

We have heard in the Gospel the phrase which is the motto chosen by St. Eugene for the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates. He has sent me to evangelize the poor, the poor are evangelized. And this was the driving force of his life from the moment he converted to the Lord on Good Friday in 1807. That is why we listen to this Gospel text every year. Like St. Eugene, we Oblates feel sent to reproduce in our lives the sending of Christ to evangelize the most abandoned.

As in the synagogue at Nazareth, St. Eugene's first preaching took place in his hometown. A few months after his ordination to the priesthood, he was invited to give Lenten talks in the Church of "la Madeleine". In that sermon, delivered to the humble and simple people of his town in Provençal, his mother tongue, we find that desire to evangelize the poor, which he would maintain throughout his life. I would like to take advantage of this feast to recall that beautiful sermon and to see how his message still has the same value as it did then. Remembering this message at the historical moment we are living does us a lot of good.

After an introduction, he shows who the poor are in the eyes of the world.

"Workers, who are you according to the world? A class of people dedicated to spending your lives in the drudgery of an obscure work that places you in a situation of dependence and subjects you to the whims of all those for whom you work."

"Servants, what are you to the world? A class of people enslaved by those who pay you, exposed to contempt, to injustice, even often to the ill-treatment of exacting masters, brutal at times, who think they have bought the right to be unjust to you for the paltry wages they give you."

"And you, farmers, peasants, what are you to the world? However useful your labors may be, they value you only by the strength of your arms; and, if they take your sweat into account, well in spite of themselves, it is only because you water the earth and make it fruitful."

"What will become of you poor, beggars, forced by the injustice of men or by the rigor of fortune to beg for your paltry subsistence, to beg, in spite of yourselves, for the bread you need to sustain your existence? The world looks upon you as the refuse of society, unbearable to its eyes, which turns elsewhere so as not to have to pity your situation, which it does not wish to alleviate."

"There you have what the world thinks, there you have what you are in its eyes! And yet you have chosen him as your master. And to him, you pay homage to this day. What can you expect? Insult and contempt."



Today we too can ask ourselves, what are we to the world? Now that election time is upon us, we are nothing more than a vote that politicians use to take advantage of us for four years. We too are like the workers of that time, people dedicated to spending our lives in the drudgery of a job that places you in a situation of dependence and subjects you to the whims of those for whom you work.

We are slaves who work all our lives, to maintain our masters, through the abusive and unfair taxes we have to bear. To the world, we are nothing but a mere economic interest that we serve for as long as we are useful to work, produce and consume for our masters, but when we no longer work, produce or consume, we are of no use and are driven to forced euthanasia. What are we to the world? We are nothing more than a collection of cells to be played with, manipulated, and experimented on in the service of the interests of those who consider themselves our lords and masters.

We are nothing more than mere slaves who have to submit everything to their totalitarian dictates. With their rules and laws, they tell us what we must be, what we must think, what we must say, how we must speak, what we must eat, what we must believe, what we must breathe, and even what to inoculate our organism with. They tell us that we will have nothing, but we will be happier. I dare say, they want to impoverish us into submission and anaesthesia through the media and the internet. That is the real opium of the people today. And those who do not submit, as we are seeing, what can they expect? Censorship, insult, and contempt.



But St. Eugene's sermon continues: "Come now and learn from us what you are in the eyes of faith. Poor of Jesus Christ, afflicted, unfortunate, sick, covered with sores, etc..., all of you, burdened with misery, my brothers, my dear brothers, my respectable brothers, listen to me. "You are the children of God, the brothers of Jesus Christ, the co-heirs of his eternal Kingdom, the chosen portion of his inheritance. As St. Peter says, you are the holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are, in a certain sense, gods: "You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High".

So it is, dear brothers, today through St. Eugene the Lord tells us exactly the same thing. It does not matter what we are to the world, what matters to us is what we are in the eyes of God, and

in the eyes of God, we are his children. We are not a mere collection of cells, but a person created in the image and likeness of God, we have the seal of God inscribed deep in our hearts.

Our Father God has given us the beautiful gift of life to live it in such a way that it leads to eternal life. God never forces our human freedom, even if we misuse it. God has created all things in nature for us, for our joy and enjoyment. The Lord has prepared for us a dwelling place in heaven, our names are inscribed in the book of Life. If God is with us, who can be against us? Nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God, nothing and no one, no powers, no governments, no ideologies nothing and no one. We are nobody's property; we depend only on God our Father. We are the most precious and the most precious in the eyes of God, we are the most beautiful and the most beautiful thing in creation. As St. Eugene himself said, we are brothers of Jesus Christ.

This is our vocation. This is our mission. This is our task. This is why the charism of St. Eugene, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to St. Eugene lives on. We are sent to pass on this Good News to the poorest, as he did. We are sent to this whole world in which we live today, in need of a word of encouragement and hope, which only God can give us. Jesus Christ is the only Messiah, the only Saviour, the only Redeemer. There is no other.

This is the Good News of the Gospel, we are not subject to the dark powers and interests of this world, but we have dignity, a kingship, a profound beauty given to us by God himself, who loves us and wants us and loves us to the point of giving his life for us. Even if they undo our earthly dwelling, we have an eternal mansion in heaven. Let us give thanks to God for this, and let us pass on this good news as timely today as St. Eugene did. Amen