

3. December 2019

"Compulsion of Love"

St. Franz Xavier

*1 Kor 9, 16-19.22-23*

*In fact, preaching the gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it. If I did it on my own initiative I would deserve a reward; but if I do it under compulsion I am simply accepting a task entrusted to me. What reward do I have, then? That in my preaching I offer the gospel free of charge to avoid using the rights which the gospel allows me. So though I was not a slave to any human being, I put myself in slavery to all people, to win as many as I could. To the weak, I made myself weak, to win the weak. I accommodated myself to people in all kinds of different situations, so that by all possible means I might bring some to salvation. All this I do for the sake of the gospel, that I may share its benefits with others.*

Today the church thinks of St. Francis Xavier from the Order of the Jesuits. He is one of the great missionaries who, like St. Paul, did not rest to announce the gospel everywhere. He lived in the 16th century. His fruitful missions led him to India, where many people came to faith through his service and to Japan. His great desire to come to China, however, was not fulfilled. He died the third of December 1552 on the island of Sancian / Shangchuan Dao near Canton in China before he could enter the mainland.

What moves such a missionary to take upon himself the most difficult circumstances, to use his life without paying attention to himself? One such missionary was St. Francis of Xavier after experiencing a conversion to Christ. What fire is burning in him that he took the heaviest sacrifices to lead people to Christ?

An element will have been his own conversion, which he received also thanks to the efforts of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The one who has experienced a strong conversion knows what he has received through the faith, and how his former life lacked that grace. He wants other people to experience this grace as well and not live far away from God. A strong gratitude to God for what one has received is likely to be a moving force in trying to win people for the salvation in Christ. It is not only about the fact that people receive salvation, but also about the fact that we

participate in the search of God for people, and therefore also to look to God Himself.

Another even stronger motive is the Lord's mandate, as in the Gospel of today, "*Go out into the whole world, and proclaim the gospel to all creatures!*" *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be damned.* „(Mk 16,15-16).

The word of the Lord is about saving people and saving them from eternal damnation. Who internalizes this as St. Franz Xavier and St. Paul did, receives a "compulsion of love" in two ways: the love to God and to the people. It is a "compulsion" that one likes to surrender to, for when these two aspects of love dominate, one does not spare any effort and the Holy Spirit burns as a great evangelizer and fire in us.

Last year, I wrote on this topic:

*The apostle acts on behalf of the Lord! That is an essential statement! Anyone who has the "compulsion of love" and received such a high mission from the Lord, will not keep asking himself at every intersection, whether or not he wants to go his way. He basically said yes to God and entered his ministry. He no longer belongs to himself, but to the Lord! That is probably the compulsion that lies on St. Paul! He fulfils his mission! If you want, you could say that this order is now over him; all thoughts and all inner alignment are to fulfil this mission! So he is completely under this mission! The Lord himself is the great and unsurpassed role model! Jesus Himself came to do the will of the Father! In all and in every moment, the Lord has fulfilled his mission! He did this out of love for his father and for us!*

*So it is with the apostle Paul! Since his vision of the Lord, he lives on assignment! That is the highest freedom that he has given to God, and therefore he does not need a new, free decision! His will is tied to the Lord, so to speak, freedom is already completely given to the Lord and everything else is a consequence of this event! This was also the basic attitude of the great Jesuit missionary, St. Francis Xavier, whose memory day we celebrate today! From such a life as that of this heroic saint can grow great fruit! Because this freedom exists to have given oneself completely to the Lord, and thus have gone into the "compulsion of love", St. Paul or other missionaries can become "slaves" to all, because they can see every situation from the perspective of how they can win other people for the gospel! Out of this last freedom, they will find the way the Lord has planned, because for them*

*no way is too far, no cross too heavy, no task too great! It is the Lord Himself who works in them!*

Unfortunately, these are in a not inconsiderable contrast as you see mission more and more today. The mistaken forms of dialogue with the religions, in which the truth of the Gospels is abandoned or set back too far, could scarcely be the result of the same fire, which in St. Paul and in St. Franz Xavier burned! If the goal of the mission is no longer the conversion of man to Christ, then it is more likely to be a "compulsion to adapt to the present-day spirit" than the "compulsion of love" that does not rest until the gospel reaches the ends of the earth.