

SISTER LIFE

Reflections on health and faith

Victoria I. Tirro A., OFS
victoriatirro@gmail.com
Psychologist, Psycho-Gerontologist
Universidad Metropolitana (Caracas- Venezuela)

There are moments in life when situations are experienced that shatter our security or convictions. Many times they are born from the ego. The earthly and the sublime, passion and reason generate tension. Openness to experiences is crucial for personal evolution. The teachings of Saint Francis demonstrate this. The *Poverello of Assisi* preferred to instill fraternity within the elements of the world and to applaud the events that we live as unique and loving expressions of God towards us.

An experience becomes a life lesson through an honest evaluation of life, time, freedom, friendship and love. To experience the meaning of life at its deepest level, one must go beyond the anchors that the world insistently considers fundamental: money, power and pleasure.

With the yearning for the infinite, comes a constant search for the truth that is both human and humanizing. By the desire to understand reality, there emerges an openness in the face of the mysteries that make up life, and that is where a different understanding of existence is born. Little by little, and thanks to personal exploration, there occurs a determination that drives us to become authentic instruments of peace.

Where there is darkness, light

The world situation is complicated and there is constant uncertainty. Competitiveness begins to substitute for brotherhood [fraternity], and self-sufficiency supplants compassion. The world and its demands lead people to take a stance on what is essential, superfluous and transcendent. From these contrasts a coherent and harmonious personality can be built. In interactions with others, expectations, interests and preferences become intertwined. It is here that we can build a barrier of apparent strength if we accept our vulnerability, the possibility of giving in to the unknown and giving up the desire to control everything. In the words of Ignacio Larrañaga (2014), Saint Francis found peace by letting things be, as a path to divine light and in unconditional union with the will of God -- to fully live the gospel of Jesus -- fidelity to his message that is crystallized in the course of our lives.

Where there is doubt, faith

Uncertainty is the hardest thing for man to bear; it is the experience that generates vertigo by not knowing where it leads. Support comes from within, from the most intimate world that is cultivated from values and attitudes. As Viktor Frankl stated in his logotherapist

proposal on existential meaning and significance: Life hurls questions and the person seeks to answer them. Confronted with uncertainty, a road map must be found in order to avoid chaos... ruin. The word of God and the practice of prayer are the necessary guides in order to light the way to the unknown and that which is not understood. Conversion sheds a light on the threads that have interwoven life, with one true goal: to live God's work in harmony with events. The tools of Saint Francis were humility, good example and the firmness of faith (Larrañaga, 2014). The Saint's meditation consisted of mental prayer, trusting and affectionate dialogue, one-to-one with God, full of adoration, praise and listening attentively (Schmucki, 1974).

Where there is injury, pardon

People have become more susceptible, irritated and not very tolerant of others who are often seen as competition or threats. The most compelling realities transform life and carry with them an intrinsic and valuable mission: to help others in similar circumstances. Humanity is connected to the vulnerable, where the suffering you and I become us, and charity abounds. From there, the sensitive gaze that empathy generates leads to compassionate actions. Therefore, being spiritual is not born from isolation and the quiet nurturing of mystical tools for one's own benefit. Capturing the sacred implies feelings of trust, security, love and humble dedication, favoring a sense of connection with the needs of others in a world of solidarity.

Where there is despair, hope

An endless series of events encompasses current life, which, when seen as isolated elements, boost their devastating power. A suggested interpretation of the facts becomes sufficient remedy to avoid bankruptcy, ruin and dismay. The search for meaning, or the reason why things happen, requires time and courage. Facing life through meaning allows us to decipher God's intention in our lives; to look at the humanity of man as fertile ground for the hope that generates changes. Saint Francis, with his firm will, transcended physical weaknesses and considered suffering as the grace of God, by citing Rev 3:19: "those whom he loves, he corrects." He lived through tribulations peacefully, leaving tomorrow in the hands of the Lord (Lehman, 2002). He was the man who lived in the present, with an adventurous faith, seeing whatever life throws at any moment with literal and basic simplicity.

Final Reflection

The spiritual teachings, through the example of the *Poverello*, promote an internal, constant and deep work that leads us to an awakening. Having faith is not a wager on emptiness nor does it intend to reject the realm of reason; both can coexist in that pilgrimage that results from the search for truth. Believing results in adventure, risk, uncertainty in the face of the unknown, and the conviction in the value of surrendering. The experiences of contemplation, of connection with the absolute are reached through solitude and inner

silence. This temporary isolation must be intentionally practiced as part of the routine of encountering oneself, which transforms and connects with others. From there vital congruence is born.

Saint Francis inspires our lives by teaching us that goodness and love crystallize in simplicity, where true humanism cannot exist without God. Preaching is given through the fresh and daily example of conversion and loving dedication to God's designs as the source of all good. A noble and faithful abandonment to the situations that we have to live is necessary to free ourselves from fear.

References

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