

**Salesiani di don Bosco**

General Chapter 28°

**Spirituality Days**

19 February 2020

**The PRIORITY OF THE SALESIAN MISSION AMONG THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF TODAY**

*Rossano Sala sdb*

Homily on the readings of the days:

*Jas* 1:19-27; *PS* 14; *Mk* 8:22-26

It seems to me that the readings we have heard invite us to mature right from the beginning to a precise and demanding style of living together the entire experience of our 28th General Chapter.

The Apostle James, a man of concreteness, is convinced of the dynamic unity between the faith professed with our lips and the works that derive from it as its fruit. He invites us not only to speak, but above all to arrive at concrete resolutions for our personal, community and institutional existence: "Be of those who put the Word into practice, and not just listeners, deluding yourselves" (v. 22). We are here to arrive at practical resolutions, and not only to share theories. The Working Instrument, which each of you has read and studied in recent months, at the end of each of the three thematic nuclei asks us this question: "What priority choices can we realistically make to face the challenges that have emerged at the level of the Congregation, the regions, and the provinces? It is an invitation to identify priorities in our mission and to articulate them in detail, opening up paths of renewal that are as prophetic and courageous as they are concrete and achievable.

Along with this great invitation to concreteness, James also offers us some rules for discernment: "Everyone should be ready to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger" (v. 19). One of the things that impressed me most during the three years of preparation and celebration of his Synod was the presence and the word of Pope Francis: in the many preparatory meetings with the Council of the Synod - a body made up of fifteen Bishops and Cardinals and presided over by the Holy Father who accompanied the entire synodal process - I appreciated from time to time his constant presence, his great discretion and above all his constant silence, rich in listening: many two-day meetings saw his initial greeting and final thanksgiving, without another word from him during the meetings. A pope "ready to listen" and "slow to speak". Always at the end, thanking, he said: "In these two days I have participated in the synodal process by listening to your word, your suggestions, your proposals. Thank you!".

I think that we too are called to make this way of participation our own: everyone will be asked first of all to be ready to listen, convinced that all those who are here with us have something important to share and esteem the word of the other more than their own; secondly, prudence in speaking, so that our word is the fruit of deep prayer, of authentic discernment and serene sharing of what the Spirit suggests to us; and finally a freedom of spirit capable of presenting with love and respect their points of view, which must be offered with joy to the Chapter assembly and not imposed with arrogance on it.

The gospel we have heard takes us a step further than the words of the Apostle James. It helps us to become aware that it will not be we who, with our own strength, identify the paths of renewal. Let us leave once and for all what Pope Francis calls "neo-pelagianism", that is, the conviction that we save young people by our own efforts, or that we save the Congregation with young people, or other similar things. The world, the Church, the Congregation and the young people themselves are healed and saved only when they have the humility to let themselves be led by Jesus and the courage to ask Him to touch and heal us. In many ways we too are in the situation of the blind of the Gospel: we can be saved only when we are taken by the hand of Jesus, recovering our friendship with him; we can heal from our wounds only when we are willing to let ourselves be meditated by Jesus; we can return to see only when we ask Jesus to lay his hands on us not only once, but several times, because healing is a process of renewal that cannot do without the constant presence and merciful action of the Lord Jesus.

Today, in a very confused and fragmented time, but as always rich in opportunities and filled with the presence of the Spirit, we are called to ask for the gift of regaining good spiritual sight: we need to "see clearly" and to know how to "distinguish everything" so as not to fall prey to dazzle and not to give in to easy temptations. For this reason, as the verse of the alleluia well recited, we ask the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "to enlighten the eyes of our heart, to make us understand what hope he has called us to".