

TRUE AND FALSE SHEPHERDS

How will they find the courage to again speak of God as Savior?

ECCLESIA

05_05_2020

**Rosalina
Ravasio***



"Today the truth is so tarnished and the lie so well established, that if you do not love the truth just as securely, you will be unable to recognize it" (Blaise Pascal).

I am a religious sister. Every day, even though I have a thousand personal shortcomings,

I try to live my life as a daily “response” to the call that I felt one day a long time ago as a saucy young woman who, like all young people, was full of plans for my life. After a sleepless night, I had the clear sensation, a conviction (call it what you will, even folly!!!) that the Lord was calling me right then and there, dispelling all of my dreams, without any need for the classic path of “spiritual discernment,” and I immediately decided to say yes. The path that led me to “awareness” of my call only came about later, after my extremely decisive and perhaps unconscious initial response.

Since then I have never – let me repeat, never – had a hesitation or “doubt” that I was mistaken in giving my yes to the Lord. Hesitations about my ability, yes!!! Doubts about my inadequacy...yes!!! Interior battles over my resistance to the labors and hardships presented by life, yes...!!! And so on and so forth...but never have I doubted the Lord.

Speaking now as a nun, I am appalled and disconcerted when I read that, during this extremely dramatic and historic time both from a human point of view as well as a spiritual one, various bishops and theologians are speaking with extreme certainty in such a way that they relegate faith to the status of almost a commercial product, telling us how and when to use it. It is really incredible: they have relegated our relationship of Love and our Resemblance to the One who has created us to a secondary place in the hierarchy of values of life and the fundamental needs of human existence. Not only that, their remarks also contain a hidden attempt to take away from the faithful the certainty that God heals and saves, a truth which is the essence of our faith.

It is a vulgar attempt to reduce God to the level of a “guru” who is not really needed at the present moment, someone who is “up there” while we here below must obey the technicians, the virologists, and the committees of scientists (how many have they saved?).

Is God absent? It seems that God is also in quarantine... far off, closed, hostile, and I would even say inaccessible.

But wasn't Jesus (and for those who believe, isn't he still) the Master of Truth and the Doctor of our wounds and anxieties? Not only that, wasn't he presented for centuries by priests, bishops, and popes as our Servant and the innocent Victim for our sins? Isn't He the Son of God who came to save us and who ended his life on an ignoble Cross amidst unspeakable torments? Isn't he the one who in Matthew 28:20 assures us that “I am with you all days, even until the end of the world”? Wasn't He always presented as the One Savior of those who are seeking Salvation? As the Bible says: “For

the salvation of those who welcome him...and the ruin of those who refute him" (Lk 2:34).

Isn't Jesus the anchor of salvation prepared by the Father for his shipwrecked children in this stormy sea?

The position held by those who should be proudly announcing the Word of Salvation is a hallucination, for they are instead proposing other anchors and saying that Jesus is only a secondary one. Everyone is being told to follow the advice given by scientists, politicians, and those who sit on TV talk-shows and pontificate to us as if they are professors: science is science, while religion is only a byproduct.

But in the future, how will they ever find the courage to again speak of God as our Savior after they have degraded him to the level of a human guru who is not capable of doing great things? Rodolphe Plus wrote: "Very few people would accept living with a dead body sitting in their dining room...and yet, too many carry a dead soul within themselves!" But whose job is it to remove the stench of our dead souls from us? The virologists?...The politicians?...The teams of scientists? Isn't it rather the job of the priest who, as a simple man, or better as the poor man that he is, can give us a palpable demonstration of the power to forgive sins and to give us back the beauty of true life, the life that goes beyond this world and death? As Saint Paul says, "If Christ is not Risen, our Faith is vain."

At this point, a question must be resolved: Has Jesus passed on this blessed power to those who belong to Him? Yes or no?

For us, only one word is necessary and true. The believer has both the need and the desire to share his burden, his interior suffering with Jesus. Yes, because the Christian feels the same need, the same yearning as the Prodigal Son: "I will rise and go to my Father...and I will say to him: *Father, I have sinned...*"

Over the centuries, the Church has always walked with her flock. The Gospel gives us the measure of fidelity – or shall we say the mark – of a true Shepherd: "The one who is not a Shepherd...sees the wolf coming and abandons his sheep." Could this be the time in which God is selecting his "True Shepherds"? Or should we instead, in a disconsolate way, recognize that "Evil" is truly smarter and more agile than Good in mixing the cards – that is, the Shepherds – and thus confusing the flock entrusted to them by God?

Is it pastoral charity to ignore the needs, the problems of conscience, the existential

anxieties of those people who have always sincerely believed in the Word of God? Those who feel the need to ask for forgiveness, who feel the need to come close to the mystery and repeat the 2000-year-old phrase that has always comforted and healed the heart of thousands of people: "Only say the word...and my soul shall be healed!"

Or are we to simply accept that, in this modern world, which is at times comfortable, hasty, and rough, even consecrated souls no longer need Jesus in the Eucharist?

"Is it better to obey God or men?" the Apostle asks. Today we pray that the Apostle's response will resound in the heart of consecrated souls at every level...even in the hierarchy.

With humility, concern, and hope...

**** Sister and foundress of the Comunità Shalom – Regina della Pace, Palazzolo sull'Oglio***