Homily of July 14, 2022: Is 2,7-9.12.16-19; Mt 11,28-30

Dear confreres, dear Chapter Fathers, it is in the painful situation of the transformation of the life of our good confrere Father Louis Buhuru Fataki that I unite myself to all our Religious Family through your presence to celebrate this Mass of suffrage. I would have liked to preside at the Eucharist in the joy of my birthday next Monday as it was planned, but the circumstance wants us to celebrate now not the birthday but the birth in heaven of a confrere. Father Louis, whom some of you know, is the first Congolese Rogationist priest in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is a priest who has always been characterized by simplicity, humility, service and concern for others. He experienced many distressing moments not only during his youth and religious formation but also as a young priest. His simplicity sometimes earned him the loan of contempt as if he were incapable of answering or demanding. He never aspired to worldly greatness, never discussed the steering wheel with anyone until his death.

"One dies as one has lived," they say. Father Louis lived in total oblivion and that is how he died in the silence of sleep, the only witness to which was the night of July 12 to 13, 2022. On Monday, July 11, 2022, Father Louis accompanied Father Jean Viateur for the funeral of his Mother; on July 12, he again accompanied Father Jean Viateur for the lifting of the mourning. He served and prayed with the others. When he returned to the Community, he again welcomed Jean Viateur's visitors and served them well at the table before going to bed for good. Before going to sleep, he told Brother Sixbert, the intern, that he would not come to the office of Lauds but that if he was late, he should be woken up for the celebration of the Eucharist. It was when he woke up that Brother Sixbert made a macabre discovery: the confrere was lying on his stomach with blood on his nose. "God has given, God has taken away. May his name be praised", the Scripture tells us.

The liturgical texts that the Church proposes to meditate on today coincide with this intention of our Eucharistic sacrifice this morning.

 The excerpt from the 26th chapter of the book of Isaiah in the first reading is a psalm of hope that seems to describe well the situation of Israel years after the return from exile. The people returned from exile full of great hope. Since the return from Exile, they were full of eagerness to rebuild, but they discovered that they were unable to save themselves and their nation (18). The pagans exploit the Holy Land and make life difficult for the believers (10-12). The believers ask God to hasten the time of their restoration. And since God is just, he will not only give the living the expected liberation, but he will raise up the innocent victims who have trusted him so that they too will know God's peace (19-21). This is probably one of the oldest biblical testimonies of hope in a resurrection. It is this conviction that animates us all in our spiritual journey. We all hope for a life of wholeness with God after our passage on earth. It is this life, I believe, that Father Louis entered.

The closing of the 11th chapter of Matthew's Gospel gives us Jesus' invitation to the little ones to whom God has revealed his mysteries: "Come to me, all you who labor under a burden, and I will give you rest. Reading this extract in the context of our General Chapter, we can say that in the "Journey Together" it is first of all Jesus who calls us to follow him and it is on his path of following that we must journey together. We have already taken some steps with him, God the Father has revealed to us the wonders of the Rogate through our Holy Founder. Today, Jesus still calls us, come to me... We are therefore aware that we cannot walk together if we do not walk behind the Master. We must walk together as disciples who learn from the Master. And what does the Master teach us? Jesus teaches us that he is gentle and humble of heart. Jesus' humility reveals to us the humility of God who never seeks to put us down or intimidate us, but instead wants to lift us up to himself. This humility does not prevent him from being God, and he will be able to demand everything from us because he does not force us from the outside: his influence reaches the depths of the heart. By coming to Jesus, he does not take away our burden, but if we accept his yoke, we will be able to carry that burden.

Jesus, a patient and humble teacher, shows us God's mercy in our lives and even in our own cross. He shows us the love of God even in the demands of the Law. May he always be with us in our journey together, in unity and sharing!