

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS - 11. "TRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE"

"And so suddenly they understood who the man that they had followed was" (Traces of the Christian Experience–Worksheet 11).

We present a letter in which Marco, a young man from GS who died seven years ago in a car accident, recalls how he discovered how Christ was present in his life, "an understanding that went beyond what my friends or others I have met could give me".

Beyond what we think we already know through our own tradition, or those fragile enthusiasms that so easily pass away, have you had a moment when you perceived that Christ is the secret of life, the light for looking at everything else?

My name is Marco Gallo, from Monza, and I am 17 years old. Yesterday, I went to the pilgrimage for the beatification of John Paul II, and it was as if a powerful desire to know him rose up in me. I wanted to understand who he was, and I was profoundly struck by his famous words: "Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors for Christ. To His saving power [...]. Do not be afraid. Christ knows 'what is in man.' He alone knows it. So often today man does not know what is within him, in the depths of his mind and heart. So often he is uncertain about the meaning of his life on this earth. He is assailed by doubt, a doubt which turns into despair. We ask you therefore, we beg you with humility and trust, let Christ speak to man. He alone has words of life, yes, of eternal life."

It was as if, finally, someone understood me. It was an understanding that went beyond what my friends or others I have met could give me. As if the whole secret of life was enclosed there, in those words. I went into the church and for the first time in a long time, I prayed intensely, begging that those words would remain deep in my heart, begging that Christ, now, in front of my situation which is often one of doubt and despair, would embrace me, now.

As soon as I got up, I caught the gaze of an elderly woman. I caught it briefly, like when you notice the sunset out of a window, without paying much attention. I realized that she had gotten up and was observing me. It seemed like she was coming toward me, but I wasn't sure. I was leaving, without realizing what was happening, of the intensity of her look. And then, opening the door to leave the church, I turned around for the last time, and I realized that, standing still, she was still there (but standing still, almost scared by my "fleeing"). I understood, as I left, that her look was an embrace of love and hope, that she was moved by seeing a young person kneeling down in church; how could it be! One like me! Like me! But what hope, what gratitude do I deserve? That woman had such love in her eyes for me! And she was still there. She was there waiting for me. And so, leaving, I felt confused, stuck between the banal fear of going up to a stranger and saying, "Did you want to say something to me?", and the recognition that here was the one to whom I had just prayed. Jesus was there. But, before that could become a certainty, when His presence was still a fragile intuition, I didn't want it.

The point is this: if Christ is not really someone who happens in our life, if Christ is not really the one who saves me, who saves you, now, but above all, if we are not open to looking for Him and accepting Him now, how can we call ourselves Christians? If we do not have the intention of changing our way of doing things, if we are not open to abandoning our fragile certainties, our pathetic fears (which could even be something like talking to a stranger), changing the way we spend our time and the way we relate to reality and to people, then where is our hope?

(M. Gallo, *Anche i sassi si sarebbero messi a saltellare* [Even the rocks would have jumped up], Itaca, Castel Bolognese, 2016, pp. 192-194)