

Volunteering: a manifestation of charity

... "But the greatest of all is charity"! How much beauty and fullness there is in this sentence and I would like to reflect on it through a simple testimony, which is placed within my experience of faith in the Apostolic Movement.

Yes, precisely thanks to the Apostolic Movement I was able to experience, among other things, some of the infinite manifestations of "charity". Above all, the charity of the Gospel must be welcomed, lived, announced and testified. And among the forms of mission motivated by the Gospel, I feel very involved in volunteering to be carried out in nursing homes, alongside what many call "sick people" but who, in the end, you discover have such a desire to live as to make you understand that maybe you're the one who is in need of help.

Being even an hour next to them, sometimes with a guitar to intone their most beautiful songs, sometimes without anything but with a great desire to listen, made me understand how charity also requires knowing how to live fully next to your neighbour, his joys and sufferings. As we know, faith cannot be something far from one's personal life; if you are a Christian you must think as a Christian, live as a Christian because only in this way "everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another".

And it is precisely volunteering, starting

from this experience alongside the most fragile people, that has become the part of life to which I am most emotionally involved.

I am part of a clown therapy association: no, I am not a clown (or maybe yes), I am just a volunteer of smiles and I want to give you a written thought of mine upon returning from one of the strongest experiences I have ever had. In Croatia there is a town, Gornja, where, in a castle placed in the mountains, there are angels, children with serious psycho-physical malformations but with a look that, if you welcome it, upsets you inside.

"Last day here. 6 am: today we decide to help the nurses with the baths. Magic moments! Around 8:45 am the whole group heads to the rooms for breakfast time and immediately afterwards we take the gornjolini (the little boys) to the outdoor playground, as in the previous days. But in Gornja no day is equal to the other, every moment loads you with emotions and even today the magic is materialized.

My personal magic bears the name of Viktor. I decide to take him for a walk around the castle; today he is a little too agitated, his hand squeezes my hand tightly along the way: it almost seems that he wants me to greet every corner of that castle, almost perceiving my departure. But the thing that upsets me most are his hugs. "Thanks for what you are giving us": this is what I read!

But the magic continues. It's 7pm: the last goodnight to those angels, tears that flow through the rooms but above all words and looks that upset you. How can I forget Marjia and her strength. Lying on her bed, locked in a body that hardly answers her, she rests her hand on mine: "Come on, don't cry... Marjia well... don't cry".

This too is charity for me: the fullest Love that allows you to welcome the other person and help him carry his cross of suffering and why not, make it be yours a little!

Antonio Afeltra

Opening ourselves to the light of Christ

In his mercy, on his own initiative, Jesus heals a blind man from birth, to manifest the works of God (Jn 9). His is an unusual gesture: he wets some mud with saliva, spreads it on the blind man's eyes and commands him to go and wash in Siloe's swimming pool. He obeys, goes to wash himself and returns to Jesus as a seeing person.

The fact is so shocking that it is almost incredible. People are so amazed that they question the very identity of the blind man who lived among them as a beggar: some recognize him, others say he is someone who looks like him. But he testifies to the truth of the fact: he affirms his identity as a blind man, testifies that his recovery was carried out by Jesus, manifests his conviction that, as thing stand in the world, nothing like this has ever been seen. His parents also confirm that his blindness condition dates back to birth.

Although the historical reality is so manifest, the Pharisees remain in their desired disbelief. Something prevents them from seeing history that flows before their eyes with the force of its evidence. They have already catalogued Jesus as a sinner, because he violates the Sabbath law, they have decided to exclude anyone who recognizes him as the Christ from the synagogue.

Instead, the blind man together with the sight of the eyes, acquires that of the heart, which allows him to recognize Jesus as a "prophet", a person who does the will of God and is listened to by him, as the Son of man, Lord and Light of the world.

Jesus "came into this world so that those who do not see, may see and those who see, become blind". If one welcomes and follows him, he has the true knowledge of man: he knows where he comes from and where he goes, he is able to understand what is ephemeral and what remains for eternity. In fact, the light of Christ rents the heart darkness and opens the eyes, as for the born blind, giving the true meaning of existence. His coming is also "judgment". To the Pharisees Jesus manifests their responsibility: «If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, "We see", your sin remains. " There is in them the will to exclude Christ and his Light: they might never see his wonders. Their heart is shut, their eyes are unable to see, their mind is blurred, the truth is not understood: no truth, neither about God nor about man. Yesterday just like today.

Pope Francis comments: «Our life is sometimes similar to that of the blind man who opened himself to the light, who opened himself to God, who opened himself to his grace. Unfortunately, sometimes it is a bit like that of the doctors of the law: from the height of our pride we judge others and even the Lord! Today, we are invited to open ourselves to the light of Christ to bear fruit in our lives, to eliminate behaviors that are not Christian" (Angelus, March 30, 2014).

Mother of the Redemption, help us enter the light of Christ your Son, to let ourselves be enveloped by it in order to bring it to every man.

Father Gesualdo de Luca

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OPENED TO DIALOGUE WITH GOD

Reflections starting from the message of H.H. Francis for Lent 2020

Lent is a particular time of grace that the Lord, through His Church, offers to the heart of every faithful so that, by listening attentively to his Word and welcoming his grace, he can renew himself internally: "We must never take for granted the fact that the Lord once again offers us a time favorable to our conversion [...] This space offered to change course expresses the tenacious will of God not to interrupt the dialogue of salvation with us" (Message).

The dialogue reveals, in its essential openness to the other, the most secret and remote corners of the love of God, who, without harming personal freedom, becomes a "disciple" together with the man of his own Truth to illuminate and invite him to sincere repentance and conversion. From the dialogue with the disciples of Emmaus, the mercy that God pours out on every man in the sad and painful events of life shines in a singular way: He himself becomes a traveling companion, notes the bitterness, the unease and the misunderstandings that have destabilized faith in him and helps to get out of the abyss of the personal thoughts in order to open up to the newness of his grace (cf. Lk 24: 13-35).

To the initiative of God that always opens wide the doors of dialogue and confrontation, man is called to respond with an attitude of welcome and trust. In particular, so that dialogue can produce fruits of conversion, a deep faith in the Word of God is required, the only one capable of bringing peace, consolation and salvation.

Without this fundamental disposition of the soul, every Word pronounced by God is received with hesitancy or reticence and is read and interpreted according to the motions of the own heart. In the Word we must believe and confide, waiting for its fulfillment in history.

From the encounter of Jesus with the two disciples, other important truths emerge which, if accepted in their objectivity, allow each dialogue to be a harbinger of profound change. The heart of the disciples, despite being in confusion and sadness, is shown to be open to the solicitations of the Master, who, without revealing himself immediately, reminding past events, gradually leads to the recognition of his truth. Opening the heart is vitally important so that the will of God can always emerge in the intricate events of history. On the way to Emmaus, first of all, Christ purified the eyes and hearts of his listeners from their personal and partial visions which prevented them from recognizing Him. Dialogue is capable of healing the hidden wounds of the soul, of bringing the most distant spirits back to God, of breaking down the walls of pride and conceit and bringing hearts back to peace.

May the Virgin Mary Mother of the Redemption make us people of dialogue, so that by casting the nets of our faith on the Word of Her Son Jesus, we can again take to the deep with confidence among the furrows traced by God in our history.

Father Salvatore Bilotta

The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE SON OF MAN?
(IV SUNDAY OF LENT - YEAR A)

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD RUSHED UPON DAVIDE (1Sam 16,1b.4.6-7.10-13)

The Lord always fills every man whom he calls to do his works with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is guide, light, strength, advice, inspiration and knowledge. Samuel is sent to the house of Jesse to consecrate as the king one of his sons. If the Lord had not been with the prophet, he would have given him a king unable to rule his people. God assists him and he consecrates the person chosen by his Lord. As soon as Samuel pours the anointing oil on David's head, the Holy Spirit breaks into and remains with him for all the days of his life. Without the Spirit who dwells in man, no one knows and cannot even do the will of the Lord. He lacks the knowledge and strength, the true wisdom and intelligence. The Spirit of the Lord is all for man and he must accomplish everything for him and with him, in his motion and inspiration. Vocation and gift of the Spirit are one in God.

RATHER EXPOSE THEM (Eph 5: 8-14)

A very serious obligation for Christians is to do all the works of light in history, while remaining always in the light of Jesus. Not only must the works of darkness be avoided, but also condemned openly. There must be no approval, not even by omission, by silence, inattention, distraction and confusion between good and evil. The Christian must always be attentive and vigilant, so that the world never takes advantage of his inattention or does not condemn to justify evil by declaring it good, proclaiming injustices justices and making sins become holy works. The Christian must be light of

work, word, truth and wisdom. If the baptized does not carry out the clear discernment or with his silence he just lets that the other confuses what is human and what is not human, he becomes responsible for all the evil resulting from his omission. If he is not a true Christian his responsibility is of eternal hell.

IF YOU WERE BLIND, YOU WOULD HAVE NO SIN (Jn 9: 1-41)

There is a natural blindness, the fruit of the first sin and of every other sin, which can be excused. Nobody passed by and nobody healed us. But there is no more excusable blindness when Christ is proclaimed and we refuse to let ourselves be healed by Him. There is an even greater responsibility which is that of every Christian and especially of the ministers of the Word. They are sent to the world to give sight to the blind in spirit and soul. If instead of giving the light of the Gospel, they give the darkness of the world, natural blindness remains, but they are responsible for it. The minister of the Word and the Holy Spirit must be one light, not two. To be light of the Word, the disciple of Jesus must be light in the body, removed from vice and sin and brought into the body of Christ, the body of light. As long as there is only one man in darkness, the minister of the Word must always ask himself if by, chance, it is not by his own grave fault. So much blindness in the world could be caused by very serious omissions. He has not become a body of light. He did not let himself be transformed into the word of light.

by the theologian,
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