

## Art, expression of the beauty of faith

### Brief reflection on the alliance between the Church and the artists of all time

Since the early centuries of the Church, in addition to the symbolic representation of the Christian faith, art has played an important role in the formation of the faithful who lived mainly in a condition of illiteracy. Education was transmitted through the figurative arts in places of worship.

Over the centuries, the protagonists of the New and Old Testaments have constituted a very rich source of inspiration: the face of Christ, the Gospel scenes, the prophets, Golgotha, the Virgin and Child or the Virgin of Sorrows, the Saints... Talent and wisdom applied in shaping the material to elaborate figurative techniques to reproduce signs, symbols, scenes, scenographies, places of prayer and of religious life. A complex, articulated and extraordinary work producing the transmission of the Gospel.

Therefore, Christian art is capable of elevating the soul, of constituting a point of contact with the Divine, of evoking the mystery by allowing its contemplation starting from beauty. The beauty of the utmost good: Jesus Christ, Icon of sublime beauty.

Dostoevsky says that humanity can live without science, it can live without bread, but only without beauty it could no longer live, because there would be nothing more to do in the world.

Beauty strikes man, fills him with new hope, gives him the courage to fully experience the

unique gift of existence. This beauty evidently does not consist in a mere aestheticism, but in a pure and authentic feeling, capable of revealing the presence of God.

Pope Paul VI defined artists as those who by Christian vocation helped the Church. With the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, on December 8, 1965, he addressed a message to the artists stating that "The world we live in needs beauty in order not to darken in despair. Beauty, like truth, is what puts joy in men's hearts, it is the precious fruit that resists the wear and tear of time, which unites generations and joins them in admiration. And this thanks to your hands". And he exhorted all artists to bear this great responsibility: "Do not refuse to put your talent at the service of divine truth! Do not close your spirit to the breath of the Holy Spirit!".

The same awareness with which Pope Wojtyla, on April 4, 1999, in an extraordinary Letter to the Artists, exhorted vigorously and forcefully the need to recover "a fruitful alliance" between the Gospel and art, to renew a relationship that has failed in the modern and contemporary period.

And precisely in connection with John Paul II, Pope Francis encouraged the peculiar evangelizing mission that belongs to artists: "In the expression of your art, have at heart also to testify that believing in Jesus Christ and following him" is not only a true and just, but also a beautiful thing, capable of filling life with a new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of trials" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 167). The Church is counting on you to make the ineffable Beauty of God's love perceptible and to allow everyone to discover the beauty of being loved by God".

So let us pray so that Christian truth and art can resume this dialogue, to continue manifesting the world the beauty of faith

**Paolo Abis and Germana Dolce**

## Here is hope back again!

It is the evening of the first day of the week. Two disciples are on their way to Emmaus. They turn their backs on Jerusalem and, with it, they leave behind everything "concerning Jesus, the Nazarene". Their experience with the Lord, their expectations and the scandalous event of the cross: by now everything is linked to the past. The other disciples are also left there behind, in the past.

Yet there had been an announcement that had shocked everyone: some women, who went to the tomb in the morning, had not found the body of the Lord and also reported a vision of angels, according to whom He is alive.

The women had shown themselves to be the keepers of hope. Hope had continued to move them, despite their pain. For the moment, on that morning it could not have led them but to the sepulcher, where to keep the bond of love towards the Master. Nevertheless, theirs was a kind of hope. Because their movement was forward, it was towards the Lord, even if placed in a sepulchre. They had not taken a path of return to the past, they had not placed the story of the Lord behind them. He was dead, but their lives did not turn back. And for this reason, the first announcement was brought to them and not to the other disciples. The women were at the tomb, while the disciples were not. But the first announcement of the resurrection had to be brought right to the sepulchre, there, where the transition from the crucifix to the risen one had to be ascertained, there, where the earthly affair of Jesus had to be linked with his glorification: «Why are you looking among the dead for the one who is alive? He

is not here. He has risen".

Instead, the disciples of Emmaus testify to that wayfarer, who approached them along the way: "We hoped he were the one who would have freed Israel". "We hoped"! Their hope is conjugated to the past! But what use is a hope left in the past? Then, what truth had that hope had, while it was still lit, if then it had not been able to resist, if it was no longer able to guide the steps forward? What use, at all times, can have a Christ remembered only in the past, a preaching aimed at regret, an announcement imbued with bitterness, a word intended to reprove what is missing, but not confident of awakening expectations, of animating charity and of setting men and women to the road?

Then, it is Jesus himself, who puts hope back into circulation. Yes, He rebukes the disciples, but he puts his trust in them. He approaches, explains them scriptures and breaks the bread. The hearts of those two men burn, their mission awakens, they return to look towards the other disciples and they convert their journey back to Jerusalem. Here is back again the hope that knows how to look forward! Looking through Christ and not human expectations.

And there, in Jerusalem, here is the first new surprise produced by hope: the Lord also appeared to Simon and all the disciples are revived. The announcement of the Risen One is always a plurality of voices, which the Lord was able to bring back into harmony.

Virgin Mary, help us, so that our faith in the Risen Christ is always sung in the communion of our voices, in the concordant journey of the disciples, forward, towards hope.

**Father Francesco Brancaccio**

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# The Eucharist, mystery of divine intimacy

*Reflection starting from the homily of H.H. Francis  
in the Mass in Coena Domini (9.4.2020)*

The life of the disciples of Christ is often stirred between continuous evangelization and missionary apostolate activities, certainly good and worthy of praise.

But Christian life is primarily characterized by a holy receptive passivity, which is, then, the form that allows us to understand the words spoken by Pope Francis in the Thursday Lord's Supper Mass (Coena Domini): divine intimacy.

Starting from the dialogue between Jesus and Peter during the feet washing (Jn 13: 6-9), the Pope shows what danger stubbornness is for the spiritual life, which camouflages pride with false humility.

In view of true humility, which is letting God do his will, for Pope Francis the Eucharist is the mystery of God's intimacy with men, the mystery of the God Servant of men and the mystery of generous and courageous forgiveness.

For the Holy Father, the Eucharist is primarily the desire of God to always remain with us, making each one a living tabernacle which guards the Lord himself: «This is the mystery of the bread and wine, of the Lord with us, in us and within us».

At the last supper, with the gesture of the feet washing, the Lord qualifies the Eucharist as the free love of the Servant of God for men. In the Christian faith, the love service God provides to man is always primary, secondary is the one of man to God. And in this Eucharistic perspective, the Pope re-reads the priestly mission: "anointed by the Lord" one is "anointed to make the Eucharist" and "anointed to serve" the people of God and every other man, so that each one can live in divine intimacy.

Against the Eucharistic background, the

Pope mentions two apostolate paths: priests and mission to the peoples - *missio ad gentes* -, perhaps wanting to recall the image of the outgoing Church, that is always herself present in the existential peripheries of the world.

Then, with the prayer, he shows how she is inhabited by concrete faces, which make of the intimate dialogue with God a service of intercession in favour of all. In the present circumstance it is the faces of the anonymous priests; the parish priests, who make themselves neighbour to each person every day; the slandered priests who do not give up on their mission. Then, in Pope Francis' prayer, there is room for "sinful priests, who together with the bishops and the sinful Pope do not forget to ask for forgiveness learn how to forgive, for they know that they need to ask for forgiveness and to forgive". Finally, he remembers the "priests who suffer from crises, who do not know what to do, are in the dark...". He wishes to send everyone his thanks!

The Holy Father exhorts the priests: "Do not be stubborn like Peter. Allow your feet to be washed. The Lord is your servant, He is close to you to give you strength, to wash your feet". For the Pope, priests must mature the "awareness of the need to be washed" to become "great forgivers", continually drawing from the Crucifix the strength to be able to stay alongside men and serve them on the path of redemption.

Mother of the Redemption, arrange that every priest penetrates increasingly deeper the words with which your Son Jesus qualified the priestly vocation: "He called them so that they stayed with him". Amen!

**Father Massimo Cardamone**

**The  
Lord's Day  
ROMAN RITE**

**WHO DOES NOT KNOW WHAT HAS TAKEN  
PLACE THERE IN THESE DAYS?  
(Third Sunday of Easter Year A)**

GOD RAISED HIM UP (At 2,14a.22-33)  
The Crucifixion of Jesus must always be told. The resurrection must always be announced. In the beginning the ministry was of the Apostles. Jesus was manifested to them. By sacrament the ministry of the announcement belongs to every man who lets himself be soaked in the waters of baptism. The baptized is dead and risen in Christ. Living in crucified and risen Christ, he must always manifest crucified and risen Christ with his life. Without this dual manifestation, the baptized might never manifest the resurrected Christ in his body. Historically Christ died, he has risen historically and ascended to heaven historically. His is not only a transcendent truth. It is both a truth of transcendence and immanence. So it must take place in the Christian: the transcendent truth of Christ, in which he is immersed, must become in him a historical truth, through the transformation of his body and of his whole life.

CONDUCT YOURSELVES WITH  
REVERENCE (1 Peter 1.17 to 21)  
The fear of God is the first fundamental and essential truth of our faith. We believe with deep conviction that God is faithful to his every Word. He works according to what he said and how he said it. Since the Word of the Lord says death and life and conditions to stay alive and the paths that lead to death, whoever believes in God's faithfulness to His Word is saved. Who does not believe in the faithfulness of God, is damned and incurs eternal death. If one loses the fear of God, he walks in illusion. He is convinced that the Lord is not true to his Word and runs through ways of death,

he thinks that in the end we will all be in his holy heavens. Today, this is the leprosy that is shredding our faith. No longer it believes that God is faithful to his every Word. One wants to live by faith without the Word. He believes in God, but not in the Word of God. By behaving this way they run through not the path of life, but that of death.

ARE YOU THE ONLY VISITOR TO  
JERUSALEM (Lk 24,13-35)  
Jesus is the only foreigner because he is the only one who sees himself with the eyes of the purest faith. He saw himself with the eyes of the purest truth in every moment of his life. While everyone else saw him with the eyes of the flesh, he saw himself with the eyes of the Holy Spirit. Seeing himself with the eyes of the Spirit of the Lord, he knew his mystery, he knew that death was the only way to attain the resurrection and with the resurrection to rise up to the Father and receive from him the promised kingdom. Who sees with the eyes of the purest faith is always a stranger in Jerusalem, in the city of men. This truth applies also to every disciple of Jesus. It suffices that he looks at himself with the eyes of the true faith, that the Word of the true faith is fulfilled in him and he instantly becomes a stranger. Just because Jesus is a stranger in Jerusalem, a stranger to his brothers and his mother's children, He is the true Messiah. All the Word of the Lord is fulfilled in him. But Jesus will always be a stranger to this world. He will be the foreigner who must be repatriated to his heaven.

*by the theologian,  
Msgr. Costantino Di Bruno*