

SYNOPSIS OF THE TOPICS OFFERED BY THE DIRECTOR
BISHOP JOSÉ VILAPLANA, BISHOP EMERITUS OF HUELVA
RETREAT OF THE FRATERNITY OF SPAIN, AUGUST 2023

The topics offered and presented by Bishop Vilaplana, as is customary, will be published in due course in the Bulletin of the C. Jesus Caritas Association of Spain and, also in due course, will be made available to those interested on the website of the aforementioned Association that brings together the various fraternities based in Spain.

Sunday, the 20th. Welcome and various information.

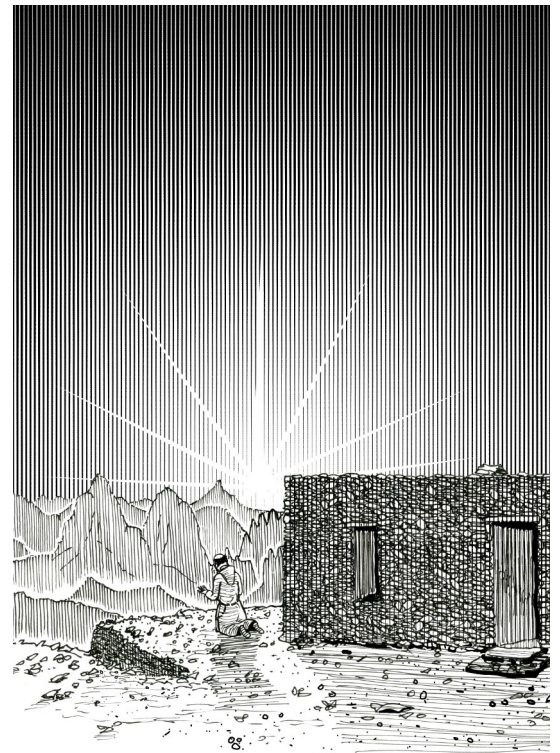
The retreat began on the same night of Sunday, August 20, after dinner where the director centered his meditation points around the question: What do you want from me, my God, at this moment in my life? Question that refers to the biblical text of Genesis 3:9, «The Lord God called and said to him, "Where are you?" to invite those present to contemplate the mystery on their knees as Brother Charles de Foucauld advises us, without "asking for lessons", open to the channel of divine mercy, taking into account that "the disciple is not a student, but discipleship makes relation to following the Master.

First day, Monday the 21st

Every day, after the lauds, the director with great success set with an evangelical phrase the key to the personal work of the day. So for the day he first proposed the phrase: "The kingdom of God is near..." Mc 1/15. Adding to the text a piece of Brother Carlos' writings where he says: "It is necessary to go through the desert and remain in it to receive the grace of God: it is in the desert where one empties oneself and detaches oneself from everything that is not God." , and where the little house of our soul is completely emptied to leave all the room for God alone.

The first talk was dedicated to the conversion that flees from worldliness and that occupies our entire life. In a well-quoted quote from Cardinal Lustiger, when asked about the plans and activities of the diocese of Paris, his response was "the priority pastoral objective is my own conversion." Conversion, then, as an unfinished process, in allusion to Margarita Saldaña's book, Carlos de Foucauld, the unfinished brother. Also precious is the call to the tenderness of the heart, referring to the quote by M. Ghandi who gave the example of river stones that are constantly bathed by water but when open, their heart is dry. We must ask God for the grace of a merciful and good heart.

In the afternoon the meditation was an extension of the theme of conversion to give thanks for the people and situations in which we have encountered God. In the case of Charles de Foucauld, his cousin Mrs. de Bondy, the desire to find the truth and his firm intention to study religion, Father Huvelin,... You have to know how to choose, breaking the ties as Saint John of the Cross wrote: "A little bird does not fly with chains or silk thread" hence the invitation to contemplate how God has worked in our hearts and, however, our harsh judgment on others (cf. passage from David and Nathan 2 Sam 12) and our neglect

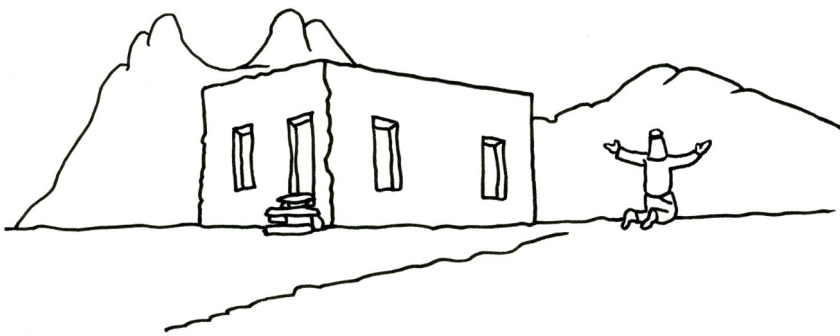


in the spiritual life that generates denigration on the human level. In this last indication the director cited D. Bonhoeffer, a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp, and his plan included in his book *Resistance and Submission* where he talks about the beginning of the end seeing the situation of the prisoners who, once all hope was lost, fell in the greatest abandonments and degradations. In the face of such situations that denigrate human dignity, we must ask the Lord for a new heart (Ps 50) and accept the discipline of what is essential to never lose the meaning of life.

Second day, Tuesday the 22nd

On the second day the phrase proposed as the thread of the meditations was: "I thank you, Father, because you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to simple people" Saint Matthew (11,25-27)

The morning meditation revolved around God the Father with a curious preliminary observation taken from the reflection of Father Y. Congar. In the Hebrew language there are no verbs believe or obey. When we say we believe we are referring to leaning on God,



to saying that God is our foundation, that the Lord is the rock. On the other hand, obey means listen. Divine paternity is spoken of, as Benedict XVI wrote, not as a result of paternalism or chance but "in someone who has thought of me" and whom I can call Abba. The two

sons of the merciful Father had, in one way or another, to rediscover their Father God and He recreates them (cf Luke 15:11-31).

The afternoon meditation was dedicated to the imitation of Jesus centered on the life of Nazareth. Brother Carlos will write that "love has its greatest effect in imitation." The best example is Jesus Christ himself who became close in the mystery of the Incarnation, assuming everything that is ours except sin and becoming one like us (cf. he worked safely in Sepphoris or its surroundings) and dignified humanity, sometimes fallen. (cf. demoniacs of Gerasa Mc 5,1-20) in such significant examples as the institution of the Eucharist and washing of the feet. The love of Jesus Christ is to the extreme (cf. "Greater love has no one than he who lays down his life for his friends" Jn 15, 13. See sacrifice of Isaac Gen 22, 1-19). Nothing can be compared to the self-giving of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist (cf. Charles de Foucauld's expression on "Eucharistic irradiation"). Do we want to follow Jesus Christ? Let us configure ourselves with him, let us imitate him.

On Tuesday night, from 10:00 p.m. to 8:30 a.m. the next day, he dedicated himself to Eucharistic adoration, being with the Lord in groups to end with the day's lauds.

Third day, Wednesday the 23rd

On this occasion the phrase proposed as a transversal thread of the day's meditations was: "At that time Jesus appeared and said to them: Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Saint Mark 16:15).

The morning meditation revolved around God the Holy Spirit and the affirmation “I believe in the Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life.” God is unique, but not solitary (cf. icon by A. Rublev, 15th century). The mystery and mission of the Church is maintained by the Holy Spirit, he is the source of hope (Ez 37, 5: "I will pour my spirit upon you and you will live"). When hope is missing, the mission is automatically deactivated (cf. Act 16: "He guides us in the midst of contradiction and failure"). The apostolate of kindness is a great service to the mission since “we are not a residue, but a remainder.” When we work with awareness of “waste” we don't excite anyone. The Church is revived by the action of the Holy Spirit with the gifts and charismas (cf. saints reformers of the 16th century) that must be put at the service of the brothers with a true passion to achieve unity (cf. letters of Saint Ignatius of Antioch) and that at the same time implies letting ourselves be carried away by their motions, if only to “clear” the path (cf. spiritual itinerary of Brother Charles)



Wednesday afternoon was dedicated to the presentation of the Beatitudes which, although distributed throughout the Gospels, in Saint Matthew and Saint Luke we find them gathered in two collections, they go beyond these texts that are a reference to the Gospel. We are blessed because God looks at us with mercy. It is the radiology of the heart of Christ (Christological reading) and, at the same time, they are steps that lead us to eternal life (anthropological reading. Cf. Saint Leo the Great). We must follow the narrow path (cf. Mt 7:14) to reach happiness, avoiding looking for fresh water in cracked cisterns (Jer 2:13).

The blessedness of poverty is founded on divine providence that makes us feel poor before God (cf. "have mercy on me, a sinner" Lk 18, 9-14) and love the poor, which is reflected in sharing their life and hopes by letting them eat (cf. P. A. Chevrier, founder of the Prado), loving poverty (cf. Mt 10) being merciful like the Father, educating our gaze and putting our hearts in tune with others (cf. Lk 6:36). Mercy looks at the wound to heal it: "I passed by your side and told you, live!" (Ez 16,6-12); Mercy is shown in recreation, in the beginning anew: "You have compassion on everyone because you can do everything" (Wisdom 11:23). Mercy requires an itinerary, a path of education of our sensitivity (cf. Lk 10, 25-37). An example from life: a woman offers to care for the sick and elderly in her community. They accept it from her and as their first collaboration they send her to take a package to an old woman. Once her order has been delivered, the old woman opens the box and looks at the coat that she had requested from the parish to protect herself from the cold. He had been placed in the box without any consideration and was extremely wrinkled. The receiving lady felt sad when she looked at the garment and found it in such a sorry state. The parish intermediary sensed the old woman's disappointment without knowing for sure what it was about. She was taken aback. She left that house thoughtful and crestfallen. Letting himself be carried away by her heart, he went to a florist to buy some flowers with the intention of taking them to the old woman. The surprise of that woman who lived in solitude was great when she opened the door again and found the lady of the parish who was carrying a bouquet of roses in her hands. Upon receiving the gift, she exclaimed with feeling and tender emotion: "Truly, the coat was what I needed to protect me from the cold, but what I have truly been waiting for all my life is this detail of affection that I now receive with these flowers."

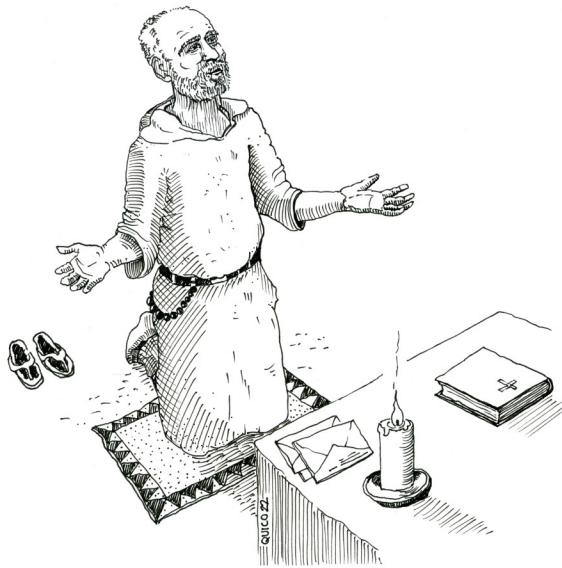
The meek person is the one you can trust. Scripture gives Moses as an example of meekness (cf. Num 12). The Gospel presents Jesus Christ as a new Moses (strong,

gentle, shepherd, lamb,...) who leads the people (Jn 10) with strength and without sharp edges, conquering evil by force of good (cf. Rom 12, 21; 1 Peter 2,23) even when, if necessary, one suffers with the Church in its imperfections (cf. 1 Pet 3,822).

"He who takes up the office of a father learns to cry" in the phrase of Saint John of Ávila (Complete Works of the Holy Master Saint John of Ávila, TV, BAC, p. 20). A paradigmatic example of inconsolable crying is the saint Job. Tears manifest our sufferings in the task of being builders of peace. Spontaneous tears flow when we focus more on what unites us than on those things that separate us, using the tool of forgiveness to break

the spiral of violence. It reminds us of African wisdom in its proverbs that "No soldier would shoot another if he looked him in the face." To continue in the true teaching: «I looked at it from afar and it seemed like a tree. I looked at him closely and he looked like a man. "I sat him at my table and he seemed like my brother." A whole task that we have before us and that, many times, consists of "disarming the word" to avoid all types of duplicity by putting coherence, rightness of intention and cleanliness of affections in our poor lives.

The desert day begins with the small introduction of the night that, as Ernesto Cardenal would write in his collection of psalmic poems, "even in my unconscious I bless you, Lord." We collect the clues for reflection for the desert day in the following sections as questions:



1 The desert day is a day for God, to become aware that He is the air we breathe and in the beauty and harmony of creation is His creative hand "that makes the sun rise for the good and the bad,..." (Mt 5, 45-48).

2 Like Saint Francis of Assisi before the crucified Saint Damian, we feel the need to follow the Lord with all our strength and we feel pain for the Church. Let us listen in a climate of silence and prayer to how we can help restore our Church. Without a doubt, we must start with ourselves so that from the experience of God we inject the Good News of the Gospel into our world. What notes does the life of Nazareth have for us and what pastoral implications does it lead us to?

3 Brother Charles was an itinerant in full sense who was never afraid of change due to his permanent attitude of search. At the same time, he was always very demanding of himself. In the silence of the desert, once again, we ask ourselves: Lord, what do you want from me? What steps do you want me to take in my Christian and priestly life?

4 It is advisable to rethink from time to time how we are to translate the life of Nazareth into our lives as secular diocesan priests. Is Nazareth a guide in my daily life, in my way of living, in my relationships, in my task as a worker of the Gospel, ...? It would be of great interest to make or enhance the life project from the spirituality of Nazareth.

5 During the day it is advisable to take the beatitudes to the heart and review them with affection, arousing in us the desire for imitation.

6 Throughout the day let us remember before the Lord the faces we see every day and pray for each other.

Fourth Day, Thursday the 24th. Desert. Sacrament of Penance

Fifth day, Friday the 25th

The phrase proposed by the director at the end of the lauds: "I am Jesus whom you persecute." Acts 9/5. Jesus identified with his Church. Retreat does not end just as the world does not end in its relationships and concerns. The meditation focuses on the article of the Creed that relates to faith in the Church which, in the expression of the Holy Fathers, is similar to the moon in that it does not have its own light, but rather receives it from the sun.

We must stimulate a look at the Church that does not remain only in sociological data but that leads us to a deep look of faith. The death of Jesus, "bowing his head, he expired" (cf. Jn 19:30), causes the Church to be born from his side and John welcomed Mary into his house, which means that he welcomed her as his own (19:26 -27).

Brother Carlos will live trying to be a universal brother with the conviction that brothers do not choose each other, they find each other. A good brother is someone who takes others seriously, accepts who they are, and offers to grow together. Our fraternal weakness becomes a fear of being a universal brother without excluding or discarding anyone and it takes shape in those closest to us, in our parishes and ordinary workplaces where it is difficult for us to stop being parents to become brothers. We must avoid the temptation of being preoccupied with seeing what others do for me and try to ask ourselves what each of us does for others. The apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* is a splendid reflection on our missionary commitment carried out with joy.

The Virgin Mary is the mother of the Church. She is the first disciple, the perfect disciple because she: she "heard and fulfilled" (Lk 11:27-28). She leads us to Jesus Christ and marks the final goal of the path. She sets out to serve (Luke 1:39-46); In joy she knows how to be attentive to detect the needs that are difficult to detect in happiness (Jn 2:1-11); In pain she is strong, next to the cross she is *stabat mater* (Jn 19:25). Her life, as in every mother, is referred to her Son: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).



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Manuel POZO OLLER