

9. Everything changes

What a liberating truth is the knowledge we spoke of yesterday, namely that we do not have to do anything else to move mountains other than to respond to Christ who calls us to himself! Because then he “gave them power to...” – to do the impossible, not only to cast out demons, not only to heal every illness, but also to raise the dead, that is, to repair the irreparable. All this is an immediate and free consequence of the simple action of allowing ourselves to be summoned by Jesus, by responding to *that* call, the call to go to Him, to receive his freely given presence.

It was incredible how the visit to that community changed after that moment. The problems and closeness did not disappear, but we were changed because we stood before that situation no longer thinking first about ourselves, and not even about the situation of the community, but rather we stood before that situation in the spirit with which the apostles must have set out from the moment in which they stood before Jesus as he called them to Himself and gave them all the power necessary to transmit Redemption to the world. But their heart remained there, at the source, in the presence of that Presence who calls to Himself and sends without separating us from Himself. The heart does not have to separate itself from Him in order to meet reality, the necessities of life, the challenges of persons and circumstances. And without even saying it to ourselves (even if later we did say it to ourselves), it was that experience which united us in addressing that community. No longer were we united in racking our brains to find a solution, to form our judgments or judge the intentions and views of others; no longer were we united by sadness or discouragement, and so by the desire to give up.

This disappointed sadness was what united the disciples on the road to Emmaus before the Mystery drew near to them, freely, to gather them to Himself. But sadness is not a source of true unity, of a unity of communion. It produces a complicity without love, without love for life. Even the demons in hell are unified in such sadness. But the mercy of God toward us and toward the world reaches us and restores in us the fashion of our first vocation, our first love: the love of being called by Him, in the depths of our heart, like the disciples on the way to Emmaus who in His company began to feel their heart burning, like the first time they had met him, who knows where and how, but it was certainly a simple encounter, an encounter that was only encounter – without having to think about obliging one’s liberty to doing anything other than staying with Him.

Even Andrew and John were with Him hours and hours, and they did not know what to say about that encounter apart from the fact that they had encountered Him, that they were with Him on that day, that it was about four in the afternoon. But they did not know what to report, not even one word about what He said. But the Word was Christ, it was the person of Jesus. To encounter him is everything. In fact, Andrew cannot say anything to the first person Andrew meets, namely Peter; he cannot say anything other than announce to him that they found the Messiah, which

means everything and nothing. And to prove it he does not offer any words or arguments, but he “brought him to Jesus” (Jn 1:42). And so Peter meets him; he too *only* meets him – and that is enough for him.

And then come the words, the parables, the teachings and works of Christ, but the nucleus of Peter’s discipleship will always and only be His presence, without which even the words have no meaning. Without his presence, they become words without energy, which maybe even push to the point of heresy or violent fundamentalism. When Peter said to Jesus, abandoned by all: “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God” (Jn 6:68-69), it was not the words of Jesus that kept Peter bound to him. It was the knowledge that only His presence gave meaning and life to the words, to the truth that flowed out of Jesus and gave sense and fervor to life. Having left him, what would Peter have done with Jesus’ words of life apart from the source of that eternal life that Christ was for them?

Standing in front of that community without abandoning the experience and the knowledge of being called only to Him, it was as if before every “unclean spirit”, “sickness” or “illness”, before all the “dead” who appeared before us, we remained summoned by Christ to receive from Him the power, energy, judgment, charity – above all charity! – to cast out evil and falsehood, to heal the fragility and the misery of human beings, to raise the dead. And to do so with joy, because we knew that the ability to stand before all this, in good and in bad, could only come from Christ. This joy of faith cast out demons, because it defused the escalation of evil above all in ourselves – the evil of negativity, of sterile criticism, which is like mold that grows in relationships when the air is stale because it is not open to the good wind of the Spirit of Christ. And we saw healing begin in every tiny effort of positivity and of desire for new life that we were now able to catch sight of, even arouse, awaken – awaken above all by bearing witness with them and by having a gaze free from every moralizing project with which they had always been seen, and with which they had seen themselves for decades.

Excuse me if I linger on this episode. I could describe many more like them, because every time, thanks to my thick-headedness and through the mercy of God, this dynamic happens again, and I hope in time to be converted from it. But it always surprises me how the essential always comes to surprise us like a novelty, and in that way, it reasserts itself as essential. Secondary things tire us sooner or later. The essential dynamics on the other hand are always new, and it is for this reason that it is worth it for us to help each other again and again.

The absolute novelty of our vocation, of every vocation – because at the beginning of Matthew 10 the twelve are simply called “disciples” – is being called to Him, being “summoned” to Christ.