

FOR A NEW HUMAN BEING IN A NEW WORLD (Dialogue with the youth– Number 8)

This year, on the occasion of Christmas, in my pontifical message I shared with our people a few thoughts concerning the new human being in a new world. This theme is at the center of the New Testament; it constitutes the focus of Christ's earthly mission.

Speaking to the newly converted Christians, St. Paul says: "...*you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the image of its Creator*" (Col. 3: 10). The message of the Apostle is clear: in Christ you have been recreated; being Christian means being a new human being. This is, indeed, the essence of Christian faith and the aim of Christian mission. Hence, any approach, any teaching, any way of life that claims to be Christian must be assessed in this perspective and with this criterion.

What should we understand by being a new creature and what are its implications?

A) *Christ: the new being.* God, the Creator created the first human creature according to His own image (Gen. 1: 26–30). The expression of "God's image" should not be perceived literally. It means that the human being is endowed with rationality and the divine privilege which enabled him to be in communion with God. Human beings were called to articulate this God-given privilege as stewards of the creation and accountable to God. The Book of Genesis tells us that because of their disobedience, the first man and woman disgraced God's image, and thus they distorted their human nature and vocation.

Christ restored God's fallen image in human beings by assuming human nature. He recreated the human being. Salvation is essentially recreation. That is why Christ is also referred to as the New Adam and His redemptive work as new creation.

Therefore, the Christian is the one who has been recreated and renewed by Christ: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). The Christian is a new human being. Sin, corruption and evil are destroyed in him by Christ, and in Christ he has become a new creature.

B) *Christ: the new life.* God is both the source and the purpose of human life. For Christianity life should not become a human-centered and human-driven reality. Life, in all its expressions, acquires its true meaning only in God.

Christ restored human life to its original quality by re-establishing the authenticity of human life. In fact, Christ defined Himself as the "true life" and described His mission as granting the "abundant life" (Jn. 10:10) to human beings. Human life acquired its fullness through the cross and resurrection.

Thus, for the Christian "*to live is Christ*" (Phil. 1: 21); Christ is the beginning of the renewed and transformed life. Apart from Him life loses its integrity and credibility. The Christian life should be Christo-centric.

C) *Christ: the inaugurator of a new world*. The recreator of the new human being and the new life is also the recreator of a new world.

The new world is the Kingdom of God which began with the incarnation of the Son of God and will reach its consummation with the second coming of Christ. God's Kingdom is founded on justice and peace, on love and reconciliation and is governed by moral values. In God's Kingdom, good triumphs over evil, light over darkness, value over interest, truth over falsehood.

God's Kingdom is already in this world, but not of this world. It is in constant combat against "the powers and principalities" (Col. 1: 16) of this world. The Christian is a militant of this Kingdom. He or she is called to fight against the evils of this world, which, in different forms and different names, have invaded our life.

The Child of Bethlehem is the inaugurator of a new humanity, of a new life and a new world. He said: "Behold I make everything new" (Rev. 21:5), and in fact, He did. He renewed the old; He overcame the evil and offered us a new quality of life, and showed us the right way to be human.

What does it mean to be human in the image of God? What does it mean to be renewed by Christ? Christ is God's gift to humanity. He is also God's invitation to be a new human being committed to the transformation of the world.

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