

Communion Letter. Christmas 2019

I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK Ap 3, 20

A WIDE AND ALIEN WORLD. “Strangeness”

Let us set our eyes upon the stranger, that person who doesn't seem to fit in in some society or other, and who triggers a violent fierceness against him. He tends to be invisible and troublesome, nobody wants to look at him, or he displeases us so that we don't want to even see him. He goes beyond our customs, our stories, our thoughts, our soothing agreements, and he brings along with him the novelty that breaks down our securities, our reassurances from of old, our greatly assumed comfort. But there's an absence imposed upon the stranger, there is no room left for him, he is thrown out. Yet he is the one with whom I engage in the battle of otherness, the one who both blesses and breaks me, he hurts me but he makes me be. He is the stranger my existence claims for, because if it weren't for him, life would be reduced to those who are equals, similar, identical, to a mirror of my own self. With no blood, with no struggle.

Our world is wide and alien, full of hostile and lacerating distances, an alien, strange, threatening world. There is such violence and aggression behind every distance! And in every enmity, so many defended and armed distances. We become such strangers to one another! That strangeness has prepared us for war (Is 2,4) and has hurtfully brought us apart.

THE ‘STRANGENESS’ AND ‘FOREIGNNESS’ OF GOD’S SON

Jesus, the Lord, has assumed this “strangeness”, he who bent down towards us, although we never managed to understand where he came from or where he was headed for, he who attracted us and provoked us with his words and gestures, he who reached out to the poor, the orphan, the widow, the sinner, the enemy, the outsiders, the strangers; he who revealed to us what the Father was like: an always surprising God, who preferred the strangest to himself: mankind! The People he chose were always foreigners, pilgrims, searching for land! He came to our door to be welcomed in as a stranger in a strange land. Just like Jesus always was, the errant and marginal jew, who wasn't understood or received by his own people and died outside the walls of the city. As if he were a criminal, a FOREIGNER, a STRANGER to everyone.

ICON OF “WELCOMENESS”. MARY’S MATERNITY

He chose for himself the same fate strangers and foreigners share, and therefore became a Guest in this inhospitable land. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock” (Rev 3, 20). He also had the need to be welcomed, received, just like one of us, because we have all been welcomed, guests, received in a mother's womb, nested, because that's the possibility to be and to live, and if without that nest, womb, matrix, we would've died in the sandy desert of existence. And the tiny fecundated cell would have failed completely if not for the Yes of a mother willing to be so, willing to receive life within her, to welcome a human creature, frail and in need.

If death really doesn't have the last word (nor the last but one) it is because life, BIRTH, is the first and last word. God has assumed the human existence by taking refuge in it, by being born! By receiving everything from a Woman. Mary is God's first House, a God who is also a Guest. And by being born from her, he has wanted to tell us what is a man: the living being, born from a woman, the mother bent down towards us, who receives us in her so that life, our own life, can be made possible. The mother who has embraced and received our extreme vulnerability, the absolute

weakness. Human life is only possible because there is a mother, a womb, a refuge made out of flesh and blood, a feminine body, a cozy manger.

And because human life starts with a hostage in a mother's womb, God's Son was Son to a Mother who conceived him, gave birth to him, embraced him, took care of him... she hosted him.

He who came from a far away country to visit those of us who lived in a far away and strange country, showed us the way of human hospitality, which could transform hostility into "welcomeness" (Is 41, 12).

We need only to set our eyes on the moment of Birth, the beginning of life. The icon of the Mother with the Son, the sign God promised (Is 7, 14) and those who were looking for it received (Mt 2, 9-11), will tell us how to live among us in this world, how to transform this violent and hostile world... by looking at the Mother and the Son we will understand that the eldest must receive the youngest, the strongest must receive the weakest, the one who feeds for himself receive the one who doesn't, the one who has, the one who doesn't have, the one who is in a higher position, the one who is in the lower. He who has a house should open its doors and welcome the one who has no house (Mt 25, 31-46).

Mother and Son become the theological place where we can understand God's love for mankind, a love that gives itself, offers itself, welcomes others for their own good and lacks all self-interest. A love in which the elder one pours himself over the younger, bends down, and therefore bears fruit.

Let's contemplate the Nativity, Jesus in Mary's arms. Let us have, like Mary, the Mother, the House Lit up, the Door Opened, the Table Laid, to welcome that strange and foreign God who is outside, knocking on the door. "Here I am! I am outside, knocking" (Rev 3, 20). Her YES welcomed God, the Guest in his own house.

Today, more than ever, in our world, we have to turn on the light in our homes, open the doors, light up a fire, lay a table and wait for Him to arrive, or someone else in His name.

We will be able to transform all hostility into hospitality, all enmity into fraternity, all distance into proximity, by welcoming others, the foreigner, the poor, the widow, the sinner, the enemy...

We mustn't prevent the stranger from having a place in our heart or in our society, communities or families, parishes or towns, or from finding a land for his shortage that will provide him with milk and honey. We mustn't allow him to die at sea without even touching the shore, or to find all the doors locked, or to be kicked out of our security areas... we could start by those who are closer to us, because beyond that, a world is waiting for us to open the door.

Because if we don't start by receiving each other in our "strangeness" and "foreignness", how will it be possible for us to one day live in Communion? And that is the destiny: TOWARDS COMMUNION WITH OTHERS. Jesus the Lord, who is now knocking on the door so that we may open, who is just about to be born from Mary the Mother, will one day sit us down at his right side at a table on which there will be a broken bread, a huge one, for everyone. At this table we will sit together with our enemies, the strangers He loves, those we have never dared to be with and even less open our door, those whom we serve unwillingly... He will bend down towards us and wash our feet, and then our eyes will be opened, and we will understand where to start from in order to be one in Him and with Him, and He one with us.

He is just outside, knocking on our door. Let's open the door and he will be born!

Happy Christmas of "welcomeness"

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