**La Salette, source of our conversion and reconciliation**

**January 2020**

For the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Missionaries of the Holy Family (1895-28 September 2020), different themes will be offered. This is the first theme: ***"La Salette, source of our conversion e reconciliation."***  Let us approach this theme in two steps: First we will look at the role of La Salette in the life and work of Father Jean Berthier our founder and then we will look by meditating and contemplating on how we present the call to conversion and reconciliation is in the heart of the gospel.

At the time of the founding of our congregation, to reassure one of his penitents (Miss DL) feared that he will leave the Missionaries of La Salette, Jean Berthier wrote: "My child, I will never leave the Community (Salette). Admittedly, I'm not indispensable, others will do much better than me. Only, seeing so many young people, advanced in years, who would become priests, thinking of all these late vocations, it seems to me a call to create a new work ... I leave the house, but there my heart will always be firmly attached " (V. HOSTACHY, *Histoire séculaire de la Salette, un siècle d’or 1846-1946,* Editions de la Revue des Alpes, 1946, pp. 431-449). Then in 1898, three years after the founding of our Congregation, Jean Berthier wrote: "*Since 1862 we have had the consolation of spending almost every year a part of the summer on the Holy Mountain. Therefore, we witnessed the salvation of fruit produced in souls the devotion to the Salette. We as a missionary, we fulfilled the holy ministry during long years in various dioceses and in different places ...; but we must say that nowhere does the sacred ministry provides such comfort that it provides every day on the mountain of La Salette. Up there everything disposes hearts to contrition, to penance, to great and strong resolutions.*"(Jean Berthier, *Les Merveilles de la Salette,* Paris, Téqui, 1898, pp. 241-242). Later, also in Grave, he often said to his students: "*I urge you, my children, to pray much Our Lady of La Salette ... She appeared in several places, but nowhere else, she has delivered speech as at la Salette. I confess that if I had not consecrated there 41 years ago, I would not be here nor do you. I am indebted to her, even the little that I could do on this earth (...) and if you have the happiness to become priests, divulge the devotion to Our Lady of Salette, the lessons she has given us*."(De Lombarde, op. cit. 272 and 518). I think these three texts of Father Berthier are clear, that the Apparition of La Salette and its message were at the heart of Jean Berthier life. Of course, Jean Berthier loved the New Testament but otherwise it is not exaggeration to say that La Salette is the source from which he drew the thread of his missionary life. And remember that this source remains alive in all of us who are his disciples. As the title says, "*Source of our conversion and reconciliation*," Now we see how this call to conversion and reconciliation affect our lives not only as Christian but also as the Missionaries of the Holy Family.

Briefly **converting** means: to open his heart and mind to God and with His grace, to make real changes in our lives by turning away from sin and being more faithful to Christ and his Gospel. About **reconciliation,** it is the free act by which God forgives the repentant sinner and reintroduced into his peace, through Christ dead and resurrection, in which all sins are forgiven. Today we more willingly speak of "sacrament of reconciliation" about the confession. Conversion and reconciliation are two different expressions and each of these expressions has its own nuances. However, as we have seen in the two above descriptions, they have much in common and are very close to one another. The conversion as reconciliation invites us to open our hearts to God through and in Jesus Christ. In other words, to convert or to reconcile means "to drop the walls and all the obstacles that lead us away from God and watch the world with his eyes full of love and hope."

Looking closely at the message of the Beautiful Lady of the Holy Mountain, we easily notice that the call to conversion is the heart, the call to return to Christ. To Melanie and Maximin, the Beautiful Lady said: "*Those who drive the carts cannot swear without mentioning the name of my Son! These are the two things that make so heavy arm of my Son. If the harvest is spoiled, it is nothing but because of you.*" Then later she continued: "*If they convert, the stones and rocks will change into mounds of wheat and potatoes will be sowed by the land*." Concerning the more Still on this Christo-centrism of La Salette, remember that the light radiating face of Mary came from the crucifix she wore on her chest. And in her message, the Virgin invites the two shepherds, and we through them, to convert us. When we read the newspapers or when we watch TV, we often see what is going wrong in the world: violence, racism, economic crisis etc. And this can give us the impression that evil is always triumphant ... So, we need conversion and reconciliation to return to the Gospel, to learn to see the world through God's eyes, a look full of love and hope. The conversion and reconciliation allow us keeping in our life what is essential and not allow ourselves sucked into the vortex of futile needs.

To conclude our reflection on "La Salette, the source of our conversion and reconciliation," I would remind that the call to conversion is at the heart of the Gospel. The conversion and reconciliation allow God to be present among us. At the beginning of his preaching in the desert, for example, preparing the ministry of Jesus, John the Baptist "*proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*" (Mark 1: 4). Later when John was thrown into prison and Jesus began his preaching, he said, "*The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel*" (Mk 1, 15). Then after the Resurrection, the Lord Jesus sent the apostles into the world to proclaim the Gospel to every creature and baptize who believeth (Mk 16: 15-16). On the Mountain of La Salette, calling to conversion, Mary invites us to go back to basics, in the heart of the Gospel: change direction and a new path under the authority of Christ. To bear good fruit, the tree should be cut so that the sap is concentrated on a limited number of buds, making them stronger and more productive ... The conversion is a little this: keep what is essential in our life, better open up to God, to ourselves and to others, through prayer, self-giving, caring, sharing, listening, etc. So, we dig tunnels, build bridges, do everything to get closer to those around us.

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