

The humble tenacity of the Kingdom

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Dear brothers and sisters,

I hope this letter finds you well.

During the month of June I had the privilege of accompanying the General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption in Rome.

The Congregation was founded by Emmanuel d'Alzon (1810-1880) in 1845 in Nîmes, France. The motto of the congregation is "Thy kingdom come" and the main theme of the Chapter, along these lines, was: "The kingdom of God is at hand. Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel".

Having accompanied the Chapter process I was able to sense the missionary fibre that animates this congregation, its passion to collaborate in the coming of the kingdom.

If there is something that characterises the manifestation of the Kingdom in Jesus, it is his word that aims to sharpen our senses and awaken our hearts to recognise how imminent and proximate the Kingdom is. The Word is here, already in our midst, and let those who have ears, hear it! With

this new understanding which the parables of the Kingdom illustrate, we can recognise its advent in dynamics such as the growth of a seed, which already in its small and insignificant form contains the power of its further manifestation, or in the transforming joy that is experienced by the one who discovers a treasure in a field and who is ready to sell everything in order to acquire the field that contains the treasure. And even more so in the joy we feel when we find something we have lost, or when a child comes home. God rejoices in all of this. It is the joy of those families who are reunited after many years of forced separation for work or survival.

The gestures of Jesus reveal the proximity of the kingdom in him: the lame walk, the blind see, sinners are forgiven, the humble and the little ones are ready to receive with joy the Good News that God is reigning in their favour. Moreover, Jesus in his self-giving is the grain that falls to the ground and bears much fruit, it is he who on the cross forgives even his enemies and who surrenders everything, including his last breath, into the hands of his Father, so that

his will may be done in him. What Jesus asks and teaches in his prayer is thus fulfilled in his own flesh.

Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we unite as a Church in hopeful praise in the presence of Jesus; "We proclaim your death and profess your resurrection. Come Lord Jesus, come". As a praying assembly, gathered around Jesus, we join in his prayer to the Father asking for his Kingdom to come and his will to be done in us.

This is precisely what the whole Church prays in remembrance of Jesus. Christ, the head, and his pilgrim body in history are united in the same prayer.

Give us a heart of mercy in the face of all human misery,
inspire us with the right gesture and the right word
in the face of the lonely and helpless brother,
help us to show ourselves available
to those who feel exploited and depressed.
May your Church, O Lord, be a place of truth and love
of freedom, justice and peace,
so that all may find in it
a reason to continue to hope.

We seek to put all our energies and gifts into making the kingdom of God manifest among us. We beg tirelessly for it like beggars, work for it like patient labourers and rejoice in its signs like those who were invited to a feast that is already prepared. Of course, the Kingdom is irreducibly God's work. But God counts on us for his advent, on our capacities and also on our resistances and failures. "Go to the crossroads and invite everyone you meet", says the Lord in the parable, having learned that the first people invited to the crossroads declined his invitation. The kingdom manifests itself like those tenacious plants that grow on the roadside or in the rock. The indescribable sign of its coming is the joy described in the beatitudes. Wherever the beatitudes are lived, there God is reigning.

In this spirit we can join in the synodal journey that we as Church are living, so that our Church and we in it become transparent to the kingdom of God: "Mission is not the marketing of a religious product, but the construction of a community in which relationships are a manifestation of God's love and therefore whose very life becomes a proclamation. (*Instrumentum laboris*, 52). May our way of life bear witness to the beatitude of the coming Kingdom and may we, together with Jesus, work so that those who mourn may be comforted and those who hunger and thirst may be satisfied.

Fraternally

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