

19. The taste with which Christ lived

“I have been crucified with Christ [the total opposite of Peter’s “God forbid, Lord; this will never happen to you!"]; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:19-20)

Faith is that kind of thinking according to God that allows one to taste in our humanity, in our flesh, the taste of the life of Christ, the taste of the life that Christ lived, in every detail, from the flowers to the rain, from the mustard seed to the fields of grain, from the sheep to the camel, from bread to wine, from figs to grapes, from children’s toys to the faith of lepers, etc. Because the whole Gospel illustrates the sentiments that were in Christ Jesus, the taste of life that Jesus had by living as Son of the Father, full of the Holy Spirit, living to love to the point of giving his life for sinners.

When one loses the taste of life, one’s vocation also becomes a trade. It is no longer our life, but a profession. And one starts to taste something else, when we take off the uniform and feel free to live, enjoying it by ourselves and for ourselves, in our own way. But invariably in these cases it is no longer the taste of reality that one is seeking, but the taste of a dream, of a mirage.

How can one lose the taste of life by following a vocation? Perhaps precisely because one does not follow it to its very depth, or even in the depth of ourselves, that is, down to our heart thirsting for meaning and happiness, and hence also for the desire to taste life, to live every instant, circumstance, and encounter with a sense of fullness. But one lives this out if one follows Christ not only from outside, formally, but even in his way of living, to the point of letting Him live in us. And this means, up to the point of feeling, tasting life like He felt and tasted it, to the point, even, to have in ourselves “the sentiments that are in Christ”.

But what was it that gave taste, that gave meaning to every detail of the human life of Jesus? What made the taste for life spring up in Him, He who actually came from Heaven, He who had quite enough fullness of life and taste in the Trinity without needing to come find taste in our human life, itself deteriorated by sin, in a society, a culture, a nature deteriorated by sin, even for Him who was without sin. In the Gospel there are countless examples of what sprung up in Jesus when he tasted any sort of thing, even the smallest, like a swallow, a lily, an old lady who put two coins in the Temple treasury, the color of the clouds that run through the sky, the bulk of a camel, a field of ripe grain, the conviviality of a feast, a father who gives his child an egg... What did the taste of living any such thing make spring up in Jesus?

The Father! The memory of the Father, of the Father who is present, united to Him in that instant as also in eternity, in that instant because in eternity. And the memory of the Father meant, for Jesus, perceiving the Father’s sentiments reflected in reality, in the instant, in the gesture, in the circumstance, in the person whom Jesus was experiencing. And the taste, the overflowing taste of happiness, came

precisely from the connection that Jesus' memory made between the Father's sentiments and that particular thing, that detail. "At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.'" (Lk 10:21-22).

It is this connection between the memory of the Father and the lived experience that filled Jesus' life with taste, with taste and happiness. The taste of reality that filled Him with gracious gladness in every instant was this memory of the Father as the One who gives everything to the little ones "in his gracious will", that is, gratuitously. The taste of everything for Jesus was the awareness that each thing had been given, was a sign of the gracious will of the Father who gave all to the Son, and hence that everything, each circumstance, each encounter allowed him to taste who the Father is, to know the Father. And it is this taste of life that Christ has shared with us, such that, thanks to Him, we too can remember in the present that everything is given by the Father, and hence is a motive for gratitude, for "eucharist", because through every fragment of reality we are granted to know the Father and the Son as they know and love each other.

Even on the Cross, Jesus found in the reference to the Father, in the memory of the Father's sentiments that he begged for in the agony of Gethsemane, the positive meaning of that terrible circumstance, and he diffused it, he communicated it. To the repentant thief, he communicated the certainty of going into Paradise, to the Father's presence (cf. Lk 24:43). And Mark makes us notice that it was not so much the earthquake that transmitted faith to the centurion but the way in which Jesus expired: "Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'" (Mk 15:39).

What did that man see, that pagan, standing in front of Him, in His presence? What did he see, probably from atop his horse, a position that allowed him almost to stand face to face with Jesus? He must have perceived the meaning that the relationship with the Father gave to Christ's dying, to his breathing his last, to his giving up his spirit. "Truly this man was God's Son!" One cannot confess the mystery of Christ with such precision without, first of all, a special grace, but the grace to glimpse the sense with which Jesus himself lived out his death, receiving it, that is, as a gift from the Father and giving it back to Him with gratitude.

See, it is asked of us and given to us, asked because given, to live out the taste of each instant of life, up to death, and hence the taste truly of *all* of life, remembering Christ as He remembered the Father, or remembering the Father as Jesus did, or in Jesus, which is the same thing.