



***Cavanis Lay Fraternity***  
***Sacred Heart House, CAVANIS INSTITUTE***  
***Via Col Draga - Possagno (TV)***

***INVISIBLE MONASTERY 02<sup>nd</sup> March 2022***

Dear Friends!

As I turn my thoughts to the upcoming March 2 (the day of our spiritual meeting) I have before me the page of Luke's gospel from the liturgy of the Word for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time. It is that extraordinarily beautiful and difficult page that invites us to love our enemies. How do we love our enemies or, more simply, be benevolent toward those we dislike? Jesus is Jewish, Semitic: for him, the relationship between feeling and action is inverted, in regard to our way of seeing things. For us, feeling determines action: how often do we hear people say, "How can I do what I don't feel?". Authenticity, the key word in the philosophy of the last century, becomes the measure of the value of actions, to the point of trivialization: "If you feel something, do it!" and, of course, if you don't "feel" it, don't do it. For the semitic culture and for the biblical culture in particular, on the other hand, the value lies in the action, to the point that it is the action that modifies the feeling. Concretely, I may have a strong dislike for a person, but if I perform a gesture of kindness, if I lend that person some help, my feeling towards him or her changes, I begin to see him or her in a different light. St. Ignatius loved the motto "*agere contra*", that is to behave in the opposite way, contrary to the feeling. The world would certainly be more human if we chose this way. Among other things, it would be a way to fulfill the Aristotelian program of "living according to reason", not according to our passions, pride, greed, and the immoderate pursuit of pleasure. Therefore, to love the enemy is to do good to him, as the Gospel says. Having said this, however, a very difficult question immediately arises: where would we end up if we behave in this way? Not defending our rights, "lend without expecting anything back?" Politics and economics struggle to follow the norms of justice: just imagine what would happen if, for example, banks lent money without demanding its return. This is about radically renouncing the relationship between our actions and success. Even those who belong to the non-violent movements think that the methods they use can be more effective, in order to gain power or to achieve the success of a project. Jesus, on the other hand, asks us to rely completely on the "mercy" of God. A little later, in the same Gospel of Luke, he will say: "Do not wonder what you will eat and drink, and do not be anxious: for all these things (that is, human security) are sought by the gentiles of this world; but your Father knows that you need them. Rather, seek his kingdom, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Lk

12:29-31). God's mercy is not only his benevolence, his patience, his infinite readiness to forgive: in God, even more than in man, the feeling becomes concrete action, “providence” for the needs of his children, who are asked to accept the challenge of the Kingdom. Therefore, loving others without reciprocity, doing good without calculating any advantages and giving selflessly without waiting for restitution, one lives the “Christian difference”. This is a lesson that emerges from the page of Luke, which I think could be useful for the spiritual journey of our Fraternity; we really need to train ourselves in the logic of the Gospel, in gratuity, in the lack of interest in our tension towards others and in our service to the Church.

### **From the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke (6, 27-38)**

Jesus said to his disciples: “I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

### **From the message of Fr. Manoel Rosa, General Superior on the occasion of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Anthony Cavanis (Rome, January 16, 2022)**

(...) We cannot be content with an insufficient knowledge of the sources of our charism. What do we really know about Father Anthony’s life? Do we have time and availability to read and reflect on the history of his vocation, on how he was educated, on the events of his life, on his priestly ministry before founding the youth association of the Marian Congregation, on his relationship with his brother, on his responsibility as a director of the school, as superior of the religious institute, of

his correspondence and writings? Do we know and are inspired by the way he heroically lived the virtues? Can the pedagogy of family education of gratuitousness, of fatherhood, of the synthesis of the formation of mind and heart still serve as a reference? What prompted him to dedicate his whole life and endure to the end? He was the first to lead the way. I propose that in this year of celebration of the Jubilee we commit ourselves to truly know the virtues, sufferings, struggles and joys that permeated the life of Father Anthony. We must feel him alive, walking with us and having something to tell us today. Our Cavanis vocation is closely linked to the trajectory of his vocation.

He left us an example of how to evangelically embody the commandment of Jesus, which shines like a lighthouse that guides ships during a storm, in the middle of a darkest night: *“Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are like them”* (Mt 19:14). He made the preferential option for the poor, like Jesus, and was far-sighted in the revolutionary choice of the education of the popular classes, as a privileged means of helping them to become free in the broadest sense of the word. Children and young people who need a good domestic education are numerous, not only in poor countries but also in wealthy societies. Thanks to divine Providence, the Cavanis Institute has never lacked generous people who have come to the aid of fragile young people, with their availability, talents, prayers and financial resources. It is only possible to welcome so many children and young people thanks to the collaboration of you benefactors and collaborators. May God reward you with what you need most. We cannot lose the true sense of gratuitousness that is fundamental to understanding ourselves as Cavanis educators. Cavanis gratuitousness has been, is and always will be a free and personal delivery of our lives. Even our employees who receive a salary participate in this gratuitousness. A true Cavanis educator cannot be a mere employee. The love with which one educates is priceless. Life is generated with life. Jesus enriched us by his poverty (2 Cor 8:9). The members of a work or activity who do not cultivate the virtues of vigilance, patience, solicitude, hope for fruit (strength and courage) and prayer (charity) (cf. Positio, p. CXV) are doing sterile work, building something that sooner or later will crumble because it is founded on sand. Holiness does not expire and never goes out of fashion, and it is the soul of our apostolate. ( ... )

