

The Pope explains the motives and expectations of the Jubilee of Mercy

Vatican City, 2 December 2015 (VIS) – The Italian magazine “Crederre” today published an interview with Pope Francis ahead of the imminent opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, in which the Holy Father explains the motives and expectations of this convocation. The following are extensive extracts from the interview:

“The theme of mercy has been strongly accentuated in the life of the Church, starting with Pope Paul VI. John Paul II underlined it firmly with Dives in Misericordia, the canonisation of St. Faustina and the institution of the feast of Divine Mercy on the Octave of Easter. In line with this, I felt that it was as if it was the Lord's wish to show His mercy to humanity. It was not something that came to my mind, but rather the relatively recent renewal of a tradition that has however always existed. ... It is obvious that today's world is in need of mercy and compassion, or rather of the capacity for empathy. We are accustomed to bad news, cruel news and the worst atrocities that offend the name and the life of God. The world needs to discover that God is the Father, that there is mercy, that cruelty is not the way, that condemnation is not the way, because it is the Church herself who at times takes a hard line, and falls into the temptation to follow a hard line and to underline moral rules only; many people are excluded. The image of the Church as a field hospital after a battle comes to mind here: it is the truth, so many people are injured and destroyed! ... I believe that this is the time for mercy. We are all sinners, all of us carry inner burdens. I felt that Jesus wanted to open the door to His heart, that the Father wants to show us his innate mercy, and for this reason he sends us the Spirit. ... It is the year of reconciliation. On the one hand we see the weapons trade ... the murder of innocent people in the cruellest ways possible, the exploitation of people, of children. There is currently a form of sacrilege against humanity, because man is sacred, he is the image of the living God. And the Father says, 'stop and come to me'”.

In response to the second question on the importance of divine mercy in the life of Pope Francis, who has repeatedly affirmed his awareness of being a sinner, he says:

“I am a sinner ... I am sure of this. I am a sinner whom the Lord looked upon with mercy. I am, as I said to detainees in Bolivia, a forgiven man. ... I still make mistakes and commit sins, and I confess every fifteen or twenty days. And if I confess it is because I need to feel that God's mercy is still upon me”. Francis recalled that he felt this sensation in a particular way on 21 September 1953, when he felt the need to enter a church and confess to a priest he did not know, and from then his life was changed; he decided to become a priest and his confessor, who was suffering from leukaemia, accompanied him for a year. “He died the following year”, said the Pope. “After the funeral I cried bitterly, I felt totally lost, as if with the fear that God had abandoned me. This was the moment in which I came across God's mercy, and it is closely linked to my episcopal motto: 21 September is the feast day of St. Matthew, and the Venerable Bede, when speaking of the conversion of St. Matthew, says that Jesus looked at him 'miserando atque eligendo'. ... The literal translation would be 'pitying and choosing'”.

“Can the Jubilee of Mercy be an opportunity to rediscover God's 'maternity'? Is there an almost 'feminine' aspect of the Church that must be valued?” is the third question.

“Yes”, the Holy Father replies. “God Himself affirms this when He says in the Book of Isaiah that a mother could perhaps forget her child, even a mother can forget, but 'I will never forsake you'. Here we see the maternal dimension of God. Not everyone understands when we speak about God's maternity, it is not part of 'popular' language – in the good sense of the word – and may seem rather elitist; for this reason I prefer to speak about the tenderness, typical of a mother, God's tenderness that comes from his innate paternity. God is both father and mother”.

In response to a question on whether the discovery of a more merciful and emotional God, Who is moved to tenderness for mankind, should lead to a change of attitude towards others, Francis says: “Discovering this leads us to have a more tolerant, more patient, more tender attitude. In 1994 during the Synod, in a group meeting, I said that it was necessary to begin a revolution of tenderness ... and I continue to say that today the revolution is that of tenderness, because justice derives from this. ... The revolution of tenderness is what we must cultivate today as the fruit of this year of mercy: God's tenderness towards each one of us. Each one of us must say, 'I am a wretch, but God loves me as I am; so, I must love others in the same way”.

The journalist recalls St. John XXIII's famous “Sermon to the moon”, in which greeting the faithful one night, he told them to give a caress to their children. “This image became an image of the Church's tenderness. In what way does the theme of mercy help our Christian communities to convert and renew themselves?”

“When I see the sick, the elderly, the caress comes to me spontaneously. ... The caress is a gesture that can be interpreted ambiguously, but it is the first gesture that a mother and father offer a newborn child, this gesture that says 'I love you, I wish well to you”.

Finally, “ is there a gesture you intend to make during the Jubilee to show God's mercy?”

“There will be many gestures, but one Friday each month I will make a different gesture”, the Holy Father concludes.

Published by VISarchive 02 - [Wednesday, December 02, 2015 0 commenti](#)