**ST BONAVENTURE**

**God’s gift to the Church**

The 750th anniversary of the death of the Seraphic Doctor (he died on July 15, 1274), gives us an opportunity not only to remember and celebrate the service he rendered to the Order and the entire Church, but also to repropose him as a gift that is still valid for our time.

During his visit at the 1974 international conference celebrating the 700th anniversary, Pope Paul VI recommended St Bonaventure “to all the children of the Church … so that, by careful meditation on his message, they may become an effective witness in the Church and in the world.”

Aware of his importance, but also that he is not always as well known and appreciated as he should be, even within our own circles, we want to accept again the invitation of Pope Paul VI by sharing some reflections on his life and message, certain that it will be a useful gift for us in the Franciscan Order to better live our commitment to the Church and the world.

It is not easy to reproduce in a few lines the theological and Franciscan richness contained in the nine volumes of the writings of Saint Bonaventure.” The leaders of the Franciscan Family chose, therefore, to highlight some aspects of St Bonaventure’s theology.

St Bonaventure was a Maser of Theology at the University of Paris from 1253 until 1257.

Only through Christ can one reach the intelligent wonder of God! In Bonaventure’s theology, we can ultimately hear the sentiments of Francis of Assisi who exclaimed: “Therefore we must desire nothing else other than the only true God, who is the full good, every good, all the good, true and supreme good, who alone is good!” (Rnb 23:9, FF 70).

As a true son of the Poverello, Bonaventure contemplated the Most High as an infinite mystery of goodness, which gives itself through Christ in every circumstance. The Father, the great source of goodness, communicates totally and infinitely his divine nature to his beloved Son, the “median person” of the Trinity. In their mutual breath of Love, they are united in the bond of the Spirit, the “gift from which all other gifts have been given.”

The expressive and productive moment of Good is the creative act of the cosmos that remains in continuous expansion, not only in terms of nature but also of knowledge. Both being and knowing reveal the same origin and the same purpose: the fullness and expansion of the Good. Both are written in the “Book of Creation” and can be read by the intelligence and love of man, called to recognize and love the Triune God in everything.

This is precisely what Pope Francis reminds us of in *Laudato Si,’* explicitly reproposing Bonaventure: “the Trinity has left its mark on all creation […] each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure” (No. 239). From this - again appealing to Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio - should result a “universal reconciliation with every creature” (No. 66). And this is possible because, as Bonaventure says, “The divine Word is in every creature and therefore every creature speaks of God” (*Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, c. 1 ad resp.).

The human person is a privileged reflection of the relationship within the Trinity, who, with the infused gift of the Holy Spirit, brings to perfection the mystery as it is manifested in the entire universe. It is in this anthropological context that Bonaventure qualifies the human person as a “microcosm,” not only because it is comparable to the “macrocosm” but also because it is its fulfilment or, vice versa, its destruction: the quality of human life conditions the quality of the environment in which he lives.

Pope Francis continually reminds us of this, calling everyone to hear the cry that rises up from the earth and from the poor. Whenever we foster “fraternity and social friendships” among peoples, we also foster environmental quality on the earth, defending it from our rivalry and greed.

In short, according to Bonaventure, theological intelligence must become an experience of God and a passion for this world, allowing us to discover in it a clear sign of divine love. The Master from Bagnoregio strongly challenges us on how sensitive we are, not only to the Scriptures but also to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, illuminating our intelligence and our affection, making us capable of “bringing to light the hidden things (of God)” and being a gift to “all the children of the Church” and the world.