



Macerata-Loreto Pilgrimage

June 8, 2019

Only a Presence Can Respond to Our Solitude

“The sense of solitude is borne in the very heart of every serious commitment to our own humanity. Those who believe they have found the solution to a great need of theirs in something or someone, only to have this something or someone disappear or prove incapable of resolving this need, can understand this” (Fr. Giussani).

Dear friends, I hope you will live this pilgrimage with a gaze of tenderness and of affection toward the humanity you find in yourself. The sacrifice you make in keeping vigil all night is a gesture of friendship toward yourselves. Doing so, you can relive the experience the poet Antonio Machado describes: “... my heart ... is awake. Awake. / Not asleep or dreaming, it looks / with open bright eyes / at far signals and listens / on the shores of a great silence.” And the Morning Prayer Hymn from the Trappist nuns at Vitorchiano can be the dominant theme of every step: “Before the break of daylight / we fervently keep vigil: / a hush befalls creation / in silence sings the mystery. // Our watchful eyes are seeking / a Face within the darkness.” You, too, physically keep vigil as night envelops all of creation.

Why do we seek a Face? Because we have a question we do not know how to answer. Who has never experienced that sense of powerlessness that emerges from the depth of our experience? How can we keep from giving in to fear and despair? Simply by keeping our eyes open, to see if some ray of life appears on the horizon to tell us we are not alone. Support one another in the fight not to be overtaken by discouragement and to never stop grappling with that deep need at the heart of authentic solitude. This is the only way you will be able to recognize what responds to that need.

“You will never be alone again.” Who can say this? Only Christ, because of the profound fellowship He lives with the Father: “I am not alone, because the Father is with me” (*Jn* 16:32). He is the only one who takes every part of us to heart and responds to our need. “Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. ‘It

is a ghost,' they said, and they cried out in fear. At once Jesus spoke to them, 'Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid'" (*Mt 14:24-27*). He does not reassure them with a lecture or set of formulas, but with His very Presence, God's companionship with man. As Pope Francis says, "Alive, He can [...] take away all sorrow and solitude. Even if all others depart, he will remain, as he promised: 'I am with you always, to the end of the age'" (*Christus Vivit*, 125).

You can only live for something that is happening now. Just as at the beginning of Christianity, the Mystery reaches us through a presence with human features, those belonging to people who leave us amazed at how they live every-day things, in such a way that they immediately feel familiar and approachable, because they embrace us just as we are and allow us to face even the darkest moments with hope.

I wish you all the tenacity of a path, both tonight and especially in the days to come, that you may discover the unmistakable features of that great Presence winking at you through the faces of those who witness to Him today, from within the life of the Church.

May Our Lady, who welcomed the Word made flesh in her womb, grant that you may experience the indestructible companionship of Him who is among us, that it may shine forth in your life.

Happy walking in companionship with the Mystery

Fr. Julián Carrón

Milan, May 29, 2019