

## *What matters is being a new creature*

Homily, 4th October, 2016

Gal 6,14-18

father G. Papparone o.p.

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Today is the feast of **Saint Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of Italy**. The Liturgy proposes this passage from the beautiful and fundamental Epistle to the Galatians, where Saint Paul broaches **the heart of Christian faith, which is the freedom of God's children**.

When Jesus died on the cross, he got **freedom** for us, the freedom from the dominion of passions, from ignorance, from the slavery of the Law, the freedom from the link between inner life and all kinds of ritualism.

Saint Paul emphasizes the nature of His mission: **what Jesus has come to do is a new creation**.

**We must think of Christianity as a new creation: not solely and primarily as a religion made of moral precepts and of rituals, but as a gift, an opportunity to be recreated, regenerated, as Christian baptism reminds us of.**

Saint Paul also told an extraordinary truth to those who clung on to rites, above all the ancient rites inherited from Hebrew tradition, like circumcision, which was crucial to be part of the chosen people: **neither having a circumcision, nor not having it, matters. What matters is being a new creature**.

Precisely because circumcision is a human rite, performed by men; the choice of refusing it, may show arrogance, self-importance, autonomy and, as a consequence, a sort of proud emancipation from all rules.

Well, Saint Paul says that neither matters, that we must be neither slaves nor free, according to the rules of men; **we must let God transform us through his grace and his Gospel**. And yet, we often forget it and create a gap between grace, which is an invisible and supernatural reality that gets into our life, and the Gospel, which are the rules and the external teaching.

These two things are inseparable, one recalls the other, both of them are the sides of the same coin.

**God gives us the grace to make us new creatures and, as such, we shall live according to the Gospel.**

In conclusion, in order to celebrate Saint Francis, a man who wanted to give up all his properties and human privileges, everything which could be, even vaguely, the expression of human nature, and who chose poverty, we want to wear the same spirit of poverty to be able to get into the Kingdom of Heaven with him.

**We wish to say a special prayer for Pope Francis** who, by choosing his name, wanted to remind all of us of the real essence of the Gospel: to be new creatures, to be evangelical men.

Praised be Jesus Christ.