

ROARS AND WHISPERS...



By Bro MARIANO DIVITO, OFM CAP.

Listening is the key to any relationship. And this does not refer just to our faculty of hearing. We listen with our eyes, with our bodies, and in a very special way with our heart!

In a word it is an art, and like any art it must be learnt, practised, and everyone brings to it their own style, colour, profundity and beauty.

Saint Paul reminds us that our very faith cannot be born except by hearing: "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom 10, 17), and one of the most repeated phrases of the Old Testament is "Hear O Israel." Almighty God is ceaselessly invoked with cries and groans and

to listen to the prayers of His children (cf. Ex 2, 23) and He is described as "He who hears the groaning of His people" (Ex 2, 24). Jesus compares those who belong to Him to sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd (cf. Jn 10, 27) and lastly the Church, which is us, to the community that hears the Spirit (cf. Rev 2, 7. 11. 17; 3, 6. 13) and listens to His Word (cf. Acts 15, 7; 28, 28).

It is said that we live, and quite correctly, in a society of images, and we must, and this is not being inconsistent, also listen to images and the sounds that describe, accompany and draw attention to them.

Pope Francis, last 10 December, in his message for the World Day for Hunger promoted by *Caritas Internationalis*, reminded us with vigour and passion that, in our era so proud of its countless technological, scientific and social achievements, the voice of the

poor, resounds like a "roar" and how there are many who not only cannot participate in the banquet of affluence but cannot even gather up the crumbs. The cup of our affluent society that once full should spill over and benefit everyone, becomes inexplicably always larger and more capacious so that not a single drop flows out upon the many deserts that, on the contrary, are always increasing.

A new year is beginning and our wishes are that it may bring to all greater serenity, well-being, justice and the resolution to the many inequalities that exist in our, nevertheless, always fascinating "azure planet."

Let us set out this year then, by learning to listen: to the roar of the poor and to the whispers of God. Padre Pio would often say that he felt his heart and soul breaking when hearing the countless material and spiritual woes that men and women would unburden in his confessional.

He would listen to them and recommend them to the Lord in his prayers and he would find concrete and successful remedies.

His ear, however, had become sensitive and attuned to the sounds of those deep waters in the hearts of men and women because, and only because, he never ceased listening to God's whispers.

With this new year we must all, each and everyone of us, respond, and in the ways we know best, to those "roars" and "whispers." ❖

fr. Mariano Divito