



Cavanis Lay Fraternity
Sacred Heart House, CAVANIS INSTITUTE
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Dear friends!

While, in the imminence of the Advent season, I am about to draft these notes, I happened to linger on the beautiful account that Luke devotes to Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, and I perceived them as significant for us, for our associational journey. After so many reflections on prayer, fueled by the suggestion of the parables used by Jesus (the insistent widow, the Pharisee and the publican, ...), in the encounter with Zacchaeus, concrete experience bursts on the scene; in the text we are shown a twofold movement: Jesus entering the city of Jericho and going through it and Zacchaeus running ahead and climbing a sycamore tree. Of Zacchaeus Luke also says that "he was trying to see who Jesus was"; this is the impetus that triggers Zacchaeus' action: he wants to see Jesus and, in order to overcome the impediments that do not allow him to do so, he runs ahead and climbs the sycamore. This initiative of Zacchaeus elicits the consequent one of Jesus who seeks him out by looking up and saying, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today!". Exactly as in the sacramental dynamic, two precise spheres of relevance and action can be recognized: the action of God who bends to meet man and lift him up (that is what theology calls **opus operatum**) and the action of man who prepares himself to meet grace and welcome it (**opus operantis**, according to the same theological language). From the encounter between these two freedoms, that of God and that of man, comes conversion as an outcome. Jesus enters Zacchaeus' house and he, in turn, gives half of his possessions to the poor and, of what he has stolen, he gives back four times as much. There is no demand on Zacchaeus for him to act in this way; it is simply new and different, after the encounter with Christ, it is his way of seeing reality and therefore his very acting. Truly in Jesus of Nazareth God shows of himself that face which the evangelist himself thus sketches, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Let us let the Holy Spirit guide us from the pages of the Gospel to the concreteness of life and ask him for a glimpse of faith to feel within us that same desire to see Jesus that Zacchaeus felt. Our associational reality, with its limitations and poverty of means, may well be what the little sycamore tree was to Zacchaeus. To climb that is to recognize it as the concrete, historical opportunity that God offers us to encounter Jesus and to go out in a new way to our brothers and sisters. Our sycamore is certainly that same tree planted by the venerable Cavanis brothers, more than two centuries ago, and whose branches have grown through time so that we, too, might take up residence in it.

Massimo Mazzuco

From the holy gospel according to saint Luke

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.

***Fr. Diego Spadotto, In remembrance of the 249th of Fr. Anthony Cavanis: If we want to overcome darkness let holiness shine.
in www.santitacavanis.org/fratelli-cavanis/documenti/ , doc. no. 11.***

The history of the Cause for the Beatification of the Venerable Servants of God Fr. Anthony and Fr. Mark Cavanis is a long one, with interruptions, resumes, many amnesias and flat electrocardiograms of confidence in their holy lives. There were two moments of some activity with postulators **Fr. Aldo Servini and Fr. Giovanni De Biasio**. Otherwise, a lot of repetitive weariness in the recitation of the "prayer" for their beatification, with nothing new. **"You think of a piano. The keys begin and end. You know there are 88 of them. They are not infinite. You are infinite, and within those keys, infinite is the music you can play"** (A. Baricco), we say that we are few and little known, only '88,' and so we do not attempt to play a new and simple music, to popularize devotion to the "saints of our house". We fail to play a music of holiness like them: always faithful, authentic interpreters of God's Word, throughout their long lives. Perhaps we have not yet understood where the beauty and originality of their holiness lies. If some holiness still remains in the congregation today, we owe it to them. Let us not complain if they are not yet declared Blessed and Saints by the Church. Rather let us help the Church to declare them saints by becoming saints ourselves. If we want to overcome the darkness let us turn on the light and stop shouting in the dark.

The holiness of Fr. Anthony and Fr. Mark that the Lord gives us every day, we do not have the right to keep it for ourselves, we must put it at the service of the Church and the world of young people, otherwise it will rot in our mediocrity. The health, social, economic and ecclesial crisis is an auspicious occasion for a brief reflection **on the significance of the crisis of holiness in our religious life and not to confuse the crisis with the climate of conflict that continues to swirl in the congregation**. Crises generally have a positive outcome, while conflicts always create competition, antagonism between people divided into friends to love and enemies to fight. Great peace and serenity can be preserved in crises, in the full knowledge that we are all just **"useless servants"** (Luke 17:10), to whom the Lord has used mercy.

(...)

The Congregation cannot continue to be a body in conflict, with winners and losers, **because "in this way it will spread fear, become more rigid, less synodal, and impose a uniform and unifying logic, so far from the richness and plurality that the Spirit has given to the Congregation."** In

this sense, all the resistance we make to entering a path of holiness by letting the Spirit lead us, condemns us to remain alone and sterile. Let us not hinder the work of God's Grace that wants to manifest itself in us and through us. If we really want change, we must have the courage of an all-round readiness for conversion in order to walk in holiness of life. One must stop thinking of change as patching an old dress. It is not a matter of patching a dress, because the congregation is not just a "dress" but a story of holiness. **"Clothe yourselves with Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever!"** (Heb. 13:8), so that it appears clearly that the Grace given to us does not come from us but from God. It is the Lord who sanctifies us. It is good to remember that the first purpose of being consecrated is the constant pursuit of **"personal sanctification."** On holiness one cannot cheat in the words of Jesus: no matter how whitewashed the tombs are still tombs.