

Ven. Lanteri, Pope Francis and the Oblates of today

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Pope Francis is helping us to make a Church emerge, in which the disciples of Ven. Lanteri find themselves well: a Church capable of drawing near with faith every man and of walking next to him with love, in a complex world in which it is difficult to separate neatly the lights from the shadows.

“Without mercy” Pope Francis said to the Brazilian bishops during the voyage to Rio de Janeiro “there is little to do today, to insert oneself in a world of wounded who need understanding, pardon, love.”

The Oblates are formed to be merciful persons, capable of inserting themselves in a world of wounded who need understanding, pardon, love, are enabled to be ready to warm the heart of the people, to walk in the night without being invaded by the darkness, to listen to the illusion of so many without allowing themselves be seduced, to receive the delusions without despairing and precipitating oneself into bitterness, to touch the disintegration of others without allowing themselves to be undone and agitated in their own identity.

One understands well, as Pope Francis said at the Angelus of September 15, 2013, that “mercy is not sentiment, it is not ‘goodness!’ On the contrary, it is the true force which can save man and the world from the ‘cancer’ that sin is.”

In the sanctuaries, in the chapels as in the parishes where they serve, the Oblates promote spaces and occasions to manifest the Mercy of God. In practice they render the lay faithful participants of the mission; they offer them the Word of God and the Sacraments with the clear awareness and conviction that the Spirit manifests Himself in them.

As soon as Lanteri saw the confreres were ready for mission, he invited them to become neighbors, to go out, to go, to be wanderers of the faith, ‘callejeros de la fe’ as Pope Francis loves to say. And this not in a self-referential manner, but a transcendent one; a faith that gives witness, in patience and in sweetness.

God is already at work in the world, as Saint Ignatius evidences in the *Spiritual Exercises*: “God is present in creatures” (SE, 235) and “works and is active for me in all realities of this world, like one who works” (SE, 236). We Lanterians are called to accompany His ‘growth’; He ‘grows’ in some way and we help Him to grow in the world.

Two characteristics of the Oblate service emerge: evangelical accompaniment and spiritual discernment, to decipher and recognize the presence of the Spirit in the human and cultural reality, in the events, in the desires, in the profound tensions of hearts and of the social, cultural and spiritual contexts, and how He asks to carry forth His work.

The charism of the Oblates accompanies one who seeks the will of God, the individual person to whom God communicates Himself personally. It is the perspective of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, which takes up the burden in a very serious manner of the subjectivity of one who seeks –

notwithstanding the perception of one's own unworthiness – to open oneself to the will of God in one's life.

The Ignatian perspective prefers to remain open to the Spirit Who speaks to the believer through life, in the originality of the situations which he lives in his historical actuality, just as in the community of believers which is the Church.

Diesbach and Lanteri brought forth missionaries, persons who were apostles, more than stirring up discussions about apostolic plans and who were on the front line in cultural production, to the point of influencing the centers of opinion.