



2015
YEAR OF THE HOSPITALLER VOCATION

“CONVERSION of St JOHN OF GOD”

Prayer of the month
January 2015

1.- Introduction

To listen to God’s voice, requires a call that implies movement, change, letting go of our usual habits and making the effort to seek the Lord’s will. Listening to his voice implies responding to his call, and discovering a life option in daily routine. This response is born of/in the experience of believing, as a call, first to live the faith, personally and in community, so as to discover later a vocation for service, either by setting up home and family, or for consecrated service. The truth of a vocation is that it is a deep stirring in one’s being, carried, developed and matured. Jesus’ call to his disciples, inviting them to follow him, is the example of a vocation that demands a following, radical enough to leave everything behind, and with Him to gain so much more. In this way he allows his disciples to have new habits in the same life and daily routine. Vocation means adopting a new life, it involves a complete change in the person.

In the Book of Genesis we find an example, a text that provides all Abraham's particulars and what it meant for him to leave his land and seek the novelty of God's invitation. At the same time, however, this causes changes in Abraham's faith, in what he used to believe in, to leave everything behind, his only hope being his belief in God. Juan Ciudad's vocation happened the moment he heard the striking reflections of Master John of Avila on the Feast of St Sebastian. He was profoundly affected by his commentary on Lk 6, 17 -32 (the Beatitudes), from which he felt the call to serve God. This call demanded this process, that he leave everything behind, and involved seeking the promised land, the place where John of God's faith, as well as his life, would change completely. John of God left the land of his birth to look for the land promised by God – Granada - that transformed his life and gave him salvation, as well as that gift of Hospitality that would multiply all over the world like leaven in the mass.

2.- Hymn

3.- Psalm: Psalm of the man open to God's will"

I stand before you today, O Lord, With
all that I am and all that I have. I come
to you with all I possess and all I need.

Because I know that in you I will find a
reply. I feel that I cannot live in doubt
all the time And that the time for a
decision has come.

I want to stand before you with a heart
as open as that of Mary, With my eyes
upon you in the hopes that you will say
your Word.

I want to stand before you like
Abraham, With a heart full of hope,
Putting my life in your hands.

I want to stand before you like Samuel,

With ears and heart ready to hear your
will. Here I am Lord, Desirous to know
your designs.

I would like to be certain Of what you
are asking of me now; I wish that you
would speak clearly to me, as you did
to Samuel.

So often do I live in eternal doubt. I live
in the midst of two opposing forces
that make me indecisive And there I
am in the middle, unable to see my
way clear.

Take me away, Lord, from the
confusion in which I live. I want to
know for sure which path I should
follow.

I want to dig deep into myself

And find the strength I need To answer
you, without excuses, without
pretexts.

I want to lose so many fears That stop
me from seeing clearly The project
that you have for my life.

What do you want, Lord? Answer me!
Do you want me to be your disciple To
proclaim you in this world?

What do you want of me, Lord? Why
me and not another? In the midst of
all these swarming doubts I want you
to know, Lord, that I shall do what you
ask.

If you want me to proclaim your
Kingdom, count on me , Lord.

If you need my help To take all the
persons I meet to you, Count on me
Lord.

If you call me to be your witness in a
more radical way As a consecrated
man amongst men, Count on me, Lord.

And if you wish to speak your Word
directly into my ears and my heart,
Speak, Lord, for your servant is
listening.

4.- Biblical reading:

Now the Lord said to Abraham, "Go from your country and kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those that bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abraham went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abraham was seventy five years old when he departed from Haran. Abraham took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abraham passes through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, "To your offspring I will give this land. So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and there pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. And Abraham journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

Genesis 12,1-9

5.- Reflection

The first comment we can make is that the text of Abraham's call has an historical basis in the customs and practices of the nomadic Tribes, who practised radical change and movement and only stayed anywhere the time it took to find food for themselves and fodder for their flocks. They were always looking for new opportunities and better places to set up camp. It was a time of movement and change, of always seeking something new. This event marks the end of the customs of an earlier stage and the start of the stage of salvation based on God's promises: from sterility there comes life; from the exodus begins a new conquest, the future of the descendants. They leave one land and God will show Abraham another for his family. God will give him a people, a synonym of benediction for his name. God will always be on his side, his name will be invoked in the promised land and the man who was called, Abraham, will respond with his obedience.

This is the grace that God gives to all who listen to his voice and respond with obedience. Like our father in the faith, and witness to complete trust in God, Juan Ciudad too eagerly responds with vocational obedience to God's call, and leaves everything behind. He stops calling himself Juan Ciudad to become John of God, as a sign of belonging. He leaves his village to go to the city. He leaves his family to have many brothers. This is how our sources describe it.

Juan Ciudad experienced emptiness and discovered the fullness of God. After a string of failures as a soldier, he was thrown off his horse, threatened, and had no help apart from what God was able to give him. He was a failure as a soldier, when a captain condemned him to be hanged on a tree, because the booty placed in his safe-keeping had been stolen, and even though he was not executed he was cast out of the camp, leaving him poorer than before. After nine years of silence, John once again enrolled in the army of the Emperor to fight against the Turks. He returned from Vienna and landed in La Coruna. Being so close to his birthplace he suddenly felt a longing to see his parents, from whom he had been taken away at the age of eight, and he was greatly distressed when he discovered that while he had been away his parents had died. He was alone and he felt empty.

Later he went to Ceuta and in order to help a sick family he set about working on the fortification of the city walls. He overcame a deep spiritual crisis with the help of a learned monk who expressly ordered him to leave Ceuta and return to Spain. He moved to Granada where after selling books he was able to listen to the striking reflections of Master John of Avila on the Feast of St Sebastian. He was particularly affected by the commentary on Lk 6, 17 – 32 (the Beatitudes), from which he feels called to serve God:

No sooner had the sermon ended than John rushed out of the place imploring and shouting for God's mercy (...) until he reached his shop and stock (...) he gave his books away free to anyone who asked for them for the love of God (...) and everything else that he had in his house (...) Very soon his stock of books was gone and he was stripped of all his worldly goods, because he did not stop there, but he also stripped himself and gave his clothes away (...) Thus naked, barefoot and dishevelled he ran out once more into the main streets of Granada shouting that he wanted to be stripped so that he could follow the naked Christ and

become poor like him, who although the richest of all creatures, made himself poor to show us the way to humility. (The Path of Hospitality)

6.- Prayers

1. **Let us pray to God for our St John of God Family, asking that in the midst of the world's new challenges we may be witnesses to our vocation of service and obedience to God, leaving everything behind to care for others.**
2. **Let us pray to God that as Hospitallers, we may be able to incarnate ever more deeply Christ's feelings towards the sick and needy, and show them compassion, and a loving welcome.**
3. **Let us pray to God that our hospitaller charism be the hope that daily urges us to leave everything behind and devote ourselves joyfully to assisting those who suffer, in the manner of a hospitaller brother.**

7.- The Lord's prayer

8.- Final prayer



PRAYER FOR THE HOSPITALER VOCATION

God our Father,
In this Hospitaller Vocations Year
We place all our trust in you
And commit to your goodness
Our difficulties, our joys and our hopes.

May the love that you have poured into our hearts
Fill us with the hospitality.
May we be welcoming and compassionate
And sensitive to the sufferings of our neighbours.

Renew in us your call to follow Jesus your Son,
And make us realise that it is worthwhile
Giving up our lives for the Gospel, in the service
Of our poor, sick and needy neighbour.

Lord, accept our praise and our prayer
So that young people, following the example of Mary,
The Mother of hospitality, will not hesitate to say 'yes'
And will joyfully join our Hospitaller Family
To perform the mission to which you have called us.

Grant that we can respond to your call,
Generously and readily.
Make us, in the image of Saint John of God,
Bearers of life,
Health and Hope for all those
We meet along the pathways of life.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen.