



“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves ...” Hebrews 12:1-10

There were beautiful flowers on the tables during the week. Br Luke brought some from the flower shop up the street. Strangely enough, their colour matched the colour of the rushniks that dn Pawel had arranged around the icons in the chapel. If dn Pawel had not chosen the right colour, they would have not matched the flowers at the tables where many people ate during the week. But they somehow matched perfectly. And then, there were the yellow roses. Like the ones we had for the euthanasia retreat. There were many bunches of them. We could not find out who brought them. They just appeared early one morning. Rumors were that they had come the previous evening, for the service. Probably a “mistake”, since we could not have beautiful flowers in the chapel during lent. The chapel is fasting from beauty in order to prepare well for Pascha. The chapel does not break the fast but remains faithful to the light it is longing for. Therefore, the yellow roses ended up on the tables and around the room at 5am, adding a special beauty to the room that morning. They coloured the light that came through the window in pale yellow. It felt like an October light. The roses did not feel out of place that morning at the mission. People were coming through the doors heavy and sleepy, hungry and naked. It had rained and it was cold and wet. As a homeless brother said, the cold went right into your bones, as well as the humidity. And it did not want to come out. The beauty however, wanted to welcome them that morning, those who had not had a peaceful sleep during the night. Beauty is hospitable to suffering first. And when it comes to man, beauty is generous, and it perfects anything that is broken in us. Through beauty, the love of God can be “touched” by man while revealing its universality.

It was the yellow roses that Angelica saw first. Or at least that’s what she confessed. The beauty of the yellow roses moved her to speak to a priest. To have a real confession. She did not use that word because she did not know what it meant. She is young and she was wearing two different running shoes on her feet (different colours, not sure about the size). It felt like any other person who comes to confession during lent. But in her case, she did not even know if God is for real or not. Through the experience of beauty within the church that morning, the grace opened her mouth and her heart to speak in truth and confess in truth.

One cannot help but wonder how that can be. How can the grace of God, in the form of beauty, overshadow a homeless woman, in order for her to speak to God she says she does not know? Not to chat but to speak in truth about her heart, about her past and about her surreal present. The remedy for the suffering of a young homeless woman is the grace of God who touches her heart through beauty. People who suffer intensely from an early age know the limits of evil. It has no debt and no creativity. It cannot surprise you anymore. It can make you captive.

And it threatens you, yes, but only to show its pitiless limits. It can bring you to complete desolation just to curse God and die, like it tried to do to Job. To say something bad about Him, it constrains, it tortures you to squeeze any evil saying. On the other side, the confession of one's sins is triggered by beauty. That gives to the heart the certitude of being loved by someone you are going to discover. What you were longing for within the destitute heart is touched by beauty in order for the inner silence to break up in a word that does not give up on goodness. To confess your sins not because you look for forgiveness, because you have not yet heard about it, but to confess because it hurts, because you wonder if this is the first, the last and the only thing left for you on earth and in your life. And while you wonder you refuse to believe so.

We do not know if the mission will see Angelica again. As she was leaving the church, she talked on the phone about the appointment she had with a judge that morning. We experienced before having young people, broken and poor, longing for the love of God, walk through the church doors never to return. Just like shooting stars. What remains with us is her witness of being touched by beauty and overshadowed by grace in order to give her word to God. And ask him to act in her life. Through her honesty, by questioning the meaning of her broken poor life.

Somehow, we fail at times to see the Sunday of Orthodoxy for what it is. The face of Christ is not only revealed within the heart of the people who are initiated in the "religious mysteries". It is as if we know, and we have the truth and they don't. Orthodoxy affirms the victory of love over the sinner. The first and the last. The last and the first. The engraved face of Christ in every human being. It is the Orthodox faith, as father says, that proclaims the universality of the Church. Jesus does not speak today only to Nathaniel, but His promise is made to all of us. We should not be surprised that the poor, who have no religious training, can see the beauty and be overshadowed by the grace of God. It is the very belief of the church that they can see God, that they can see that they are loved while having the experience of rejection within their heart. In Christ we all have in our heart the experience of love that adopts us as sons and daughters.

However, it is the chastisement and the discipline that the poor experience in their lives that help them move and act on it. As God acts on our death and suffering to bring light into the darkness, so also, they act when they see the beauty that graciously offers itself to a life that is undervalued. They might not have the great words to proclaim it loudly in a public square, but within the heart their silence is cast away when they make their vows to the Bridegroom.

Chewing the Lenten fat...

***Does God Love to save or
save because he Loves?***

Which of these two does the mission seek to live each day?



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
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