

**IV INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON THE SERVANT OF GOD
LUISA PICCARRETA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF HER BIRTH
“Church in the Divine Will”**

CONCELEBRATION IN CHIESA MADRE – APRIL 23 – 2015

HOMILY of His Eminence Cardinal José SARAIVA MARTINS

For me it's an intimate and deep joy living with you the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta. Therefore I warmly thank His Excellency, Archbishop Giovan Battista Pichierri, Pastor of this local Church, for his kind invitation to officiate this solemn Mass today .

The text from the Gospel we have just heard is for many Christians the first text of the Gospel they have learned by heart, probably upon their parent's or grandparent's knees. Maybe they do not know, however, that they have learned its synthesis because «the Sunday prayer (meaning The Lord's Prayer) is really the synthesis of the whole Gospel»¹ In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives it to us in the context of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5). He wants to show his disciples the new requirements of the Kingdom He has come to bring, with a justice which exceeds that of the «scribes and pharisees» (Mt 5,20) so that it will not be fulfilled before men but before God the Father. Yes, a Father who does not need to be convinced with talkative arguments, as pagans do (cfr Mt 6,7), but on the contrary takes up before hand our requirements, knows which things we have need of, even before we ask Him for them (cfr Mt 6,8).

The love of the Father anticipates us, is always before us. It is a teaching very dear to Pope Francis who speaks very often about this.

The Our Father is, therefore, the prayer that germinates in a humble and trustful heart. It is the prayer of the poor and the small. Of those who do not have another richness than the certainty of God's merciful heart, the humble hope in the providence of the Father in history and in their personal existence. We have heard it in psalm 130: «I hold myself in quiet and silence, like a little child in its mother's arms, like a little child, so I keep myself».

The Our Father makes us live the humble audacity of standing before God with open hands, expecting everything from heaven, not holding tight anything on earth. «Who else is there for me in heaven? And, with you, I lack nothing on earth» (Ps 73,25).

To which «celestial vocation» (Heb 3,1) are we called with this consignment of the Lord! He, in fact, does not simply give us a formula to be repeated, but in it He reveals to us who we are before the eyes of God, gives us the consciousness of

¹ Tertulliano, De oratione, 1, 6: CCL 1, 258 (PL 1, 1255).

having been conformed to Him, the beloved Son, and to live in his Spirit a total relationship with the Father. «As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

This is the great and precious Easter gift, the root of any other gift: The Holy Spirit, who makes us Sons of the Father! The Our Father is then the prayer of the «true worshipers» of the Father, because it is a prayer in «Spirit and truth» (Jn 4,23).

The project of God, already announced in creation, finds its fulfillment in Redemption by the complete sanctification of man. The II Vatican Council is quite clear in this matter: «The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. The Church was sanctified by the outpouring of the Spirit.

Rightly, then, Jesus has taught us to invoke the Father with the adjective «our». Because while He constituted us as sons in the Holy Spirit and made us to participate in the very life of God, He fused us too in a «we» which is the Church, his own Body (Col 1,18).

How many times we invoke the Father without considering that the one who is at our side –will remind us Saint John Paul II- is «one who belongs to me» even though I may not know him or besides he is not hold in high regard!

Being Church is not the fruit of kind relationships, but the reality of the love of the Father who communicates us his own glance upon men. It is the discovery of this love what brings us to good relationships, to look courageously for unity, harmony, that yields us to forgive, impels us to a silent service, and ties us with stronger bonds than blood or friendship.

Benedict XVI, in a beautiful page of the Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* concludes saying: «Love is “divine” because it comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a “we” which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28)» (DCE, n.18).

This precious gift towards universal fraternity was given to us “on the day of our baptism”!

«We can adore the Father –the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us- because he has caused us to be reborn to his life by adopting us as his children in his only Son: by Baptism, he incorporates us into the Body of his Christ; through the anointing of his Spirit who flows from the head to the members, he makes us other "christs." (2782).

It is outlined here a wonderful road to holiness adapted to each one, because it is possible «by means of all the activities» that each christian is called to carry out. A holiness of daily, simple gestures, frequently hidden and repeated, but anointed by the Holy Spirit. This cannot be other than a gift to invoke in the Our Father when we ask «Hallowed be Thy Name»!

Still Saint John Paul II in the Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio inunte* explained that «this ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few "uncommon heroes" of holiness. The

ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual. I thank the Lord that in these years he has enabled me to beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life. The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction. It is also clear however that the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine "training in holiness", adapted to people's needs. This training must integrate the resources offered to everyone with both the traditional forms of individual and group assistance, as well as the more recent forms of support offered in associations and movements recognized by the Church» (n.31).

My dear ones, we find in the life of the Servant of God Luisa Piccarreta all the elements that we have said until now.

Today we remember in this Chiesa Madre of Corato, her birth and her rebirth through baptism which happened 150 years ago.

I have been impressed by two elements which characterize this first day in the life of Luisa.

The first element is that precisely in this place, with the sacred washing, Luisa has received the gift of divine life. Here has been sowed the precious seed of the very holiness of Jesus, given to her so that it would germinate in her life in conformity to the Divine Volition of Jesus in her daily acts, made of prayer, work and so many encounters. Luisa has lived the ordinariness of life in the continuous tension of asking even in the smallest of her acts the presence of Jesus, to give the Father the glory, the praise and the adoration that all men should give Him and that Luisa has done always and for all.

The second element I pick it from the fact that the calendar, that 23rd of April 1865, marked the Sunday in albis. We know that Saint John Paul II would consecrate this Sunday to Divine Mercy. This fact also seems to me like an anticipating sign in the life of Luisa.

Like I have written in the foreword to the first documented biography of the Servant of God untitled *Il Sole della mia Volontà*², Pope Francis reminds us that «We are living a time of mercy»³ I commented on this regard that the profound testimony of Luisa Piccarreta shows us this typical dynamism of God's mercy that attracts to the most profound unity with Him for transforming the heart in a spring of gushing waters for the benefit of all. (...)

Living like that, even the smallest act of our life participates in the dynamism of mercy, concurring with Jesus in bringing his light to all hearts and to God the praise and adoration that everyone should give Him.

² Maria Rosaria Del Genio, *Il Sole della mia Volontà. An ordinary life out of ordinary. Luisa Piccarreta*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2014

³ Speech to the parish Priests, March 6, 2014

The small lady of southern Italy, who has known the alternation of various epidemics, two wars, and has collected so many tears due to the hard conditions of life of her contemporaries, transforms her own heart in a place totally inhabited by God. Those who have met her have felt themselves attracted from the reality of heaven and driven to live a holy life, totally spent in the ordinary occupations under the model of the family of Nazareth. And it is properly in the quotidian that God's mercy looks for men in order to restore them to the innocence of Eden, to a life weaved with joy and to an existence guided by the certainty of being loved children»⁴

It is my wish that this congress will signal for you a milestone in your journey to sanctity in the desire to become always more missionaries of that fiat which has brought heaven on earth and earth in heaven.

May the Virgin Mary, our loved protectress, take us throughout the paths of time and guard us in her maternal heart.

Corato, Province of Bari, April 23, 2015

Card. José SARAIVA MARTINS

⁴ p. 5-7