



Days of Spirituality of the Salesian Family Homily 21 January 2017. English

The memory of the martyr St. Agnes leads us to reflect on one reality that accompanied the Church from her beginnings. The persecution of Christians, more or less manifested, is repeated along the centuries. Pope Francis recalls that in recent years, the number of Christians killed exceed those well known in the Roman Empire.

Without always coming to a situation of persecution, we can say that the Christian faith leads us to live in opposition to the world. It is so because the Gospel in totality does not conform with any ideology nor culture. Eventually we realize that God, the person of Jesus Christ, always overcomes any human vision of reality. To understand life as God has shown us means that those who have found themselves with him make an original experience of life. Christians introduce values in contrast with the culture of the moment, values that modify culture and improve it. Ultimately, values which, many times, make Christians different and are not always easy to be well understood by others.

For example, observe nowadays what the world thinks of the family and see what is our choice. Many times the world does not allow us to have our own thoughts and our reflections about the family is truly proper, original and, honestly we think that it is constructive and necessary.

We must know that as we walk against the current thoughts, we engage in a deep dialogue with what is offered to us about the family to be able to take those with particular values without sacrificing our principles. To create an evangelical culture about the family at these times is our obligation even though this means that many times we should look at St. Agnes and many others, who came before us and have preserved and witnessed their faith, so clearly, walking against the present culture.

Next to St Agnes, we also remember Santa Emerenciana, one of her friends who was stoned when she was praying in the tomb of a friend. We can think of how they lived together the difficult path that St. Agnes took in the final days of her life in this world.

St. Emerenciana can help us understand better the decisive values others have in their experiences that we can make of our faith and of our daily life. We can not walk alone. In isolation, difficulties will achieve its destructive work in each of us. Without other people, the good we can do is much reduced. Our strength is found in friends, in a group, in the community.

We are in Rome members of the 31 groups of the Salesian Family. The first thing we can internalize, as Don Bosco himself wanted, is to have our lives united and with that our group takes a new and richer magnitude. Our strength and, above all, our ability to do good grows when we are able to look at the world together, to reflect together, to plan together, to form ourselves together, to work together.

In this way we see the importance of family. A Christian family is a group capable of doing together a project of life that helps build mature people, improves the society and increases the faith of its members. As the Rector Major suggests, a family as such becomes a school of life and of love.

With St. Agnes and St. Emerenciana, all together we proclaim our desire to stay united next to Don Bosco and our family with all the solemnity that this meeting allows us,. This communion is for us an essential value.

I end up making a reference to the Gospel in a verse that narrates a situation that has storical basis, as the experts say. His contemporaries say that Jesus was out of himself, who has lost his mind, was insane. Like his mother and his relatives living with him, we can think without understanding much about this difficult situation. And we can also think that her son, their relative, was not only a fool but could become the eventual solution of human life.

But that is life and, in a particular way, the life of faith. Everything turns into a journey towards an ending that does not always appear clearly. We still have not reached the goal, but slowly, we may be able to make a stronger conviction that can become final: God is with us because he loves us so much. God is never absent. God prepares for each one of us a joyful end as we all thought.

This situation lived by the family of Jesus brings me to conclude this homily with an indication that can put ourselves into the conclusion of these days. We are blessed without a doubt because of the person of Jesus. We get to be certain about it with the help of many experts, of many believers and also our own experience. He is brother, the Son of God, who assures us of the realization of the good we desire in our heart. The meeting that we do these days with so many people like us shows us the certainty of our faith. Let these days be a permanent song of thanksgiving to the Lord for allowing us to build a strong sense of what we do and who we are. We are indeed blessed!

Let us ask Our Lady Help of Christians for a generous response to the many graces we receive like our family, the family of Don Bosco and the Church that has brought each one of us together.