

★ *lasalliana*

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BROTHER SCUBILION WAS ABLE TO SEE GOD IN EVERY PERSON

1. *«You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world»* (Mt 5: 13, 14).

In the Gospel of Saint Matthew, these surprising words are addressed to the hearers of the Sermon on the Mount, that is, to all those who have heard the message of the Beatitudes, the law of the Kingdom of God.

It is therefore to the crowd of the poor, the afflicted, those who hunger for justice, the insulted, the calumniated, the persecuted that Jesus comes to say: "You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world».

Such is, in fact, the ideal which Jesus proposes to his disciples and the call that he makes to the People of God as a whole. Such is the vocation of the Church. Such also are the demands of the Gospel for the members of this Church.

«You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world!»

Should this be for us a source of self-satisfaction? No, it is the truth when we think of what we are: «See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are» (1 Jn 3:1). And Saint Peter affirms: «But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light» (1 Pt 2:9). The great Pope Saint Leo challenged the faithful in this way on the night of Christmas: «Recognize your dignity, O Christian».

«You are the salt of the earth...» What does this mean? Salt gives flavour to food and preserves it. Salt is precious. When Jesus declares: «You are the salt of the earth: if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?», he means: *what you have received makes you precious for the world; nothing can replace what you bring. It is up to you to be the ones here on earth to prevent life from losing its savour.*

Brothers and sisters of Réunion, you who give flavour to the world by your faith, I greet you warmly, and express my joy in being with you to honour your first Blessed, Brother Scubilion.

I greet Monsignor Gilbert Aubry, your Bishop, and I offer him my cordial wishes on this anniversary of his episcopal ordination.

I also greet His Eminence, Cardinal Albert Decourtray, President of the Conference of Bishops of France, and His Eminence Cardinal Jean Margéot, President of the Episcopal Conference of the Indian Ocean, as well as my brother bishops.

I address my cordial greetings to the priests and the men and women religious. In particular, I greet Brother John Johnston, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, together with the members of the Institute present here; I share their joy and I join with them in their thanksgiving on this day when the great family of Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle is again being honoured.

To the civil authorities who have come to this liturgical celebration. I offer my respectful greetings, and I thank them for their presence.

And, once again, greetings to you, dear brothers and sister of Réunion!

2. Today, when the Bishop of Rome comes to see you, I would like, before everything else, *to give thanks to the Lord with you for the gift of faith* granted to this country. With a free heart you have adhered to the Good News which was offered you. Evangelization has already produced numerous fruits here, and Brother Scubilion is a remarkable witness of the movement towards holiness inaugurated on this island by the first missionaries.

3. *It is necessary that each one make the faith received from his ancestors grow within him*, by voluntarily rooting it in a parish, in a community, in a neighbourhood team, in a reflection team, in a movement. First of all, the Christian faith must permeate this basic community which is the family. Dear brothers and sisters, may the family be the first sphere of your commitment as baptized, in the firm conviction of the unique and irreplaceable value of the family cell for the development of society and of the Church. Take part in ecclesial activities wherever you are, and consider the deepening of your Christian formation as a priority to which you must dedicate some time. Finally, without limiting your involvement in services which are ecclesial in the strict sense, bring your qualified contribution to the building of a society that is ever more respectful of human dignity, by not being afraid to say «no» to the slavery of material things which could entice you. Be among the authentic elements of civic and moral progress for this island which is yours.

Without imposing your faith, out of respect for others, live «the Christian difference» and let the Catholic imprint appear not only in individual behaviour, but also in the quality of community and collective life: in the family, in business, in leisure, in politics. There is a manner of being and acting which must influence the structures of society. Do not take refuge in a false humility which would consist in keeping silent about the content of the faith or causing the public expression of it to disappear. Live in conformity with Christian demands, and you will become witnesses of love. With all the others, search for the ways of a human development for everyone, so that the dignity of each person may be recognized.

4. Brother Scubilion bore witness to this care for the dignity of the human person during his years of missionary life. He was born at the end of the 18th century, in metropolitan France, in the present Diocese of Sens-Auxerre which desired to send a delegation here. After entering religious life in the Brothers of the Christian Schools, he offered himself willingly for the apostolate in distant lands, in his desire for a more complete gift of himself. In 1853 he arrived in Réunion and served here until his death.

The love of God and the love of neighbour were inseparable in him. In the eyes of everyone, he shone with a power of love that revealed the God of Love. *He was light, as Christ wished it: «You are the light of the world».* He allowed himself to be enlightened by Jesus Christ and he enlightened others in the light of Jesus Christ by this example and in particular, by his catechesis among the slaves.

As a good educator, Brother Scubilion loved to catechize. Enthusiastically, he made up delightful catechism lessons. His love for young people and his joviality urged him to take

his pupils of Sainte-Marie to explore the Heights of the Ravine-des-Chèvres or the caves of the Trois-Trous; he even attempted to scale Charpentier's Peak with them. These excursions were also pilgrimages: they visited the Church of the Rivière-des-Pluies or Notre Dame de Bel-Air or Notre Dame de Bon-Secours. In the light of the world, Brother helped people to discover the light of the soul, the light of Christ.

5. Brother Scubilion understood and lived the love of neighbour in its evangelical dimension. He knew how to see God's image and likeness in every person. He loved in the way God loved. Following the example of Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, he showed great tenderness towards those who were entrusted to him. He helped them to have confidence, to forgive one another, to give meaning to their life, to walk in hope; he distinguished himself in the service of the sick, showing great compassion to his brothers and sisters in distress. *He practised the charity of which the Apostle Paul made himself the wonderful herald in his Letter to the Corinthians to which we have listened together: «Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things» (1 Cor 13:4-7).*

6. The greatest commandment of the Law is to love God with all one's heart and one's neighbour as oneself. Christ made this law of love his personal commandment. It is the newness of the Gospel, which fulfils and completes the former Law: «Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets, but to fulfil them» (Mt 5:17). And Jesus continues, praising in advance all educators of the type of Brother Scubilion: «Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and *teaches* men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But he who does them and *teaches* them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven» (Mt 5:19).

7. Dear brothers and sisters, the beatification of Brother Scubilion is like a founding event in the history of your diocesan Church. It emphasises at the same time that this part of the world, this region of the Indian Ocean, your island, has a vocation to raise up examples of holiness for the whole Church. Father Laval in Mauritius, Victoria in Madagascar, and Brother Scubilion in Réunion join hands together to bring your peoples into the community of the children of God; as other great figures of your country also do: Father Monet, «apostle of the Blacks», Father Lavasseur, companion of Libermann, Aimée Pignolet of Fresne, foundress of the Daughters of Mary. *You already have a spiritual patrimony which it is important not only to keep but to know well in order to live it and in order that apostles with hearts on fire will always rise up.* Accept your history and play a major role in it. While living the Gospel as these great servants of God have done, bring your own culture more and

more to life. You will want to be more human in the measure of the love of Jesus Christ for the men and women of Réunion.

8. On your island, you enjoy relative abundance. However, consumerism can turn people away from the true evangelical way of human success. Among you, as in the home country, *there are without doubt lifestyles to be changed so as to know the happiness of simple people and preserve the quality of human relations.* Moreover, together with many other countries, you are unfortunately experiencing unemployment and you will have to try to reduce it. In the same way that you were able to take up your life again after the hard trial of the cyclone Firinga (28-29 January 1989), I desire that your fraternal solidarity will reach all those who are without work and suggest to you the necessary local initiatives so that all may share in a worthy, responsible development.

9. As for you, dear *young people* who are listening to me, I know how sensitive you are to success of life in peace. Your heart knows no boundaries and you desire to love. You wish to give yourselves entirely in order to love and be loved. You are right, for without love life does not attain its goal. However, be careful of caricatures of love! Saint Paul has given us today distinctive signs of true love; build your life on this type of love. Let Jesus Christ lead you by the hand. He will not let you go, for he wishes to go with you to the very limit of love. Search for your vocation: to Christian marriage, religious or priestly vocation. Learn to respect yourselves, to sustain one another in order to build a world in which you will bring about the triumph of the values of the praise of God and the service of people, values of tenderness and sharing, of justice and peace, of solidarity and responsibility. Do not be afraid of sacrifices in order to improve yourselves from day to day and make your talents fruitful. The way of perfection, the way of effort, is also the way of joy. Good luck for today and for tomorrow! The Church and the world count on you: become the champions of your future in solidarity.

10. Jesus says to all of you who are here, to you who are listening to me on the radio and television: «*You are the light of the world.*»

Let me say to you in Creole: «Do not remain in the darkness; come to the light. Leave aside what is not good and go straight forward with a good conscience. The sun rises and then it sets: the moon rises and then it sets; but you are the light which is not extinguished».

With your Bishop and all your pastors, continue to build your Church and develop your country, striving to drive off the slaveries which dehumanize existence.

According to the example of Brother Scubilion, learn to become saints. Like him, build your lives on the mystery of the cross, on the lifegiving power of the Eucharist, on devotion to Mary, Queen of the Apostles.

May this very loving Mother protect you and lead you in peace towards her Son Jesus!

To him be honour and glory forever and ever!

(L'Osservatore Romano, May 29th 1989).