



NON PLUS ULTRA...

By Bro Mariano Di Vito, OFM Cap.

For the people of ancient times the Pillars of Hercules (the westernmost point of the Iberian peninsula) marked the ends of the world and on their geographical maps at the entrance of the great ocean would be written the words “*Non plus Ultra!*” (“Nothing further beyond!”) Then three Caravels crossed the great ocean and the “new world” entered history, changing it for always!

On those Caravels travelling, together with the not always noble ambitions of the Eminent of Spain, were disciples of Francis, Dominic and Ignatius, bringing with them in their hearts the fervent desire to preach the Gospel and to bring to the unknown and unexplored West Indies the Cross of our Lord and Saviour. Five hundred or more years later, another disciple of Ignatius made the same journey but this time in the opposite direction, to become Peter, the Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the Universal Church and taking the name of Francis.

He has been called to confirm the faith that was preached to his forefathers by his fellow brothers and to shepherd as Pastor the whole of Our Lord’s flock.

He chose the name Francis because, like our Seraphic Father, he wishes to rely on the strength

of the Gospel and because he has chosen the poor of the world as the privileged subjects of his Petrine ministry.

He has already won our hearts! His simple clear words, comprehensible to all have, as one important ecclesiastic already aptly stated, brought into the hallowed halls of the Vatican and to the outer reaches of the world the fragrance of the Gospel, the fragrance of Bethlehem: words fragrant and substantial like bread...

The barque of Peter in stormy seas and besieged by violent waves seems to have, in one mighty surge and with sails swelled by the power of the Spirit, turned towards the open sea and is ready, with the optimism of the faith, to traverse the great sea of history.

Of course, it will be necessary to cast our nets out (...most probably after some reparation), and to announce again the Gospel in ways that are understandable to our times. This is a duty that is entrusted to all baptised and to every Christian community. And no one can deny that Pope Francis from the outset has not spoken and acted in ways that demonstrate this road to all men and women of good will: compassion, tenderness, goodness, service, respect, protection of cre-

ation, prayer, attention centred on Our Lord’s cross and the crosses of humanity... This is all a language of the heart and of a living faith, rather than specific pastoral programmes, and has because of this already influenced in a beneficial way, if nothing more, on how we are to approach and dialogue with mankind and the world, that is with humility that is able to draw and win the hearts of people, rather than a cold, arrogant confidence in one’s own powers. Pope Francis has declared as Bishop of Rome and as Pontiff that he wishes to be, or rather that he wishes to continue to be, before all else, a true disciple of Our Lord Jesus, whom he looks to as exemplar and wishes to build and safeguard in His Name, with trust and hope, true, authentic and peaceful relations with all men of good will. We are with Peter.

All of us from the Voice of Padre Pio and together with the Padre’s many devotees, who have shown our absolute faith, devotion and unconditional obedience on so many occasions to the Successor of Peter, wish to assure him of our constant and heartfelt prayers.

Thank you and our best wishes Pope Francis!