

Will You Dance With Me?

“You are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). As I was doing my Lectio on the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady with the Gospel of day, I stopped to ponder this verse. Some ask themselves these days if they can stay in the Church, in this Church. It is a question loaded with pain and doubt, and only each one of us can find a true response to it, one that comes neither from the opinions of others nor from simple inertia. But when I see the terrible and concrete consequences of sin and I want to run away or look in another direction, I need to remember that the Church is a people whom Jesus came to save from our sins or even more concretely, in Saint Paul's words: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first” (1 Tim 1:15).

What has this to do with the discernment of your vocation? One of our great Cistercian saints, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, likes to talk about this important interior movement that needs to happen in our lives if we want to strive towards holiness. It is the most important journey you have to make in your life, but the steps are steps of the soul. This hidden path takes us from living focused on my own will—myself, my needs and desires—to make what Bernard calls the common will our constant reference and orientation.

What is this common will? The common will (*voluntas communis*) is a will that is common to God and the brothers or sisters with whom we share our lives—our family or religious community, our parish and the Church as a whole. Saint Bernard does not think about God's will as something apart from the good and the needs of the community, because it is through an attitude of obedience and humility, a desire to serve others, beginning with those closer to us, that we discover God's will for each one of us. I am afraid that nowadays we run the risk of making the discernment of our vocation a private enterprise. We ask ourselves what is going to make me happy and forget that true and lasting happiness is the result of the total gift of self in the service of God and others. So what is our Church asking of you today?

As a Trappist-Cistercian nun I can hear the cry of Christ in the needs of the present Church. It is a call for me to renew my consecration in union with my Sisters so that our Church will be cleansed and renewed in the sacrifice of Christ. It is a call to intercede and offer myself with Christ through my work and constant prayer so that the mercy and light that only God can grant would heal, guide and give us new peace and hope to walk together toward the house of our Father.

In our process of discernment we need to learn to listen to the heart of Christ, that beats in his Body, the Church. How do we do this? Let me tell you a personal story. Some time ago I was praying in our chapel asking the Lord what I should do in relation to a particular situation. I was a little confused and quite worried. I did not know what to do and I wanted Jesus to give me a clear answer. You might have been “there” too, in one of those situations when you just ask the Lord: “Tell me what to do, and I will do it”. I remained there in silence, waiting. Suddenly I heard in my heart: “Will you dance with me?” I knew it was too unexpected to be a thought that I had crafted on my own, and so I pondered its meaning.

What would come into your mind and heart if Jesus would ask you to dance with him? Maybe you would begin to realize that you need to let him lead you, and that it is not so much about what to do or where to go but about this letting yourself be in his arms. This act of abandonment is what leads you to the right answer, the right action. You may start thinking that you need to attune the ear of your heart to his soft and mysterious music, the music of the Holy Spirit. You may smile then, even if there are still worries or even pain in your soul, when you see that dancing close to Jesus is a great way of listening to his heart.

As we celebrate the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross we can look at the world, the Church and our own lives with new hope. We are redeemed sinners. We know that the victory is Christ's, and his light will shatter all darkness. With confidence we can ask the Lord: “What do you want me to do for you, for your Church?” You may hear a clear answer but if you don't, listen a little closer, he may be asking you: “Will you dance with me?”

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