



Homily "The ardor of the heart"
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Welcome brothers to Our Lady of the Porziuncola, a place particularly dear to Francis of Assisi, so much so that in the Major Legend St. Bonaventure wrote: "*Here he humbly began; here he progressed virtuously; here he happily came to completion*" (*Legenda major*, 2,8; FF 1048).

Beginning this meeting that I like to call the Mat Chapter of the young friars of Europe, on the feast of a great man capable of combining contemplation and action, competence and intellect of love, rich balance and humanity. Rarely have science and faith been so harmonized and above all animated by love.

The *Collect* has made us ask God for *the light of wisdom and the ardor of the heart*; I ask it intensely for you so that in the footsteps of the Lord you may taste His goodness and beauty.

In the first reading, Solomon declares a feeling of deep attraction to wisdom in an intimate and burning language: "*It is she whom I have loved and sought from my youth, I have longed to make her my bride, I have fallen in love with her beauty*" (Wis 8:2). There is in these words a strong personification of wisdom almost to be an accomplice to it: "*I have loved... I fell in love*" and at the center we find the verbs that keep our discipleship young, fresh and generous: "*I sought*" and "*I longed*".

Solomon, like Bonaventure, like many of our holy friends, like friars who have proclaimed Christ to us and are fathers in the faith, are so involved with Wisdom that they define it as a companion, a bride, a friend with whom to rest and consume oneself. But what is wisdom if not an aspect, a unique trait of the Holy Spirit that Francis wants for himself and for the friars and that must never be lacking: "*To have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation*" that is, to follow the Spirit, to be second to Him in order to learn to live for Him, with Him and in Him. It is the Spirit who makes the heart burn and enlightens the mind. Burning but without being "flash in the pan" in a culture that turns on and off, always leaving us on the surface. Burning with vigor, burning intensely, burning with high, beautiful, true desires. Desire is the engine of freedom! *Where the Spirit is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3:17). Burn until you are consumed.

To be consumed like salt, like light, like leaven, like perfume, as St. Paul would say. You are the salt. You are the light, the leaven, the perfume. These elements, once opened and used, do not come back, disappear, wear out; the salt in the food, the light on starts and does not stop, so does the yeast or the perfume spilled. The Father called you for a love that is consumed, He called you to consume you not to preserve you and die "brand new". He called you not only to commit yourself but to commit you to the Gospel, an accomplice of a wisdom that this world does not have.

But there is a moment when the salt loses its flavour. The light dims or goes out. The yeast seems to be lacking. Perfume without fragrance. It also happened to Francis when he no longer recognized the inspiration present in the friars of the second hour, when the porter here at the Portiuncula, in Perfect Joy, says to him: "*Go away, go back to the Crucifers, we are so many and such that we do not need you!*". Where is

the good taste? And where has the light hidden? Everything speaks of disappointment, anger screams, sadness takes hold of the face, everything has not helped. Friendly voices are silent, the enemy speaks.

Francis does not go to the Crucifers who took care of lepers, he does not go back to the beginning. Francis could go to Rome to visit his friend, Cardinal Hugolin: he would have welcomed him, he would have agreed with him by helping him to go and to re-found the Order with more observant and rigorous disciples. But love does not seek reason!

Francis goes up to La Verna to seek the Voice of God, to cry out to God, he goes up to La Verna and goes down deep within himself to seek and long again for the Face of God hidden by the burdens of life.

Francis will be found again by God and marked with the wisdom of the Cross in the flesh.

Francis is still salt, light, leaven, perfume. It has the confirmation that love does not come back. So it is that he brings down from Mountain of La Verna the most beautiful relic, a note where on one side there are the Praises to the Most High God, on the other the Blessing to Br. Leo. Praise God and bless our brothers and sisters. Here is the gift. Still true for me and for you.

May you have happy days of grace brothers!