

“WE HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS!” (Mk 2:12)

INTRODUCTION - 2. “HOW NECESSARY IT IS THAT THE HUMAN ‘I’ BE GREAT, MY FRIEND” (CHARLES PÉGU)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled” (John 14:1)

by Pierluigi Banna*

“Only when I realize that You exist / do I hear my voice again—like an echo” (*Il mio volto*, on page 6 of the booklet).** So then it is possible not to succumb to the betrayal, to the disillusionment, and to have a bit of that tenderness for ourselves again! Our own strength cannot do it, a project of self-esteem or self-improvement, but only recognizing that there is someone in this world—it only takes one!—who does not expect me to be a superhero and who then at my first failure, throws me away and kicks me out of his way. I only need one who looks at me for what I am, someone whom I can meet, touch, kiss. Like The Chainsmokers say in the quote on page 8: “I’m not looking for somebody / with some superhuman gifts, some superhero, / some fairytale bliss, / just something I can turn to, somebody I can kiss” (*Something just like this*).

One of you describes this with extreme clarity: “Right now I want: a new phone, an electric guitar, a tattoo, a piercing, money, drugs, two holes in my right ear, and to meet my idols. And when I’ve done all this? I will be sad because the new phone gets old, the electric guitar is not perfect because I can’t play it for the life of me, the tattoo is too small and I want another one, the money runs out and I want more, drugs cost too much and I don’t have money when they run out, I want a third hole in my left ear [what ears!] and then another in the right; and then [pay attention, this passage is spectacular!], after I’ve met my idols just one time, they soon forget about me. What do I want? I... I... I want... I want... to be cared for, I want to be look at, I want to be loved.”

Only when I realize that there is someone who is not like my idols—who push me, make me spend so much of myself, and then throw me down—, but who loves me just as I am, then I am reborn. Cared for, loved, looked at for what I am, without being forgotten. It is only in the encounter with a friend who does not betray us, who tells us: “Do not let your hearts be troubled,” that we can begin again.

Just like what happened to that woman, whose story you’ll find on page 7: for twelve years she had an illness that made her continue to lose blood; she didn’t spend her money on tattoos, holes in her ears, electric guitars (also because she lived in another time), but she »

* Introduction to the Paschal Triduum of Gioventù Studentesca, Rimini, 13 April 2017.

** The booklet “*We have never seen anything like this*” contains the quotes cited throughout the Triduum and is [downloadable in pdf format](#).

» had spent all her money on doctors and none of them could heal her. Just think, after twelve years, what a sense of failure, of betrayal, she must have felt. She felt betrayed: not only by the doctors, but above all by life. Besides, because of the country where she lived, that type of illness was seen as a kind of divine curse, so that she had to stay far from the city and she couldn't touch anyone, lest she contaminate them; in short, she was excluded, refused. Betrayed by life, by her friends, by her people and even by God. Just this morning in an interview, Pope Francis spoke about this woman and said that she was excluded, discarded by society.

Now this woman—who could just as well be any one of us—finds out that a man has come to her town who is able to heal every illness, who is not scandalized by any evil. That man is Jesus. And what happens? The woman challenges all of the prohibitions: the prohibition of entering the city, of not touching anyone. She doesn't care at all about the judgments of others. She has only one desire when she thinks of that man: to be healed. And she thinks: "If I can touch just the hem of his garment, I will be saved!" (Mark 5:28). Think how the presence of that man undid all of those betrayals and made the desire of that woman burst open: "If only I can touch him...", "if only I can contaminate him!" She risks everything, reaching out to touch the purest one of all, Jesus, risking even death. Here, desire is totally reawakened by the figure of Jesus.

And so, when we meet someone who is not scandalized by us, when we meet someone who tells us: "Do not let your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1), when we run into someone who demands nothing from us and who does not betray us, but reawakens all of our desires, there is reborn in us that "craving for life", as Lucrezio calls it (on page 8), that we find in ourselves, that "craving for life that is so deep and obnoxious, that agitates us and pushes us to go through dangers and uncertainties" (*De rerum natura*). And it come to the point where we want to shout: "Help me!", "Heal me!", "I want to be with you!"

You are truly welcome here this evening, because we are in a place where we can shout: "Help me!" without the fear of "contaminating" the others here present. It is this desire to be healed, that makes us shout: "Help me!", that is our true nature. And finally we no longer feel like one among many, finally the desire to be special is reborn, to escape the anonymous mass of people, as the Polish intellectual Heschel writes (you will find him quoted on page 8): even if "in the eyes of the world... I am a statistical average, in my heart that is not who I am" (*Who Is Man?*). That heart, which for others is only a statistic, is reawakened, is revived. That heart is in each one of us, that heart exists—it exists!—and it cries out: "Help me!". Without being afraid of ourselves, with a renewed tenderness toward our true humanity, let us put our hearts into play again, listening to the words of the song *Il desiderio* by Gaber.

Il desiderio