

## Hope: being rooted, giving time for growth, being surprised by the seed that dies.

One of the Tibhirine monks shares with the local villagers: "We may be leaving!"

"And why are you leaving?" asks one of villagers.

"We are like birds on a branch. We don't know if we'll leave".

A woman promptly replies: "We are the birds. You are the branch. If you leave, we lose our footing". (2010 Film: *Of Gods and Men*)

"Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 86).

### I. Being rooted

"Look at Jesus. His deep compassion reached out to others. It did not make him hesitant, timid or self-conscious, as often happens with us. Quite the opposite. His compassion made him go out actively to preach and to send others on a mission of healing and liberation. Let us acknowledge our weakness, but allow Jesus to lay hold of it and send us too on mission. We are weak, yet we hold a treasure that can enlarge us and make those who receive it better and happier. Boldness and apostolic courage are an essential part of mission." (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 131).

"What is the task of the branches? They have to produce grapes. They direct their whole strength to producing grapes. They dread not bearing enough fruit at the right time. They worry about their survival. ... Jesus also wants the grapes to grow. Jesus sees how the branches laden with anxious care, pressure themselves and wear themselves out in misguided attention. ... Instead of concentrating on the grapes, unite yourselves with the vine. Then the strength of the vine will flow through you and you will bear rich fruit. At the same time, you'll be freed from your pressure, your compulsion to compare yourselves with others and your tensions. ... You are so occupied with yourself that you don't notice that your connection with the vine has already been broken and that no vitality is flowing into you. Turn back to your source and everything will be given"<sup>1</sup>.

### II. Giving time for growth

Visit by the Jesuit Llorenç Puig to a Marist community in Chad. He asked them:

"And you, why are you still here, in a place with so many discomforts, where everything is so difficult and uphill? "And they gave me an answer that made me

---

<sup>1</sup> FRANZ JALICS, *Contemplative retreat*. An Introduction to the Contemplative way of Life and to the Jesus Prayer, Munich 2003, 209.

think a lot. They said: "The mother of God was not by the cross because she would like to be at the cross of Jesus. The mother of God was at the cross because her son was crucified. And we are here because we have brothers who are crucified, who are suffering, who are in difficulty." <sup>2</sup>

**Time is greater than space:** "This principle enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans. It invites us to accept the tension between fullness and limitation, and to give a priority to time. One of the faults which we occasionally observe in socio-political activity is that spaces and power are preferred to time and processes. Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back. Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return. What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 223).

### III. Surprised by the seed that dies

"This certainty is often called "a sense of mystery". It involves knowing with certitude that all those who entrust themselves to God in love will bear good fruit (cf. Jn 15:5). This fruitfulness is often invisible, elusive and unquantifiable. We can know quite well that our lives will be fruitful, without claiming to know how, or where, or when. We may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force. Sometimes it seems that our work is fruitless, but mission is not like a business transaction or investment, or even a humanitarian activity. It is not a show where we count how many people come as a result of our publicity; it is something much deeper, which escapes all measurement. It may be that the Lord uses our sacrifices to shower blessings in another part of the world which we will never visit. The Holy Spirit works as he wills, when he wills and where he wills; we entrust ourselves without pretending to see striking results. We know only that our commitment is necessary. Let us learn to rest in the tenderness of the arms of the Father amid our creative and generous commitment. Let us keep marching forward; let us give him everything, allowing him to make our efforts bear fruit in his good time." (*Evangelii Gaudium* 279).

---

<sup>2</sup> LLORENÇ PUIG, *La globalización de la indiferencia en cinco iconos*, in *La era del desánimo. Una lectura creyente desde la filosofía y la teología*, Barcelona 2018, 31.