

HOMILY ON SOL. OF OUR LADY OF THE APPARITION

(Est 5:1b-2; 7:2b-3; Rev 12:1, 5, 13a, 15-16a; Jn 2:1-11).

Do what He tells you!

Dear brothers and sisters!

We extend a special greeting to the Benedictine educators from various countries who have gathered in our monastery for BENET Rio 2023: World Meeting of Benedictine Schools, which has been taking place since yesterday at our College of St. Benedict.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lady of the Conception Aparecida, the Patroness of Brazil, whose image was found by three fishermen in the Paraíba do Sul River in October 1717, 306 years ago.

Since then, the devotion to Our Lady of Aparecida has continued to grow. Three chapels were built, one always larger than the last, up to the present Basilica, consecrated by St. John Paul II on July 4, 1980, with the capacity to hold up to 45,000 faithful inside.

The readings speak of two queens, Esther and Mary. One, interceding for the life of a people: If I have found favor in your sight, O king, grant me life and the life of my people (1st reading).

Esther doesn't ask for anything for herself, she wants to stay alive to help the people, to serve her community. She is a figure of Our Lady, who intercedes with her Son, for the needs of the people and the world, both of which are so in need of Mary's help.

The Gospel shows Mary interceding for the guests at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. Mary, like Esther, intercedes with a King, her Son, Jesus Christ, Lord and King of the universe: They have no more wine; do whatever he tells you!

Mary, the cause of our joy, could not let the bride and groom and their guests down. A zealous mother, placed among her people, Mary continues at all times and places, welcoming and interceding with her Son for the desires of the children who come to her.

My brothers and sisters, and my dearest Benedictine educators, God always surprises! Just as he surprised the fishermen, he wants to surprise all of us at this World Meeting. The story of the fishermen and the encounter with the image is also a human story, the story of each one of us, the story of you who have come to Benet Rio 2023.

One day we were thrown into the river of life, into the sea of existence, into the lake of a

journey with so many shores to reach, into the waters of a noble mission: to lead souls towards an integral and excellent formation, all this was done so that we can place them before the Creator.

May Our Lady of Aparecida intercede for our meeting, so that we return to our schools, aware that it is also their mission to place our students before God and his Son Jesus Christ: what good is it if a man gains the whole world and loses his soul (Mt 16:26).

Make no mistake, our experience today on the 'river of education' is similar to that of the fishermen on the Paraíba River. Projects launched, not always harvested. How many times have we felt insecure, like fragile boats, afraid to move into deeper waters, in the face of a digital post-modernity that challenges an education like ours?!

Let's not get discouraged when our pedagogical actions show partial, half-hearted results. The fishermen teach us that we must persevere. God often tests us - he tests our ability to endure, to tolerate, to go all the way, even when the conditions aren't the best - but he is a God who always surprises those who are persevering, creative, on their knees! If we carry on like this, we will not only have complete schools, but also an ever-abundant catch of fish. My brothers and sisters, let us do what God asks of us, putting nothing before the love of his Son Jesus Christ, as our Holy Father Benedict teaches us in the fourth chapter of his Rule (RB 4:21). If we live from God, putting nothing before the love of Christ, he will also manifest his glory to us, just as he did to his disciples at the Wedding Feast of Cana, through the intercession of Our Lady.

May Our Lady of Aparecida intercede for all of us, for our Brazil, for Benet Rio 2023.

And may God continue to surprise us. Amen!

+ Filipe da Silva OSB - 12/10/2023.