



**Homily offered by H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata
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Our celebration falls on the day on which the Church commemorates Saint Ephrem, a Syrian saint of the fourth century who left behind him a profound trace throughout the Christian tradition. He was a prominent witness of the Syriac Church of the first centuries, which is both rich and little known. Compared with this glorious past, thinking of what Syria and the Middle East regions are today can only arouse great pain. Of Saint Ephrem we cherish in particular a series of hymns and canticles which are still reference texts for the liturgy and for Christian spirituality. In this way, Saint Ephrem accepted and put into practice the invitation that we heard in the Letter to the Colossians: *"Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God"* (3:16).

Reading these elements in the light of today's Gospel (Lk 6:43-45), we can truly say that the fruits that this saint has born come from a good tree or, outside this metaphor, from a good heart, from the overabundance of his heart.

In this way, we can identify the message that the liturgy entrusts to us today, in other words what the Lord wants to tell us. His message is above all a message with a human meaning of unmistakable evidence. In the end, each person comes up with what he has deep down in his heart and which he carries inside with a strength that cannot be repressed, only at the most concealed, but only up to a certain point. Each person cannot help but reveal, be it little or much, be it sooner or later, what he cares about the most, what is closest to his heart.

Reflection therefore is grounded in our interiority, in our heart, intended as what defines us and moves us in the depths of our being and of our feelings. The first thing to say about this, then, is that we need to take care of our interiority above all else. And the reason is, precisely, that what we say and what we do spring in some way from our deep feelings.

Therefore, we must first of all ask ourselves if and how we cultivate our interiority. There are obviously many ways to do this; let us think of listening to God through Scripture and many other ways, such as seeking the signs of the times, through dialogue and discussion within the ecclesial community, above all with prayer and,

last but not least, with the sacraments. In reality, what is needed is a well-trained ability to reflect and listen to our inner world, to grasp and direct everything according to truth and with a conviction of what is worth and what really matters. What is in question here is the solidity of our formation and the spiritual and human strength of our personality.

We should not think that this is only a matter of personal moral action. It is clear that the moral level is the first one and the most immediate personal fruit of the quality of a person and of his interiority. What is at issue, however, is also the multiple assessments and choices that affect all aspects of our life and concern our place in society and the exercise of our responsibilities towards the others.

Hence, the step towards public, as well as political, responsibility, is very short. Political choices need a complex elaboration of skills and relational and social elements among which one easily risks getting lost. An essential condition for a political action that is, yes, effective but above all the fruit of a good tree is this: that it is never separated from the ideal, spiritual and moral root of the person and of the community which supports and awaits the results of his presence and the exercise of his duties.

A politician is like a tree that is good and bears good fruit if it matures a vision of the common good that responds to the circumstances of society and of the time; and if he is capable of looking to a future of hope and to inspire projects of peace and integral development for each and all, for each person and for the whole person.

The great personalities are those who never lose sight of the deep feeling from which they were inspired and which animates them, while at the same time being capable of examining with wisdom, prudence and courage the historical circumstances in which they carry out their responsibility. Ours may not seem to be a time in which such figures are easily encountered. But it is a misunderstanding that eventually leads to resignation, to disconsolate observations on the difficult times we are going through: we humans are not the immutable product of an inexorable and blind destiny, but we can be the creators of our present and our future. If possible, the Christian faith offers one more reason to believe in this; in fact it assigns an extraordinary strength to the freedom and initiative of believers, a gift of grace for all those who, with faith and earnestly, are disposed to put the talents they received to fruition.

Just as the fruits depend on the quality of the trees, so the facts, history, culture and all that can be humanly given to us, ultimately depend on us, on our will to believe and decide, on our ability to take care of our inner world, where all human creativity has its source. We ask this to the Lord and we wish this to each other.