

ARCHDIOCESE OF MILAN
30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PONTIFICAL RECOGNITION
OF THE FRATERNITY OF COMMUNION AND LIBERATION
7TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF MONSIGNOR LUIGI GIUSSANI

Votive Mass of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

Qo 8:5b-14; Ps 89; Mk 12:38-44

Milan Cathedral, February 22, 2012

HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL ANGELO SCOLA, ARCHBISHOP OF MILAN

1. *“There is no man who is master of the breath of life so as to retain it” (First Reading—Qo 8:8).* The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), a clever but pessimistic “preacher” who lived at the beginning of the 2nd century BC and identified with King Solomon, explores the precariousness of human existence with crude realism. He is scandalized in particular by the fact that it is impossible to achieve justice in human history: *“I saw wicked men buried,”*—not even they are able to retain their breath of life—*“who, while still alive, were in the holy place and were praised in the city as if their works were just” (Qo 8:10).* This calculated forgetfulness is intensified by the fact that *“the sentence against evildoers is not promptly executed, therefore the hearts of men are filled with the desire to commit evil” (Qo 8:11).*

The profundity of the affirmation (“I saw” is an expression that Qoheleth uses a lot) is equalled only by its extraordinary relevance today. Qoheleth is not content merely to note the inevitability of death that, as a background noise, accompanies the life of every man. Nor does he stop short at the distressing question, *“He is ignorant of what is to come; who will make known to him how it will be?” (Qo 8:7).* He gets down to day-to-day life where truth and falsehood, good and evil, justice and injustice, mix together.

The range of factors at play permit him to spin the web of human *vanitas*. Which of us, gathered here this evening in prayer to renew the fatherly bond of communion that ties us to dear Monsignor Giussani, can remain indifferent to Qoheleth’s agonizing questions and bitter observations? It is not by chance that the Church, Mother and Teacher, invites us to read the circumstance that gathers us through the Word of God proclaimed in this Holy Eucharistic Action. The Liturgy is the *form* (the paradigm) of life that throws light on reality, the network of circumstances and relationships, as Fr. Giussani liked to define it.

Vanitas, Qoheleth says, that is, inconsistency; the inconsistency of our being, and of our doing.

2. “*Though indeed I know that it shall be well with those who fear God... and that it shall not be well with the wicked man...*” (Qo 8:12-13). Reflecting on every action that is done under the sun, Qoheleth meets in the *fear of God* a raft to cling to in the enormous sea of evil. But this does not seem to free him completely from the risk of drowning, because “*there are just men treated as though they had done evil and wicked men treated as though they had done justly. This, too, I say is vanity*” (Qo 8:14).

Is there no escape then from the claws of this evil that grips our “I” and makes all its weight felt in the world’s evil, and of which, rightly or wrongly, we hear spoken in these times of suffering? Qoheleth anticipates the cry of St. Paul, “*Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body?*” (Rom 7:24).

Was not one genial aspect of Monsignor Giussani’s educational proposal the effective re-proposal of the Christian truth that no one can save himself?

The choice of celebrating the Votive Mass of the Most Holy Name of Jesus on the 7th anniversary of Monsignor Giussani’s death and in remembrance of the 30th anniversary of the Pontifical Recognition of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation clearly indicates the way of salvation offered to each one of us and to the whole of mankind.

The *Prayer at the Beginning of the Liturgical Assembly* had us pray: “*For Your Son who came among us You chose, O God, a name that would clearly present Him as Saviour of the human race...*” The name of Jesus means “*God saves.*” Truly Jesus solved the enigma of man by revealing where his consistency lies. This is rooted in the love with which God “*in the morning fills us*” and “*gives success to the work of our hands*” (Responsorial Psalm, Ps 90: 14a, 17).

3. In Jesus, the *vanitas* is conquered. “*Adorned with the wonderful name that expresses salvation,*” the *Preface* says, Jesus accompanies us, rescuing us from our sin. And the liturgical text reinforces it with the detail, “*Sweet and reassuring is Your protection in the dangers of life and, when invoked at the moment of death, Your name is hope and comfort.*”

All things have their consistency in Christ: “*Omnia in Ipso constant*” (Col 1:17). It is important to meditate long upon and to incline our day-to-day life to this conviction. “All things” means *everything*. In the glorious mystery of the *Verbum caro*, everything has been saved because everything has been taken up by Christ. Right from its first beginnings, the tradition of the Ambrosian Church has transformed the method of God’s action in human history (incarnation) into a fruitful educative proposal. Thus, over the centuries, it has generated children aware that “those

who do not love [Jesus] waste too much time” (“*troppo perde il tempo chi ben non t’ama*”—medieval *Lauda*).

Monsignor Giussani expressed this Ambrosian sensitivity with prophetic force from the 1950s, educating his followers to assume wholesale every aspect of human life. Through the logic of incarnation, a Christian is he who testifies—in the family, at work, in society at all levels, right up to political commitment—the salvific work of the Crucified and Risen Christ.

4. Friends, this evening’s Eucharistic Action places every one of us before an *aut-aut* which, at times tacit and almost imperceptible, at times overbearing, accompanies our every action. Under the pressure of physical and, above all, moral evil, even a Christian may undergo the temptation to think that all is *vanitas*, inconsistency. A Christian may presume in fact to save himself, at times ending up as the scribes “*seeking the first seats in the synagogues*” (*Gospel, Mk 12: 38-39*), or his freedom may yield to the loving rebuff of the psalm: “*You turn men back into dust and say, ‘Go back sons of men’*” (*Responsorial Psalm*), as the imposition of the Ashes will remind us a few days from now.

Our return, the fruit of forgiveness, makes us capable of an objective and effective love. Like Qoheleth, Jesus, too, is an attentive observer of reality. “*He sat down opposite the treasury and observed ...*” (*Gospel, Mk 12:41*). The widow, who had put into the treasury “*all she had to live on*” (*Gospel Mk 12: 44*), shows the full form of Christian freedom. In every action, a Christian is called to express the primacy of God in his life. The victory over *vanitas*, the grace of consistency, lies all in the recognition of Christ present that requires the total gift of self. Memory and offering express thus the affective fullness for which all men long and which a genuine Christian can experience.

5. Today’s Gospel offers us one last precious teaching. It is contained in the short narrative passage, hidden like a pearl among the folds of the Gospel text. “*Calling His disciples to Himself*” (*Gospel, Mk 12:43*), Jesus helps them to understand the widow’s action.

What transpires from this gesture of Jesus? The solid bond between the members of that first companionship He generated, a relationship stronger than that of flesh and blood, a fraternity in which—as is revealed in the Eucharist—is anticipated the life of Heaven. Christ calls His own to an unheard of experience that the consistency of the “I” calls communion.

Communion as esteem *a priori* for the other, because we have in common Christ Himself. Communion ready for any sacrifice for unity, *that the world may believe*. “*Thus the mature expression of Christian sharing is unity, including the tangible and visible. That was the expression of Christ’s final torment in His prayer to the Father, when He indicated that the decisive testimony of His friends consisted of such a tangible and visible unity*” (Luigi Giussani, *The Journey to Truth*

is an Experience, McGill-Queen's U.P., 2006, pp. 30-31). Here lies the victory over *vanitas*. Here communion is liberation.

“*Our communion is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ*” (1 Jn 1:3b). When by grace we become God's friends, communion generates an irresistible movement of sharing of the life of all our fellow men in every ambit of human existence—gratitude for having received everything generates gratitude in giving everything.

6. Dear friends, the Catholic charism that the Spirit gave to Monsignor Giussani, that the Church has universally recognized, and that tens of thousands of people all over the world can enjoy today, flowered in this Holy Ambrosian Church. The love that Monsignor Giussani had for this Church is documented in thousands and thousands of signs and witnesses. For the faithful of this diocese belonging to the Movement of Communion and Liberation, this fact constitutes a responsibility that needs to be continually renewed: to practise, in the wholehearted assumption of the principle of pluriformity in unity, a profound communion with the whole diocesan Church which lives in the image of the universal Church. This communion is with the Archbishop, with the priests, with the male and female religious, with all the aggregations of the faithful, with all the baptized and with all the inhabitants of our “Mid-land”.

The meeting of the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities with Blessed John Paul II, on May 30, 1998, marked an irreversible passage toward a new ecclesial phase confirmed by events that are being produced in the Church and in our country.

As Benedict XVI keeps on reminding us, this is the time of the new evangelization in which all ecclesial realities must collaborate in harmonious unity.

Post-modern man asks for salvation, consistency, and for this needs witnesses of that beautiful form of the world (*Ecclesia forma mundi*) that is the Holy Church of God.

7. “Give us the abundant help of Your grace and ensure for us the joy of finding our names written in heaven.” These words from the Prayer after Communion tell us what is the font of our joy and our hope: Jesus Christ living among us and our being familiar with Him for the good of our fellow men. Amen.