Blood, so that partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, you become one body and one blood with Christ.

Hence, we become Christ-bearers, i.e. we carry within ourselves Christ, because His Body and Blood are spread in our members.

As Saint Peter says: "We become participants of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1, 4)

Cyril of Alexandria, 4th / 5th century

Ora et labora

The recognition of our need for God and His grace in our life (**humility**) and the **exercise of the Presence of God** at every moment of our life, as well as our **focus onto the person of Christ** constitute the foundation of a stable and prayerful attitude, according to Saint Benedict (Nurcia, Italy, 480-543 A.D.).

On the other hand, work is the means that aids man to live well and with discipline. Work is a strong creative power which lifts man up whereas idleness is only destructive. Work is necessary not only for the general and individual welfare, but, also, for maintaining an authentic Christian way of life.

Saint Benedict summarizes the above in three words: “Ora et labora”, i.e. “pray and work”.

Although the Saint was addressing his brothers / monks, fifteen centuries later the wisdom of his admonition is evident.

How many ills would have been avoided if this attitude became the general norm and prevailed among those in positions of heavy responsibility in leadership and decision-making!

The Holy Father never ceases to remind us that in order to build a more fraternal, just and humane society we must give living witness of our Christian Faith by our example, our works, our prayer and our love for God and neighbour.

Equal to the Apostles



*Christ, who for our sake from a Virgin was born,
You followed Maria,
His rights and precepts keeping.
Therefore, today your holy memory we celebrate and
The absolution of our sins through your prayers obtain.
(From the Eastern Church)*

The figure of Mary Magdalene has inspired artists of all time.

She is the woman who has been healed by Christ (*from seven demons—Mk. 16, 9*) and follows Him, with other women, in order to assist to the needs of the journeys of the Lord.

She is one of the Myrrh bearers who go to take care of the body of Jesus at the tomb “on the first day of the week very early” (*Lk. 24, 1*). She is the first witness of the Resurrection and the first who brings the Good News to the Apostles. (*John, 29, 18*).

According to a tradition she traveled as far as Marseille (France) and became the first apostle of the Gospel there.

The Church honours her memory and calls her “Equal to the Apostles”.

Did you know...



In the biblical revelation, the idea of **Mission** is totally relative to the History of Salvation.

It presupposes a positive call of God that gets clearly manifested in each particular case.

It applies to groups as well as to individuals.

Jesus is the person **sent** by the Father par excellence.

His mission is extended through the sending of His own disciples, the Twelve, who for this very reason are called Apostles.

(Greek: **apostolos / apostle = sent**—said of a person, **apostolé=mission**).

The Apostles and the preachers of the Gospel did not rely on their human strength alone, but completed their effort by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is the significance of Pentecost:

The mission of the Spirit is the source of man's sanctification and part of the Christian experience.

Patron Saint of Europe



Saint Benedict is considered the father of Western monasticism.

The influence of his order in the formation of the European culture and civilization has been decisive.

The simplicity of his "Rule", balancing wisely physical activity and spiritual life, became the model of monasticism in the West.

His encouragement for studies and learning led to the copying of precious manuscripts, not only of Christian origin, but also works of Classical Antiquity, and this really saved and spread the civilization of Europe during the dark times of the Barbaric invasions (5th-8th c. A.D.)

The monasteries became centres of learning and their libraries contained rich collections of invaluable manuscripts.

Many Benedictine monks contributed with zeal and self-sacrifice to the Christianization of the Old Continent, from the British Isles and the Netherlands to Germany, Scandinavia and elsewhere.

On October 24th 1964, Pope Saint Paul 6th proclaimed Saint Benedict Patron Saint of Europe.

Prayer before work

*Heavenly father, as I enter this work place, I bring your presence with me
I speak your peace, your grace, your mercy and your perfect order into my work.
I acknowledge your power over all that will be done, spoken, thought and decided within these walls.
I commit to use them responsibly in your honor. Give me a fresh supply of strength to do my job. Anoint my
projects, ideas, and energy, so that even my smallest accomplishment may bring you glory.
Lord, when I am confused, please guide me. When I am weary, energize me. When I am burned out, infuse me
with the light of the Holy Spirit.
May the work that I do and the way I do it bring faith, joy and a smile to all that I come in contact with today.
Lord, please help me to be focused and productive today, and when I leave this place, give me traveling mercy.
Bless my family and home to be in order as I left it.
Lord, I thank you for everything you've done, everything you are doing, and everything you are going to do.
Lord, I thank you for the gifts you have blessed me with.
In the name of Jesus I pray, with much love and thanksgiving.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen*

Globalization

Globalization is a fact, and we may see many of its application in our everyday affairs, from reading / viewing the news on the Internet to buying exotic fresh fruit from far away countries.

Whatever happens in the remotest corner of our planet becomes instantly known worldwide.

As Christians we have to recognize the undisputed positive side of globalization.

First of all, we may claim as our very own a “first initiation” to globalization since our Lord sent His disciples on the mission to preach the Gospel “to the ends of the earth” (Mt. 28, 19)!

The Christian Faith is one, universal (catholic) and missionary (i.e. apostolic); it anticipates a unified human family whose horizon goes beyond the earthly limits of this world.

This Faith which is born in and through the Church is founded in the reality of the Incarnation of the Word of God, who willingly died on the cross so that we “may all be one” (John 17, 21).

The bread and wine “fruit of the earth and work of human hands” becomes our spiritual nourishment that accompanies us in our way.

