

About others

Brothers are for when things go wrong; friends, for all sorts of moment.

As one old hermit put it, "The sick do good to those around them."

An old, retired missionary taught me nursing where he lived with his community. It was a comfortable, well-prepared and very well cared for space. When he finished, I told him that I was glad he had such a decent place to stay, because he really deserved it. He replied, "Everyone deserves to live in a place like this."

A theologian said that before the Lord no one is worthy enough and that by His side we are a fly. But the truth is that the Lord has given us much greater dignity and better treatment than this.

One monk said, "Laugh first at yourself, and then at everyone else; but without ever hurting anyone."

A Benedictine hermit said that the rule of his order compelled him to receive everyone who knocked on his door as if it were Jesus Himself; but he told me, in a good mood, that sometimes he was visited by dishevelled people and he found it difficult to see Jesus in them.

Jesus said that the really greatest in a place is the smallest.

About what things are

In one of those difficult times in life, thinking that evil doesn't exist and is only in people's heads, can seem liberating and mentally healthy. But, on the existence of the Evil One, the truth is that, if it were not there, everyone would always do good (realizing that it is the best), and there wouldn't be problems.

As someone who was instructing a child in the Christian faith said: angels have only spirit;

animals have only a body; and, men, we have body and spirit.

God ends up doing justice the way He wants, and the angels do His will with great strength and tenacity. But we men, rather, must confine ourselves to following the gospel with simplicity: we must never want to be gods or angels.

Talking to a young man about life experiences, the old but experienced hermit told him, "Dangers often appear on the way back."

An old Chinese priest said: "Not euros, not health, eternal youth." He said it in the sense that everyone wants euros and health, but it seems like no one has enough of them. On the other hand, having a young spirit is something that is worth investing in.

As one monk said: "Mass is good for everything. You can fit everything in there." And so it is. Something can be offered; but the greatest sacrifice is that which the Son of God makes in giving Himself to us in every celebration of the Eucharist.

To know if women can become deaconesses or priestesses, we should consider whether not allowing them to be so is a matter for God or a matter for men.

An old hermit said: *man is a unit*. And, also: *the soul is unique*.

The old hermit of a monastery spoke of silence as something that always goes well and he differentiated it from the feeling that we should always be talking. For him, silence was letting thought flow freely without brakes or barriers. He said listening to classical music is also silence.

Some justify their actions by saying they are done out of love; but let us remember that, as it is said in the New Testament, he who loves is patient and kind.

In the Holy Bible, in Ecclesiastes, it says, "A rich man commits injustice and is still irritated, a poor man is treated unjustly and still apologizes." It must be said that, two thousand years later, this remains the same.

An anthropologist stated that, for some people, the dirty war of States forms part of the needs

of those States to get rid of certain evils; and that's why they call them "the sewers of the state," a necessary part of any building. But let's not be fooled: this sewer system needed in all buildings is already made up from the judiciary as a whole, the police force, the penitentiary system and others; we don't believe that something like a dirty war is a natural part of the building that is the state.

Someone said, "Fools don't go to heaven." He was referring to those who do not do good when that would be best for them in the short term and in obtaining eternal life.

Although there are difficult times in our lives when it seems that our prayer has no effect, this is not the case; we must be persistent in what we ask for. Jesus gave us prayer as a remedy for when other things have had no effect (Mark 9:29).

About Christians

An old, cultured and humanist organist in a basilica said that in the temples one should see a diversity of religious beliefs reflected; something the Romans and Greeks had already done in antiquity. But rather Jesus said that we should go and evangelize other peoples (Matthew 28:19)

Hearing that in a Mass it was said, "We bless you, Lord, God of the universe ...," I asked a hermit how someone could bless the Lord when we are nothing and He is everything. He replied, "Stop your false humility. Of course we can bless him".

On one occasion, a six-year-old boy was running with a friend and shouted blasphemies and insults while playing with him. His brother, who was three years older than him, told him, "Don't say that. God does not want it." The little one, continuing to play and run, replied: "And who is God ... is God strong?" The older one said yes, He is very strong. The little one then asked if God was the strongest; and when the older one answered in the affirmative, he said: "Then, I am of God."

As Christians, we are not concerned about the continuity of our faith because we know from Jesus' testimony that Christianity will not end. What worries us most is the drift of the world. This is a ship into which we must put our efforts for its subsistence and for its good.

About the world

Regarding climate change, although some talk about certain episodes of unusually good weather, this is the warmth you feel in winter when your house is burning.

The evolutionary narrative of the world is very suspicious. The fact that our surroundings in the universe are completely lifeless, whereas on earth we find countless foodstuffs and biodiversity, that we often find the remedies for the diseases we suffer from in nature itself and that, for example, we find substances that produce a wide range of moods, with resources to warm ourselves up, to move ourselves about, to enjoy ourselves ... all this makes us think more that someone has left it for us because we use it freely rather than that all this has been made on its own (the most naive thought one can have).

The rector of a basilica, a professor of theology, said in one of his classes that the world today is unsustainable, and that it will end. Likewise, a hermit said that the world, as we know it, is falling apart; and that there will be a great upheaval. All of this is very clear, and scientists are the first to say so. But let's ensure that this drastic change is a new attitude towards ecology and resources. Here we are! He will help us.

One teacher said that there are too many people in the world. I told him that the demographic problem has its solution in culture, which is proven to radically reduce the birth rate. When he asked me in which culture, I told him first in the native and then in the global culture.

The solution to climate change and pollution lies in the radical use of renewables. And to immigration by helping disadvantaged people while they are in their country of origin (preventing wars from escalating and helping them to develop).

Sometimes, in the face of life's difficulties and injustices, we find complete consolation in the Truth, which is Jesus. On one occasion, I saw photos of a shipwreck in the Mediterranean: about eighty people with lifebuoys, splashing about in the water and a dozen clinging on to the overturned ship, with no one to help them. Seeing this, I realized that even though that misfortune would not come to the attention of many, at that moment, there, by their side, they had the one who is the Truth, and that nothing is overlooked.

The biggest dangers for humanity in general today are climate change and a lack of faith (because, along with love, this is the most important driver of change in the face of adversity).

About the Church

Churches around the world are fostering a real revolution: the revolution of love. Its aim is to love others as oneself (as oneself!), to do good even if it involves suffering, or a thousand other things so that everyone is well. If we look closely, in the world today and in the world of forever, what the church promotes is something unheard of and wonderful. And all this is done with discretion and simplicity.

As an old Chinese Jesuit said: in the Gospel Jesus says, "So I will call you Peter, which means "a rock." On this rock I will build my church... "; in the fragment Jesus does not say a church, nor the church of Peter, nor the church of men or of Christians, but His church, the church of Jesus.

Even if there are members of the church who commit great evils (abuses, collusion etc.) we must be clear that what the church specifically does and teaches is to fight against these evils.

The church is often in the media for serious mistakes made by some of its members or for trivial facts. Today, it is very difficult for its work to be recognized or disseminated.

Returning from a luncheon and talking to the rector of a basilica and his organist, the organist asked the rector if he had considered putting himself up for bishop. The rector replied that he did not, *because before everyone knelt before the bishop, but now it is the bishop who must kneel before everyone.*

About God

Much has been said and written about the mystery of God, but Jesus does not speak of mystery but of light. Everything He does couldn't be simpler or clearer. Evil, on the other hand, is a mystery, and it is huge.

The people of this world look out for themselves better than the people who belong to the light. But, as the Bible says, God makes the wicked fall into his own traps.

On one occasion, at a conference on teaching, the caretaker of a Christian school who was attending the conference asked me, "We are constantly told that God saves us ... that God saves us; but saves us from what?" I immediately replied, "Man, in principle it saves us from everything." And while that may seem like an easy answer, it's the truth. God saves us from death, sin, and all other hardships, when He frees us from them or allows us to offer them by taking advantage of them.

About how to act

As an old hermit used to say, "Do the big things as if they were small and the small things as if they were big". She also said: "to leave in silence."

As the rector of a basilica used to say to the married couple, "Do everything together."

A professor of anthropology at the university said that when you hold a position, you have to spend 90 percent of your efforts to stay in office. But, if the philosophy of whoever holds the position is this, we won't move forward.

In the most difficult moments, a hermit would quote to himself the fragment of a psalm that says: "I may walk through valleys as dark as death, but I won't be afraid. You are with me, and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe".

An old Chinese Jesuit priest said: family, total delivery; friends, all for one and one for all; and work, never worry!

Although some want to have all their actions planned and tied down in advance and others, at the opposite end, use techniques to live the present moment in each moment; Jesus simply says that every day has its worries.

An old priest said, "Keep order and order will keep you."

A hermit revealed to me a simple but surprising philosophy that he himself put into practice: to make heaven on earth.

There are those who constantly turn to the Lord for any of the things in life, but there are also those who turn to Him only for the issues they consider most important. Both things are fine; it depends on the nature and way each one does things.

As a healthy measure, especially when there are difficulties, the advice of a hermit is good, who said: "when you eat, eat. When you work, work. When you read, read. When you do something, do that".

About justice

Someone wrote, "You will be judged by your works and their consequences." It must be said that today we are light years away from this conception of things, especially the political class.

Some, as a measure of pressure, say there will be no peace without justice; but, as we read in the New Testament, in the letter of James (James 3:18), justice will arise from the seed sown by the peacemaker. That is, peace is always good and a cause of justice. There is no need to generate violent conflict as this makes things worse and only lengthens the path.

As Jesus announced, there will be a great judgment on the last day, on the living and the dead. It will not be like the individual judgment that we undergo as people when we die and that leads us to eternal reward or punishment; but in the final judgment everybody will be judged with respect to all and respect to everything. Therefore, everything will be seen there in its full measure and dimension. So, by way of example, Jesus said that, in this judgment, the queen of the land of the South will condemn those Jews who were contemporary with Jesus, since she came from the distances of the world to hear Solomon; and instead, those Jews ignored and rejected Jesus, who was much more than Solomon.

About good and evil

Some in the world are better and some are worse; but there is also a wide swathe of people in the middle who are lukewarm, and who do not lean clearly towards good or towards evil. This big mass of people deserve and need us to put all our efforts into their salvation; which otherwise might not occur.

A priest, a professor of theology, at the beginning of his explanations, said that if we do good - things well done - this causes a great fear to the devil, who will turn away from us.

It is one thing to be of the world, which is good, and another to be worldly, which is bad.

A theologian said that evil is something that is part of the person. But evil, though it may arise from us at the instigation of the Evil One, is not a part of us.

Evil is a dark and sad mystery: this revolt against the established order in which we harm ourselves and others.

Someone told me that evil should be studied; but the way of Jesus does not pass through here, it is much simpler than that. On the other hand, those who look too much into the dark will damage their eyesight.

About the New Testament

It is one thing to give reason for our hope to those who ask us, as it is said in the first letter of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:15); and another, very different, to fill entire shelves with theological reasoning. The two things bear very different fruits.

The various Christian denominations must get on well with each other and form a single body. If we follow the path of the Master, there is no need to look for points of union with other religious beliefs: we simply follow the Gospel and He will guide us.

There are certain times in the Gospel that when Jesus speaks about God, He says, "My Father." Also, speaking to believers, He says, "Your Father." But in no case does Jesus, referring

to Him and to believers at the same time, say "Our Father"; that's because the fatherhood of God in Jesus is different from that which He has in respect to the believers.

One biblical scholar, a great expert in the Old Testament, said that whoever wrote the Gospel thought very well about what they were saying. But the truth is that to offer the other cheek when someone hits you, not to prepare a defence when they accuse you but to let the Spirit speak through you, to call the most disadvantaged as blessed or to see the smallest as the greatest, it is something that is still wonderful, extraordinary and, moreover, the only way forward.