

The Discipleship and the World

A pilgrimage in the deserts

On Thursday October 11, 2012 in St. Peter's Square Pope Benedict XVI celebrated the Mass that marked the 50th anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Council and launched the Year of Faith. It is linked harmoniously with the Church's whole path of mission that intends to open up the opportunities for the world and people to encounter God and His salvation through the person Jesus Christ.

In his homily the Holy Father used the word “**a desert**” to describe the world we live in where God is challenged by competing religions and philosophies of the 21st century. This reminds us of the Holy Father's criticism in his works and speeches of the major destructive theories in our society: rationalism, relativism and materialism. Rationalism understands the world through human reason alone, excluding the necessity and capacity of humanity's innate spiritual connection with God. Relativism denounces the existence of absolute truth and the Church's teaching on moral and ethics that uphold the human dignity. Materialism obstructs humanity's natural search for the divine communion with God, degenerating humanity into a worship of the modern-day “golden calf”: money, power and material advancements.

While humanity could derive undeniable benefits from advances in science and technology, as well as the expanding possibilities regarding life and individual freedom, it also has been particularly challenged by an abandonment of the faith – a phenomenon more manifests in societies and cultures which for centuries seemed to be permeated by the Gospel. This is the spiritual “desertification” that has been developing for decades and we now see around us every day the tragic reality of a life or a world without God -- violence, corruption, genocides and killing are taking place on a larger scale throughout the world.

Thus the Pope calls the Christian life on earth “a pilgrimage in the deserts of today's world.” He also points out that it is from the experience of this desert, from this void, that we can again discover the joy of believing and its importance. “In the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for living; thus in today's world there are innumerable signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life. And in the desert people of faith are needed who, with their own lives, point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive. Living faith opens the heart to the grace of God which frees us from pessimism.”

The Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary and World Mission

There are two great events happening in the month of October: the celebrations of the Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary on the 7th and the Word Mission Day on 21st. Rosary and mission being two important aspects of our ecclesiastical life, St. Dominic (1170 – 1221), founder of the Order of Preachers also known as Dominican Friars, is recognized as the one who formed and developed the Rosary Prayer and carried out the evangelization with a burning enthusiasm.

Dominic was born at Caleruega, Spain, into a noble family. Well educated, he distinguished himself from very beginning for his interest in the studies of the Sacred Scripture and for his love of the poor, to the point of selling valuable books in order to support famine victims. Ordained a priest, he did not view it as a personal privilege but a service to carry out with dedication and humility. On his travels in Europe Dominic saw two great challenges for the Church: people who were not yet evangelized and the Albigensian heretics who were preventing people from the truth of the faith.



Tradition says that during the battle with the Albigensians Dominic earnestly seek the help from our Holy Mother and was instructed by her to preach the Rosary among the people as an antidote to heresy and sin. The defeat of the Albigensian heretics at the battle of Muret in 1213 was attributed to the recitation of the Rosary by Dominic. From that time on this manner of prayer was published abroad and formed. It is believed that on many occasions the faithful who resorted to Rosary prayers in times of danger were rewarded. For example, the victory of the battle of Lepanto gained by Don John of Austria over the Turks on the first Sunday of October in 1571 responded wonderfully to the processions made at Rome on that same day by the members of the Rosary confraternity. Pope Pius V thereupon ordered that a commemoration of the Rosary should be made upon that day and in 1573 allowed this feast to be kept in all churches on an altar dedicated to the Holy Rosary.

Dominic was canonized in 1234. “This great Saint reminds us that in the heart of the Church a missionary fire must always burn. It must be a constant incentive to make the first proclamation of the Gospel and, wherever necessary, a new evangelization. Christ, in fact, is the most precious good that the men and women of every time and every place have the right to know and love! And it is comforting to see that in the Church today too there are many pastors and lay faithful alike, members of ancient religious orders and new ecclesial movements who spend their lives joyfully for this supreme ideal, proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel!” (Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, Wednesday, February 3, 2010)



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門徒與世俗生活

教宗本篤十六世在十月十一日參加慶祝梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議召開五十周年的紀念彌撒並宣佈信德年的開始。這正好融合教會開放到全世界各民族的使命和叫人藉著基督去找尋上主和救贖的目的。

教宗在講道中用‘沙漠’來形容我們現處的廿一世紀，宗教受到理性的挑戰。教宗曾經在其他的文章中批評三大主流理論：理性主義、道德相對主義和物質主義破壞現今社會。理性主義鼓吹人類只靠理性和科學去解釋一切事情，缺乏內在的和心靈上對天主的連繫和追求。道德相對主義否定絕對真理的存在，主張沒有普遍有效的道德原則，在某一個社會是道德上正確的行爲，在另一個社會可能是錯的。從而減少教會訓導在道德倫理上對人類尊嚴上的重要影響。物質主義妨礙人類對靈性上對天主的依賴與追求，令世人只膜拜現代的‘金牛’ — 金錢、權力和物質享受。

正當人類享受科技發達帶來的成果，和人權高漲，人人享有高度自由的同時；正是教會面對人們放棄信仰的時候。這現象在一些傳統的天主教國家和城市尤為顯著。在過去數十年間，這心靈‘沙漠化’的現象日益嚴重，在我們的生活中已見到它的惡果 — 暴力、

貪污、種族滅絕和集體屠殺的事件正在世界各地日益增加。

教宗稱現代信徒的生活為‘在現世沙漠中朝聖’他指出在這個沙漠中，我們將再次發現信仰的喜悅和重要性。「在沙漠中我們會重新發現什麼為生命是有價值的；找到無數的標記，多數是暗示和否定的；對天主的渴求是生命的最終意義。在這沙漠中，人們需要藉著信德，在他們的生活中找尋到達預許福地的方向和保持有活力的希望。充滿活力的信德可以打開我們的心靈去迎接天主的慈愛，使我們遠離悲觀的情緒。」



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玫瑰的奇蹟 - 聖若望·雅格

聖若望·雅格 (St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin) 是十六世紀的中美洲原住民，生活在相當於今天的墨西哥城。用他們族群的語言，他名叫「誇奧拉杜新」，意思是「說話的鷹」。他在傳教士手中接受洗禮成為基督徒時，取了兩個聖人名字作聖名，所以名叫若望·雅格。

若望·雅格的妻子去世後，他搬到一個較接近聖堂的地方居住。不過，「較接近」的意思是，他仍要赤腳走路三個多小時，才能到達聖堂！因為他是來自低下階層，不但沒有鞋子，還只有粗糙的仙人掌纖維製作的大披肩保暖。



在一個冬天的早上，天還未亮，他便照常出發去聖堂參加彌撒。在半路，他聽到很動聽的聲音，猶如雀鳥的歌唱，但仔細聽下去，卻比任何鳥聲更悅耳。忽然，這些音樂停了，接下來是在山上有一聲音，用他的族裔母語說：「小若望、小雅格」。好奇的他便隨著聲音走，在山上他看到一位身穿發光衣服的女士，而周圍的花草變得像寶石般晶瑩。原來是聖母瑪利亞顯現，並吩咐若望·雅格去見主教，請求他在那裡興建教堂。

若望·雅格爽快答應便去了，經歷不少辛苦後，終於可以拜見主教。雖然主教很客氣，但若望·雅格卻認為他不大相信自己，故他回去山上，向聖母解釋，因為他出身卑微，請求聖母不要再找他。他說：「不如妳找一位有名望的人去見主教，以免阻撓建聖堂的事。」不過聖母堅持要若望·雅格再嘗試，並指示他到山上採花給主教作一個記號。

在山峰上，儘管泥土不夠，天氣寒冷，卻生長了許多芬芳撲鼻的玫瑰。若望·雅格小心翼翼把鮮花採摘下來，放在他的大披肩裡。好不容易再次有機會見到主教。當他把披肩打開，玫瑰花掉出來散佈在地上，突然在他們眼前，神妙地浮現出一個聖母的圖像在披肩上。主教看見了便立刻相信，並立刻興建教堂，而這塊有聖母像奇蹟的披肩，則一直供奉在聖堂那裡，她就是瓜達露北 (Guadalupe) 聖母。

若望·雅格的事蹟，告訴我們憑著信、望、愛，人仍能與天主爽快答應合作，造就了奇蹟的出現。

轉載自「金錢以外」電台廣播節目《聖人卻在燈火闌珊處》 講者：伍維烈修士



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