



IT IS ME IN PERSON! Lk 24,39

SPIRITUALITY OF A GOD HUMANIZED

When the LORD turned again to the captivity of Zion, we were like them in that dream, Psalm 126

PREVIOUS FORMATION FOR THE PREACHING

Third delivery: December 10th, 2012



3 CHRISTIANS' JOY

Objective: To understand that the core of Christian-Dominican spirituality is present in human life.

3.1 Do not patch up anything

- It often happens that, when posed with clarity and bluntness, the very many difficulties that religion, faith, and in general, Christianity present is to be joyful and live in true happiness. We grab solutions and replies that, in their core are nothing but mere patches in old tissue that is worn-out or simply old.

- According to the concept and experience that each one has of God, so will be his Christian life, in a nut shell, in that which refers and affects happiness that is cherished, or on the contrary, to the sadness that we have to withstand, even though we may label sadness with the pious name of *Christian patience*.

- There are people who have their entire faith placed in God who give nothing of themselves so that their adepts receive (that is if they can) a dose of acceptable patience and strength in this valley of tears and suffering. There are also believers whose God is an endless source of joy and even illusions, in the worst of cases in life. That is why it can be reassured that the God of happiness is the God of all Christians.

3.2 The danger of mixing up the new and the old

- The prologue of John's Gospel ends up saying: *God has never been seen; his only Son [...] is the one who has made him known among us (John 1, 18)*. To say that nobody has ever seen God is the same as saying that God is not within our reach. That is to say that God is the transcendental one, the one that goes beyond all possibility of our knowledge and understanding.

- On the other hand, to say that He has been his Father's only Son, *that one who has made him known to us* which is the same as reassuring that Christians can learn about God, the same God Jesus preached about (and currently preaches about). Jesus's utterance reaches such a conclusion

about the old patch on old tissue and about the danger involved in storing new wine in old wineskins (Mc 2,21-22).

- To think that our God keeps on being the God of the Law and the Prophets (the God of the Old Testament), even if we try to improve him and make Him up with evangelic preaching that talk about goodness and mercy. It means lack of understanding the radical novelty that represents the knowledge Jesus brings us about God.

- Expressed in a different way, that is as much as putting new woolen patches on old tissue or dumping new wine in old wineskins. Unfortunately this is what happens to lots of people: they keep an image of a threatening menacing God in their heads, which is pictured in a fairly good number of the texts from the Old Testament.

- Or that God who demands pain and suffering on the part of mortals to calm his rage against sin. Or, that which is worse, that God who tells the poor and those who suffer that they must withstand it with patience and that they must not complain about their pains and humiliations. What we have really done, with these explanations, has been to dump the new wine Jesus brought us in traditionally old wineskins, which abide by rules that no longer belong to us. The end result is then, *an even bigger hole and the bursting of the wineskins completely* (Mc 2,21-22).

3.3. God's humanization.

- That God the New Testament talks about is not mainly God, who is the Father, but most of all God incarnated. *That is to say, God humanized.* I am talking about God, the one who made us know and revealed himself in that man who became Jesus of Nazareth.

- *The mystery of incarnation* is regularly understood as the mystery of man's divinization, for as-much-as that mystery tells us that a man (Jesus of Nazareth) became the Son of God. And that is true. But what is usually said is that the *mystery of incarnation* is the mystery of *God's humanization*. That is, when we talk about God's incarnation, we are asserting that God has become part of humankind.

- When we say that, God became human in Jesus, we are saying that God can be found in everything truly human. Even more, we are asserting that we place our faith in everything that is human because it not possible to find God outside humankind.

3.4 Joy as the experience of faith

- We have been educated in such a way that we have found religious beliefs in limited boundaries of the *holy* or also of the *ethical*, mainly when our ethical behavior is translated as generosity. This brings along with it resignation, the defeat over human instincts, of our desires, and, in general, of everything that supposes austerity, sobriety, sacrifice, and pain.

- But nobody has ever thought that he has been relating to God when having a good time in absolute joy. This means that our religious *formation* has turned, in good proportion into *deformation*. This amounts to saying that we have displaced God from the most joyful and happiest events of our lives.

- We distort God and our faith in God, whenever it does not include happiness as our main experience. St. Paul in Romans 15, 13 says to Christians: May the God of faith, joy and peace fill you up, so that with the strength of the Holy Spirit, you overcome yourselves in hope.

- Additionally, we may assure you that it is in the happiest instances of life when we get closer to God, most of all. It is at those instances when we most properly feel God surrounding us, and also feel he is not a God of pain or sadness, but of unconditional joy and happiness.

3.5 The spirituality of joy

- The spirituality of joy is one of the most demanding and difficult types, at times the most torturing and most heroic sort that we can face in our lives; this is one of the ways human beings usually function. Because when we discuss the matter, it has nothing to do with our programming our existence to lead it happily and in endless amusement.

- We just know too well that it is not possible, the way things are in this world at present. It is rather a question of your arranging life in such a way that anywhere you live, and whoever you live with, you must do the impossible so that others feel at ease, live in peace, live together in great delight. They must mainly try to turn others into joyful people, filled with transparent happiness in their faces at all times.

- We must live so that others feel happier of having been born, which is the same as you giving up being the center of things. It is therefore placing shared happiness before your own; this can surely be done once in a while. What I am talking about is the assumption of spirituality as a life project. I am also talking about what the task supposes and demands.

- In depth, all this supposes a drastic change of mentality, something that surpasses many people's understanding. Religion can be generally associated with accomplished duty but not with everybody else's needs. Experience tells us that to do one's duty; we could give several people a hard time, or accuse anybody. Or, we could also simply impose things and our points of view. On the contrary, when making other people happy, things change.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL AND GROUP REFLECTION:

1. Why do Christians prefer to be preached about the spirituality of pain and suffering, of the spirituality of the cross and death, and not of the spirituality of joy and happiness?

2. Why is that spirituality of joy certainly the clearest and strongest meaning of the expression: *God's humanization*?

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