

## Notes - A book: Domenico Concolino, Silence. Reaper of lost sheaves, Cosenza 2019

Today, writing about silence is a paradox at first sight. In fact, who decides to do it destroys it. However speaking of silence is something possible, indeed necessary, since talking about it positively qualifies the depth of our way of relating to reality (...).

Romano Guardini, the brilliant theologian of Italian origin, recalls in his writings how the true horizon of silence shows itself precisely in what denies it: the word of man, or, also, the word of God. If it is true that every word spoken it marginalizes silence for the time of its pronouncement, but the latter reappears in the end as the taste and sense of what we have heard. However, Guardini continues curiously, there is no specific term in our Western languages to indicate the simultaneous connection of silence and word. The entirety of this duality cannot be expressed in a single concept. The fact remains that word and silence are an entirety not to be separated. The word far from the silence expires in the lowest and most vulgar chatter, exposing itself to misunderstanding, frivolity and even violence, while the silence that no longer feeds on words becomes an absurdity, that is, literally, becomes incapable of giving listening to reality and ourselves, turning into an illogical nonsense (...).

Thus it happens, especially in Christianity, that the Word and silence are never realities that are mutually exclusive and far from it. They feed on each other. One becomes the

womb of the other reality. The liturgy itself is a mixture of silence and word. Like music and its pauses, writing and its spaces, the image and the canvas; only that Word that comes from silence and remains in it is capable of generating wisdom and it scatters wisdom, foresight and light. This is why it is always relevant to reflect on silence. In a world in which its presence has been drastically reduced, even the spoken word, the one written on paper or the one entrusted to the web, has become poor at times insipid, repetitive, superficial, necrotic and divisive.

Therefore, the practice of silence is not only an aesthetic dimension of language, but above all it is a therapy and a restorative cure for every man. Silence takes care of us deep inside, where it dresses us like a second skin. Only in it does our mind light up, discern, grasp the essential, distinguishing now the true word, now the false word, the one that passes by from the one that has value and resists over time. In silence - the prolonged and constant one - our sight is sharpened and our mind ordered. Through its door one enters the house of discernment and even of prayer, of the meaning of life and of our journey through time. It is no coincidence that many forms of Christian spirituality, and others, recommend it above all as an ascetic practice.

A book, of very small dimensions, is thought of as a help to return to the language of silence, in its phenomenology, in its life and aims to be support and strength not only of the human word, but even more, of the Word of God, that is given there where man is silent and stops fidgeting shut up only in his words and thoughts.

In this sense, silence leads to conversion (metanoia), to going beyond our thoughts (...). In fact, in the house of silence, we all have the opportunity to recognize ourselves as limited people, on the way towards the Holy Face of God. (The Author)

### What did you go to see in the desert?

**The** Lord always credits his envoys with signs, miracles and wonders. With Moses the Lord has done works that no one has ever done. He donates the same accreditation to Elijah and Elisha. With the other prophets, major and minor, the Lord does not reveal himself with prodigies, except with Daniel. But they are credited by the Word that is fulfilled. Jesus comes and like Moses, rather more than he, is credited by the Father through a multitude of signs. The last is his glorious resurrection. Jesus does not take up the body he had before his crucifixion and death, he receives from the Father the pierced body but transformed into light and spirit and made immortal and incorruptible for eternity. Thus the Gospel according to John ends: "In the presence of his disciples, Jesus made many other signs that were not written in this book. But these were written so that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and so that, believing, you have life in his name (Jn 20: 30-31). Perfect and superior accreditation to any other given by God to his messengers, apostles, envoys and prophets.

What is the accreditation given by God to John the Baptist? This great instrument of God has not accomplished any visible prodigy. The Lord gave him a word burning like fire. This word attracted the crowds and those who approached Him, were moved by the Spirit who was in the word to a true conversion. Everyone repented of his sins, let himself be baptized and prepared his heart to welcome the Messiah that was about to come. The angel Gabriel had announced it to his father: "He will walk

before him with the spirit and the power of Elijah, to bring back the hearts of the fathers to their children and the rebels to the wisdom of the just and to prepare a well disposed people for the Lord (Lk 1:17). His father had also sung him in his hymn of blessing to his God: "And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High because you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people the knowledge of salvation in the remission of its sins. Thanks to the tenderness and mercy of our God, a sun that rises from above will visit us, to shine on those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death and to direct our steps on the way of peace" (Lk 1,76- 79). In John the power of the Holy Spirit works the great prodigy of the conversion of many hearts.

Jesus also bears witness to John the Baptist. He says of him that he is more than a prophet. He is his precursor. In him Malachi's prophecy is fulfilled: "Behold, I send my messenger before you, he will prepare your way before you". By bearing witness to John, Jesus attests that he is the Lord who comes. He is the Christ of God. He is the promised Messiah. He who is born in Bethlehem is not only the Son of Mary, he is the Son of Mary and the Only Begotten Son of the Father, his eternal Word. This is the great mystery that we are preparing to celebrate. Mother of the Redemption, arrange that the disciple of Jesus lives the whole truth of the mystery of Christ that comes so as to attract every other heart to him, today, tomorrow and always.

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## PHILIP AND THE "RACE" OF THE GOSPEL ON NEW ROADS

Reflections from the Audience of H.H. Francis (2.10.2019)

**O**n November 30, 1919 Pope Benedict XV wrote an apostolic letter entitled "Maximum Illud", emphasizing the importance and value of the mission. In the centenary of that document, Pope Francis drew inspiration from it to hold the Extraordinary missionary month of last October and to ask all of us the same passion and zeal that the apostles had to bring the Gospel that saves to the world.

The Pope has embarked on a journey of deepening on the Acts of the Apostles in this context, since last May 29. The Holy Father invites us with particular attention to reflect and first of all he highlights how persecution is inserted into the life of the apostles, because Jesus himself was persecuted before them (cf. Jn 15:20). It is important to note that the greater the persecution is, the greater the love of the apostles is, which leads them to persevere in their mission to bring the Gospel. They have a mandate and do not want to withdraw or be ashamed of the One in whom they believe. There is in them the desire to bring the Word of Jesus into the world; thus, a "race" of salvation begins.

The Pope dwells on the figure of the deacon Philip and an Ethiopian. The Holy Spirit marks a new stage for Philip: he sends him to a stranger who has the heart open to know the Lord, but does not know how to do it. The Disciple meets this high official of the Queen of Ethiopia, the administrator of her treasures. After having been in Jerusalem for worship, this man is returning to his country. In his carriage he reads the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, who speaks of the "Servant of the Lord". Philip begins his mission by asking the man if he

understands what he is reading. The value of initial and permanent formation immediately stands out, so that the Word of God is nourishment for our soul. The Ethiopian immediately replies that there is no one to explain it to him, but he shows great desire to be enlightened. His humility is manifested and the Lord helps him, precisely because he is predisposed to listen to and live the Word of God. It is not only necessary to read, one must be humble and listen to the guidance that the Lord sends.

So who is the protagonist of that passage? Who does the prophet Isaiah refer to? Philip offers his interlocutor the key to reading: that meek suffering servant, who does not react to evil with evil and who - though considered unsuccessful and sterile and ultimately removed - frees the people from iniquity and bears fruit for God, is precisely that Christ whom Philip and the Church all announce! That redeemed us all in his Easter. The Ethiopian finally recognizes Christ and professes his faith in him, asking for baptism.

Let us ask ourselves: who moved Philip to go along a deserted street to meet this man? And who does the Ethiopian receive help from? The author is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist of evangelization. But he can guide those who place themselves faithfully in the service of Christ. He can enlighten those who humbly seek the truth to follow it. If one affirms or listens to himself, he cannot follow the motion of the Spirit. Virgin Mary, help us to be humble as the Ethiopian and faithful servants like Philip.

**Father Nicola Coppoletta**

**The  
Lord's Day  
ROMAN RITE**

**ARE YOU THE ONE WHO IS TO COME,  
OR SHOULD WE LOOK FOR ANOTHER?  
(III ADVENT SUNDAY - Year A)**

THEN WILL THE EYES OF THE BLIND BE OPENED (Is 35,1-6a.10)

The Lord sees the poverty in which his people fell and promises a powerful intervention. "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; Then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing". God's work alone is not enough to create a new world. Man's is also needed: "Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes to save you". If man neglects his work towards his brothers, the action of God alone might do nothing or very little. John the Baptist came and prepared the way for the Lord. Now Jesus can truly create hope in hearts. Today the world needs to be created in hope. Only the Holy Spirit can do this work. But he needs our work. Jesus comes, but he needs the Christian.

THE COMING OF THE LORD IS AT HAND (Jas 5,7-10)

There are two works to be done for the Christian to be true. The first is always the Lord's. It is He who frees and saves with his grace, truth, light and eternal life. It is He who produces, like a tree, every fruit of salvation and redemption. But the work of God is not sufficient and it is not enough. First of all, the Christian must reside in the holiness and truth of Christ Jesus. Moreover, he must have the same patience as the peasant. As this waits for the tree to produce its precious fruits, so too the Christian must wait for the coming of the Lord, without ever getting tired,

surrendering and persevering in hope until the end. If you get tired, go back, don't move forward and retreat, you lose your salvation, because you have lost hope. Today many disciples of Jesus are hopeless. Some have lost it because of their terrible fault, others because they were not helped or helped badly by those who had been placed as true curators of it.

GO AND TELL JOHN (Mt 11.2-11)

John the Baptist is in prison. He sends some messengers to Jesus to ask him a singular question: "Are you the one who has to come or should we wait for another?" If John is a prophet of the living God, if he is the one who has indicated God's Messiah present in the world, if he is the one who said that Jesus must grow, while he must decrease, why does he ask this question? The answer is in the nature of the prophet himself. The word of the prophet does not pass through the mind nor through the heart. He speaks it with the power of the Holy Spirit. He also needs God to explain and interpret it to him. John expected the coming of the kingdom of God according to the prophecy of Malachi. But Jesus did not come to fulfill that prophecy, he comes to prepare hearts so that that prophecy can be fulfilled with the greatest number of saved and redeemed. Jesus came to prepare for the Father a kingdom in which justice, charity, light, love and eternal life dwell. In this kingdom all men must be called first. Then it will become the eternal kingdom in paradise.

*by the theologian,  
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