

ORGANIZATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

*«According to the gift that each one
has received, administer it to one another
as good stewards of the manifold grace of God»
(I Pt. 4:10)*

Like Jesus, whoever wishes to be great... let him be a servant

And James and John the sons of Zebedee, come to him, saying: 'Master, we desire that whatever we shall ask, You would do for us'. But He said to them: 'What would you want Me to do for you?' And they said: 'Grant to us, that we may sit, one on Your right hand, and the other on You left hand, in Your glory.' And Jesus said to them: 'You know not what you ask. Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of: or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?' But they said to Him: 'We can' And Jesus said to them: 'You shall indeed drink of the chalice that I drink of: and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you shall be baptized.' But to sit on my right hand, or on my left, is not Mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared.' And the ten hearing it, began to be much displeased at James and John. But Jesus calling them, said to them: 'You know that they who rule over the Gentiles lord it over them: and their princes have power over them. But it is not to be so among you: whoever will be greater, shall be your servant. And whoever will be first among you, shall be the servant of all.' (Mk. 10:35-45)

John – not just any Apostle, but the favorite one, the closest one, the most intuitive one – asks for himself and for his brother to have the places of honor. The entire group of the Ten immediately rebels, unanimous in envy. It is as if up until now Jesus had spoken in a vacuum: "You do not know what you are asking!" You do not know what barriers you destroy with this hunger to be first. You do not understand the dark force that is born from this being drunk with power or how impoverished is the heart from which it springs.

And behold the words Jesus uses to show forth the Christian difference: "it is not to be so among you". The great ones of the earth dominate the others... Among you it is not this way! They think that governing needs to be done by force... Not so among you! Whoever wants to be great among you... The desire for greatness is in man: the not being satisfied, that "little bit more," the restless heart. Jesus does not condemn all of this. He doesn't want men and women in His Kingdom to be unfulfilled and unrealized or dull, but fully-realized, regal, noble, bold, and free.

Sanctity does not consist in an extinguished passion but of a converted one. Whoever wants to be great must be a servant. The conversion is from being "first" to being a "servant". This is not something

that is all that easy because we fear that service is the enemy of happiness and that it demands a wealth of courage of which we will be deprived and that it is the challenging definition, the very challenging definition, of love. Yet, the term "servant" is the most surprising of all the ways in which Jesus defined Himself: "I did not come to be served but to be a servant." These are words that make our head spin: "Servant," then, is a name for God; God is my servant!

All the old ideas about God fall apart: God is not the Master of the Universe, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings. He is the Servant of all! He does not hold the world under His Feet; he kneels down at the feet of His Creatures. He does not have a throne; instead, He girds on a towel. How would humanity be if every one of us showed God's humble and active care and concern to each other? If each one of us would kneel – not before the powerful – but before the "last"?

We have not yet thought enough about what it means to have God as our servant. Masters engender fear; the servant, no. Christ frees us from the fear of fears: the fear of God. The master judges and punishes, the servant never does; He does not break the damaged reed but he binds it up as if it were a wounded heart. He does not finish extinguishing the smoldering wick but fans it so that it burst again into flame. God does not expect us to be luminous already; He works in us and with us so that we become so. If God is our servant, who will be our master? The Christian has no master and still, he is the servant of every fragment of life. And he does this not out of a reserve of cowardice but as a marvel of courage – of God's courage in us – of God Who is All in all. The incorrect, or partial, understanding of Christ is a distortion of ecclesiology. Jesus' reminder of the Chalice that is to be drunk and of the immersion to be undergone, i.e., the bloody Death awaiting Him, corrects their understanding of Him but also reminds them that the Church draws its life from Her being grafted onto the life-giving Death of Christ, thanks to Baptism and to the Eucharist. This is a grafting which confers upon someone a different form in respect to worldly institutions: not power, but service is its internal logic. From Jesus the Servant is born the Servant Church.

The initiative of the two brothers raises up conflict within the Community: "And the Ten hearing it, began to be much displeased at James and John." (Mk. 10:41) Competitiveness and clericalism *ante litteram* are already present among the Twelve – so much so that Jesus calls them together and instructs them in the logic that must prevail in the Christian Communities, opposing the one that reigns among the powerful of the world. "Among you, it is not this way": This word from Jesus places before us a criterion that distinguishes the Church from "non-Church."

The first political witness that the Church gives consists of its internal structure, in the organization of its structures of authority and in the way it lives authority, which must be conformed to what Christ lived and to what He requested of His Disciples. Jesus' word condemns the logic of worldly powers, but, above all, is directed to the Church: to the temptation to mimic worldly mechanisms. Jesus opposes this with the Christian difference – founded on all making themselves each other's servants.

If the Church is witness to the Servant Christ throughout history from the Cross to the *Parousia*, then its form shows that it is neither a homologous Community nor one enslaved. And so, using a quip: The Church is not a State: "among you, it is not this way." The Church, is, instead, according to the beautiful words of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, "*Alternative Community*," or as Blessed Paul VI said, "*the Servant of Humanity*."

The key word in this chapter is "service." The entire structure and the different Levels of governance and animation are at the service of the members of the Association.

In reading this chapter one must be attentive not to put the juridic-canonical aspects on the same level with the merely technical-organizational ones. The former bring us back to the ecclesial norms which define the purpose, nature, composition, and establishment of the organization and of its bodies. The latter, instead, generally concern modalities, times, and forms to achieve this goal. The chapter follows an ascendant line which begins with the foundational reality – the Center – and ends with the World Council.