

Reflections - Faith and science: the limit of life

To the question "What is your biggest fear?", most people answer: being buried alive. This fear comes back to us, in a more or less conscious form, every time a news item invites us to take a stand on what life is to distinguish it from what no longer is: the gray area where serious acquired brain injuries are manifested, that is, brain damages such as seriously compromise movements and cognitive functions like the vegetative state. And that is how, the specialized terms that science often uses, interpreted in the light of an avowedly atheist ideology, end up creating more confusion than clarity. What to do in these cases? It is necessary to turn to faith (expressed by the Magisterium and the Tradition of the Church) and science. Faith and science seek the truth; when science does so, it frees from ideological prejudices, radiates its wisdom in the world and improves the lives of men.

In 2004 St. John Paul II had called an International Congress to deepen the concept of the vegetative state, in whose joint declaration it is argued that the subjects in this state can in no way be considered terminally ill (and in fact in no stage is their death legal), because they can remain stable for years and, moreover, they are not

subjected to treatments comparable to persistent therapy (they are only fed artificially). The document argues that future research could yield important results to improve the condition of those in this state. In fact, this was the case.

The case of Scott, a 26-year-old Canadian boy, is emblematic; after a car accident, he has been considered in a vegetative state for 12 years, before through new tests it was discovered that he was aware of his condition, of the place where he was and of who was taking care of him. When he was asked if he felt pain, to the doctor's deep emotion, Scott replied no. In fact, most patients who were in his condition claim that they are happy enough and that they do not want to end their lives. Progress of the studies has revealed that the term vegetative connotes this state too negatively and therefore its change to an a-responsive wakefulness syndrome was proposed.

It is clear that as a Catholic I never wish that people decided to end a life, but the thing that makes me shudder most is to think that absolutely arbitrary criteria can be established to ascertain which type of life has a greater dignity and can therefore be lived. And every time I think of whoever has resorted to justice, to put an end to the life of a loved one in a vegetative state, I think of how much harm a man that moves away from the light of truth is able to do.

For this reason I pray to the Mother of the Redemption, so that she may obtain for us the grace of being Light of the world and Salt of the earth in a society that seems to have increasingly forgotten the Truth of the Word of her Son Jesus.

Maria Primo

Closed doors, open hearts

John was there. He saw what he is telling us and gained experience of it. He, who had been at the foot of the cross with Mary and had seen the nails pierce the hands of the Lord; He, who had contemplated the sepulchre left empty by the Risen One - seeing and believing - was in front of Jesus now. Therefore, when he says that "the disciples rejoiced at seeing the Lord", he tells us something that touched him deeply, that crossed his heart, like Jesus, in his spiritualized and risen body, crossed the closed doors of the place where the beloved disciple was together with his brothers.

I believe the situation we are living globally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, can and is able to help us understand in a renewed way what the Apostle narrated - and delivered to the Gospel page we are going to read on Sunday "in Albis", after Easter (John 20, 19-31) - in order to experience it in turn. Actually, like the disciples, we too stay closed in our homes, even if, unlike them, not out of "fear of the Jews" - as John testifies -, but of an extremely contagious virus, which has already made thousands of victims.

Having entered with closed doors, John tells us, Jesus "stands in the midst" of his disciples, brings them his pace, shows them the wounds of his Passion and they feel joy at seeing him. The Greek word used to express this seeing from which joy (idontes) is born, does not only indicate the

sense of sight, but also seeing with inner eyes of faith: gaining deep experience of something. This is what we always and now more than ever need to see. This vision of faith provides us with profound experience of the presence of the Lord in our existence and this joy supports us, gives us strength, allows us to overcome difficulties, to resist that sadness that does not come from God and wished it could take possession of our Heart.

This sight of faith is also heart open-mindedness, willingness to meet and let ourselves be met by the Lord. The doors of our houses - from which prudence, justice and charity now ask to let ourselves be guarded -, however closed, are not an obstacle for him to come and stay among us, bringing us his peace as a gift. They do not become the bars of a prison, if we leave our heart open to Christ who comes to visit us, making himself present through his Word, through the grace of his Spirit, through our mutual love - a love also capable of bridging distances through small gestures of attention, like that of a phone call - even through the wounds of our suffering and that of whoever is close to us, for Jesus is always present in suffering persons.

Then, let us ask to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, the gift of this interior gaze, of these eyes of faith, capable of seeing the light of the Resurrection, beyond Calvary.

Father Davide Marino

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Continuing to love and hope in the trial

Reflections from the Meditation of H.H. Francis

in the extraordinary moment of prayer (St. Peter's Square, 27 March 2020)

It is starting from the "sedated storm" passage that the Holy Father, in a time of trial marked by a worldwide health emergency, wanted to send a strong and heartfelt message of faith and hope.

After having spoken at length about the kingdom of God (cf. Mk 4: 1-34), Jesus had invited his disciples to "go to the other shore" (cf. Mk 4:35). In reality, Jesus had asked his disciples, even before that physical passage in the sea of history, to make an important, necessary spiritual passage: the one from a weak, occasional and naive faith, to a mature, strong, enterprising and resolute faith. Jesus had already seen his disciples in difficulty, even before getting on the boat, and had tried to strengthen their faith. The gift of spiritual sight which to read and interpret the events of life is only one of the many signs of God's great love manifestation. Caught up in the vortex of adversity, we also did not always listen to the word of Jesus and, remaining still on the shores of our ego, we were not able to take it to the deep, to hoist the sails of faith, trust and hope in him: "The storm [...] shows us how we left asleep and abandoned what feeds, supports and gives strength to our life and our community" (Meditation). Jesus invites us to strengthen our faith every day so as not to find ourselves unprepared and to know how to welcome life's events with docility. The passage to the more mature faith reveals us that the journey with Jesus is dynamic; it requires continuous deep adaptations and internal changes: "Living is changing, and being

perfect is changing often" (S. J.H. Newman).

Therefore, the storm shows the little faith of the Apostles, who do not understand the "sleeping" of Jesus. It seems the Master does not even care about them. The apparent silence of Jesus, who does not respond to the doubts and perplexities hidden in the depths of hearts, is just another test for the disciples. However, it becomes a propitious opportunity to discover reasons and motivations that only the heart knows (B. Pascal) and that help move forward, encourage us to recognize the presence of Christ beyond and in difficulties and to unmask our uncertainties and fears. The same silence that we are experiencing in this period drives us to re-think ourselves, to re-see us and others in a different way, to re-connect the bridges of communion and to live with love the service to the Lord present in the smallest of our brothers.

«Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand him over our fears, so that He overcomes them. Like the disciples we will experience that, with him on board, there is no shipwreck. Because this is the strength of God: turning everything that happens to us, even bad things to good. He brings peace in our storms, because life never dies with God" (Meditation).

May the Virgin Mary Mother of the Redemption support us on the journey of faith to land at the safe harbor, Christ Jesus.

Father Salvatore Bilotta

**The
Lord's Day
ROMAN RITE**

**AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, SO I SEND YOU
(Second Sunday of Easter Year A)**

THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE TEACHING (Acts 2.42 to 47)

The Church lives from growth in Christ and in herself. She grows in Christ, by being nourished with the Word of Christ and his grace. She must always draw these two nourishments from the Apostles. Teaching and grace must be given without interruption, assiduously. Every faithful must also assiduously receive them. If she detaches herself from these two gifts, the Church does not grow in Christ. She has no strength to build herself. Two other things are needed. The prayer to ask God for every grace. Everything is a gift of the Lord. Everything must be asked him with an assiduous prayer. The fellowship, which is communion with the truth and grace of Jesus is lived and realized in the sharing of both personal spiritual and material goods. Sharing attests to the truth of our faith in Christ and our growth as his true Church. The Christian gives himself wholly to Christ and in Christ gives himself wholly to the brothers. Communion is perfect.

TO A LIVING HOPE (1 Pt 1,3-9)

After sin, the Lord creates for men a new hope: Christ Jesus. He creates it not as an external, but as an internal hope and it is accomplished by forming Jesus Christ in us and us in Christ Jesus. It is only in Him that man becomes a real man, though not in one moment, but committing himself entirely to the realization of this remarkable transformation in Him. Looking for other hopes out of Christ the Lord is vanity and foolishness. Our God has constituted no one else for us as true hope and if He does

not constitute, no one can be constituted on his own. Realizing his hope in Christ, becoming him true man and manifesting to every other man the fulfilment of hope in him and him in hope, the Christian might help every one of his brothers so that he also finds in Christ his true hope and reaches the fulfilment of his humanity. Only in Christ, the real man, you can become real men. No other way is bestowed upon us.

WE HAVE SEEN THE LORD. (Jn 20, 19-31) Moses, so that the Pharaoh and his people believed in God, carried out ten signs. Jesus so that his disciples believed in his every word, did many miracles and wonders. History shows us that every man that gave splendour to the faith, has always been helped by a vision of the Lord. What would have happened to Saul if Jesus had not blinded him with his light on the road to Damascus? What would there be of the pagan world if Peter had not been visited by the Lord? Man is not only intelligence, he is eye, ear, touch, taste and smell. Can we exclude the five senses from the process of faith? The man is intelligence and history, he is spirit and matter. Matter cannot be excluded from the process of faith. It is up to those who are the missionaries of faith to always compose in them intelligence and history, spirit and matter. If faith is not born, it is not necessarily the other's responsibility. It is often our responsibility. We did not show faith in its completeness of intelligence, history, spirit, matter, words, signs, truth and work. The obligation is all ours.

*by the theologian,
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