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On the anniversary of the Dominican Order: eight hundred years in the service of the Gospel with word and works

This afternoon, in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, Pope Francis presided at the closing Mass for the “Jubilee of the Dominicans” (7 November 2015 – 21 January 2017), on the theme “Sent to preach the Gospel”, on the occasion of the eighth centenary of the confirmation of the founding of the Order of Preachers by Pope Honorius III.

The following is the full text of the Holy Father’s homily:

“The Word of God today presents us with two opposing human scenarios: on the one hand, the ‘carnival’ of worldly curiosity, and on the other the glorification of the Father through good works. And our life always moves between these two scenarios. Indeed, these exist in every age, as shown by the St. Paul’s words to Timothy (cf. 2 Tm 4.1-5). Even St. Dominic, with his first brothers, around eight hundred years ago, moved between these two scenarios.

Paul warns Timothy that he must proclaim the Gospel in a context in which the people are always in search of new masters, fables, different doctrines, ideologies ... ‘Prurientes auribus’ (2 Tm 4.3). It is the ‘carnival’ of worldly curiosity, of seduction. Therefore, the Apostle instructs his disciple also by using strong words such as ‘urgent’, ‘convince’, ‘rebuke’, ‘exhort’, ‘be steady’, ‘endure sufferings’.

It is interesting to see how even then, two millennia ago, the Apostles of the Gospel found themselves facing this situation, which in our times is very developed and globalised due to the seduction of subjectivist relativism. The tendency to seek novelty, typical of the human being, finds its ideal environment in a society of appearances, in consumption, in which often old things are recycled but the important thing is to make them seem new, attractive, captivating. Even truth is doctored. We move within the so-called ‘liquid society’, without fixed points, unhinged, without solid and stable points of reference, in the culture of the ephemeral and the disposable.

This worldly ‘carnival’ contrasts clearly with the opposite scenario, which we find in the words of Jesus that we have just heard: ‘Give glory to your Father Who is in heaven’ (Matthew 5.16). And how can we proceed from this pseudo-festive superficiality to glorification, which is the true feast? It happens thanks to the good works of those

who, becoming disciples of Jesus, have become 'salt' and 'light'. 'In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven' (Matthew 5.16).

Amid the 'carnival' of yesterday and today, this is the answer Jesus and the Church give; this is the solid support in the 'liquid' environment: the good works that we can perform thanks to Christ and His Holy Spirit, and which give rise in the heart to gratitude to God the Father, praise, or at least wonder and the question, 'why?', 'why does that person act in this way?' – that is, the restlessness of the world faced with the witness of the Gospel.

But for this shakeup to take place, salt must not lose its flavour and light must not be concealed (cf. Matthew 5.13-15). Jesus says very clearly, if salt loses its flavour it is no longer of use. Woe betide the salt that loses its flavour! Woe betide a Church that loses her flavour! Woe betide a priest, a consecrated person, or a congregation that loses its flavour!

Today we give glory to the Father for the work that St. Dominic, full of the light and salt of Christ, performed around eight hundred years ago; work in the service of the Gospel, preached with the word and with his life, a work that, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, has ensured that many men and women have been helped not to lose themselves in the midst of the 'carnival' of worldly curiosity, but instead have savoured the flavour of healthy doctrine, the flavour of the Gospel, and have become, in turn, light and salt, artisans of good works... and true brothers and sisters who glorify God and teach how to glorify God with the good works of life".
