

Passing on the faith

“Passing on the faith in post-modern times: in and through the family”, is the title of a lecture given by the late Jutta Burggraf (1952-2010), professor of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Navarre.

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Introduction

Let us talk about passing on the faith. I am referring to children, relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues: about everyone who may enter a cheerful and welcoming house, open to people of all types and conditions, colour or beliefs. We want to converse with everyone as we were taught by Saint Josemaría Escrivá, the Founder of Opus Dei, to whom we owe so much,.

I want to begin our reflections with a scene presented by Nietzsche more than a hundred years ago. In his book, “The Gay Science”, this perceptive philosopher made a madman shout: “I am looking for God!, I am looking for God!... Where has God gone to?” ... I will tell you... “God has died! And we have killed him!... What was most sacred and powerful in the world has bled to death under our daggers”. ... The madman then kept quiet and looked again at his audience; they too kept

quiet and looked perplexed at each other. In the end, he threw his lantern on the floor, so that it broke into pieces and was extinguished... “I have come too soon”, he then said, “my time has not yet come. This great event is still on the way and has not yet come to the ears of men.”[1]

Today, a century later, we can affirm that this “great event” *has* come to the ears of most of our contemporaries, for whom “God” is no more than an empty word. One can say that there is a present day “religious illiteracy”, an ignorance of even the most basic concepts of our faith.[2]

Some have asked whether a child, who does not know the word ‘thanks’ can ever be grateful, because language does not only express what I think, but also contains it. In any case, it determines it profoundly. This can be seen when considering

the different languages. To speak Chinese or French does not simply mean to change one word for another, but to have other mental structures and to see the world according to the circumstances of each place. Some tribes in Siberia, for instance, have very many different words for 'snow' (depending on whether it is white or grey, hard or soft, recent or old), while in Arab countries they have a great array of words for 'horse'. If one bears this in mind, one can understand the saying of Charles V: "I am as many times a man as the number of languages I speak."

Regarding the topic of religion, we can conclude: if I live in a secularised world, and I have absolutely no idea of the language of faith, it is humanly impossible to become a Christian.

I. The present scene

If we want to speak about the faith, we have to bear in mind the environment we are in. We have to know the feelings of the men and women of today — with their doubts and perplexities — which are our own feelings, doubts and perplexities.

1. The era of postmodernism.

We generally have many idols, such as, for instance, health, the “cult of the body”, beauty, success, money or sport; all of them may acquire, in certain circumstances, the features of a new religion. Chesterton has said “When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing – they believe in anything.” And, really, it sometimes seems that anything is more credible than a Christian truth. My students in the civil Faculties, such as Law or Chemistry, with good will, talk about the “reincarnation” of Christ (which took place 2000 years

ago). It seems the word “reincarnation” is much more familiar to them than “incarnation”. It may point to the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism in the West. Why do they have such a strong attraction? It seems there is a hankering for the exotic, and the “liberal”, something like a “religion a la carte”. There is no search for truth, but for what I like, what suits me: a bit of Buddha, a bit of Shiva, a bit of Jesus of Nazareth.

In times gone by, life was considered as progress. Today, however, life is considered as tourism: there is no continuity, only discontinuity; we travel without a fixed direction. A sign seen on a car on the road says it all: “I don’t know where I’m going, but I want to get there fast”. In recent literature we read about “modern obscurity”, and “present chaos”.

“Modern man is a gypsy”, is another thing that is said, and rightly so. He has no home: he might have a house for his bodily needs, but not for his soul. There is a lack of orientation, lack of security, and there is also much loneliness. It is, therefore, not surprising that happiness is sought in immediate pleasure, or perhaps in being applauded. If one is not loved, one at least wants to be praised.

Perhaps, we have all got accustomed to not thinking, or at least to not thinking things through to the end. It is what is called *weak thinking*. We live at a time when we have ever more perfect means, but the ends have been rather disturbed.

At the same time, we can discover a true “hunger for an inner world” in literature as in art, in music and also in films. There is an increasing number of people who seek some silent experience and contemplation.

At the same time, they are disappointed with a Christianity that, in many environments, is thought of as being not more than a rigid “bureaucratic institution”, with its precepts and punishments.

Other people flee from the Church for opposite reasons: Christian preaching seems to them to be to “superficial”, too “light”, not fundamental enough and lacking rigorous demands. These people aren’t looking for what is “liberal”, but for what is “assuring”. They want to be told with absolute certainty which is the way to salvation, and that another person should think and decide for them. Here we find the great market for sects.[3]

We live in multicultural societies, where we can observe the most contradictory phenomena taking place simultaneously. There are those who attempt to summarise

everything that is happening to us in one word: *postmodernism*. This term indicates a changing situation: a time that comes “after” modernism and “before” a new era which we don’t know yet. (The followers of the New Age have appropriated this name: according to them, we are already in this new age, but – as I see it – it is an error: they are simply “postmodern”).

Postmodernism is a limited era that shows the failure of modernism. It can be compared with the “post-war” period – the difficult time after a war – which is a preparation for something new. And it can also be compared with a “post-operation” period in which a person convalesces from surgery before returning to his normal activities.

It really seems we are living through a period of change: we are entering into a new period in humanity. And

new things require new approaches in speech and action.

2. Attitude towards cultural changes.

How are we to speak about the faith in such an upheaval? First, some reflections of Romano Guardini can help us. They have not lost any of their value. In his Letters from Lake Como, this great Christian writer spoke about his concern for the modern world. He refers, for example, to our artificial way of life; he writes about the manipulation we are daily exposed to, he deals with traditional values and the strident light that comes to us from psychoanalysis... After describing a truly desperate panorama in eight long letters, at the end of the book he suddenly changes attitude. In the ninth and last letter he ends with a “complete Yes” to this world in which it has been his lot to live. He explains

to the surprised reader, that this is exactly what God is asking each one of us to do. The cultural change, we are witnessing, should not lead Christians to a generalised perplexity.[4] It can't be right that wherever we look we should see worried and concerned people who yearn for times past. For it is God himself who acts in all changes. We must be ready to listen and to allow ourselves to be formed by him.[5]

Whoever wants to influence the present times must love the world we live in. He must not look at the past with nostalgia or resignation, but should adopt a positive attitude towards the particular historical moment. He must accept the new circumstances, which bring their own joys and worries and a whole style of life. "In the whole history of the world there is only one important hour – the present one," says Bonhoeffer. "He who flees from

the present flees from the hour of God.”[6]

Today, a person sees the various events in the world in a way which is different from previous generations, and he also reacts with different feelings. For that reason, it is so important to know how to listen.[7] A good theologian reads as much of Scripture as he reads of the news, browses through some magazines or the internet, showing interest and sympathy for our world.[8] And he knows that it is in the minds and hearts of men and women around him that he can find God, in a much more vivid way than in theories and reflections.

The changes in mentality invite us to express our own beliefs in a different way from before.[9] With regard to this, an writer has said: “I am not ready to modify my (basic) ideas no matter how times change. But I am

ready to place all external formulations at the level of my own times, simply for the love I have for my ideas and for my brothers, because if I talk in a dead language or an out of date focus, I would be burying my ideas and not be able to communicate with anybody.”[10]

II. The personality of the speaker

To talk about God it is not only necessary to bear in mind the environment we find ourselves in. What makes a bigger difference is the personality of the speaker: because, when we speak, not only do we communicate something; in the first place we express our own selves. Language is the “mirror of our spirit”. [11]

There is also a non-verbal language, which substitutes or accompanies our words. It is the climate we create around us, normally through very little things such as, for example, a

cordial smile or an appreciative look. When certain basic elements in the human body are missing, even though minimal, one can become gravely ill and die. By analogy we can speak about “basic elements” in a certain environment, which are those small details, difficult to determine and certainly not possible to demand, that can make others feel at ease, loved and appreciated.

1. To be and to appear to be

We ought to take more seriously some of the modern theories of communications (which, by the way, only express obvious truths). These theories remind us that people tell us more by what they are than by what they say. Some theories even say that as much as 80% or 90% of what we communicate occurs in a non-verbal form.

What is more, we transmit only a small part of the information in a

conscious manner and all the rest unconsciously: by how we look or by the expression on our face, the use of our hands and other gestures, the tone of voice and the whole of our body language. The body reveals our interior life, it “translates” emotions y aspirations, interest and deception, generosity and anguish, hatred and despair, love, petition, resignation and triumph; it rarely deceives. St Augustine speaks about “a language that is natural for all peoples”.[12]

The others, likewise, perceive the message in a conscious manner only in part, and they find out more things unconsciously. A certain situation has been engraved in my memory as proving this very clearly. When I was working in an institution looking after sick and lonely people, one day, someone in charge entered into the room where the patient was, speaking very kindly, and making all kinds of caresses. But when that

person left the room the patient confessed that she had felt a strong dislike for that person. Why? Because of my work there I had learned that the person making the visit, rather despised the patient. There was an attempt to hide this, but it was expressed unconsciously. And, as expected, the patient was perfectly aware of this..

This means that it is not good enough to smile and show oneself agreeable. If we want to touch the heart of others we must first change our own heart. The most important lessons are taught by the mere presence of a mature and loving person. In ancient China and in India, the man most valued was the one who possessed outstanding spiritual qualities. He did not merely transmit knowledge, but also profoundly human attitudes. Those who entered into contact with him, wished to change and to

improve – and they lost the fear to be different.

It is important precisely in our day to realise that the faith is very human and very humanising; faith creates a climate in which all feel at ease, loving being asked to give the best they have. This truth is expressed in the life of many great figures, from the apostle St John to Mother Teresa of Calcutta and St Josemaría Escrivá.

2. Christian identity and authenticity

To speak effectively about God, a clear Christian identity is needed. Perhaps our language may appear at times to be insipid because we are not yet sufficiently convinced about the beauty of the faith and about this great treasure we have, and we allow ourselves easily to be overcome by the general atmosphere.

But light comes before darkness and our God is eternally New. It is not that men find that original Christianity has become “old-fashioned”; it is the so called bourgeois Christianity that puts them off. “But this bourgeois Christianity is not the real Christianity”, warns Congar. “It is only the incarnation of Christianity into bourgeois civilization.”[13] This fact allows us to have a certain modicum of optimism and hope when it comes to talking about God.

A Christian need not be perfect, but he must be authentic. Others notice whether someone is convinced about what he is saying, or not. The same words – for example, God is Love – can sound trivial or extraordinary, depending on the way they are said. “That way depends on the profound depths of man’s being, from where they arise, without the will being able to do anything. And, through a

marvellous agreement, it reaches the same depths in the one who is listening.”[14] If someone is speaking from the joy of having found God in the depths of his heart, he may be able to move others with the power of his word. He need not be a brilliant orator. He simply needs to speak with the authority of one who lives – or tries to practise – what he says. He communicates something from the very centre of his existence, without using set phrases or boring formulae.

People assimilate, as if by osmosis, the attitudes and behaviour of those who are around them. And so, all Christian activity can be an invitation to open up to God, whether it is in an explicit relation to the faith or not. But it can also scandalize others, and words then lose their true value. Edith Stein admits that she lost her Jewish faith when, as a girl, she realised that, in the

ceremonies of the Pasch, her elder brothers were only “play acting” and did not believe in what they were saying.

3. Serenity

A Christian is not, in the first place, a “pious” person. Rather, he is a happy person because he has found the meaning of his existence. Precisely because of this he is capable of transmitting to others the love for life, that is as contagious as anguish is.

It is not, normally, a boisterous happiness, but a peaceful serenity, the fruit of having assimilated the pain of what is called “life’s afflictions”. It is necessary to convince others – without hiding one’s own difficulties – that no single life experience is in vain. We can always grow in maturity, even when we veer off our path, get lost in the desert or are caught in a storm.

Gertrud von Le Fort says that not only a sunny day, but also a dark night can have its miracles. “There are certain flowers that only flower in the desert; stars that can only be seen outside a built up area. There are certain experiences of God’s love that can only be felt when we find ourselves in the most utter abandonment, nearly on the border of despair.”[15]

How can someone, who has never been afflicted by sadness, understand and console? There are people who having suffered very much have become very understanding, cordial, welcoming and very sensitive with regard to other’s sorrows. In one word they have learned how to love.

4. Love and trust.

Love stimulates what is best in man. In a climate of acceptance and kindness great ideals are forged. It is

more important for a child, for instance, to grow in an atmosphere of authentic love, without any explicit reference to religion, than in a “pious” background which is merely formal and with no affection. If there is no love, the basic condition for a healthy development is missing. Iron cannot be moulded when it is cold, but when it is heated, it can be gently given shape.

It is through their parents that children should discover the love of God.[16] This requires a “language of deeds”; living up to one’s own message. What is decisive is not giving lessons and teaching catechism. That will come later. But earlier, much earlier, what is needed is to till the earth for the seed to take root.

In the first years of his life, each child makes a basic discovery, which will be of vital importance for his

character: either “I am important, I am understood and loved”, or “I am in the way, I am a nuisance”. Each one has to discover, in some way, the experience of love Isaiah transmits to us: “Because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you: Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands.”[17]

If that experience is missing, it can happen that a person will never be able to establish lasting relations or work seriously. And, above all, he will find it very difficult to really believe in the love of God: to believe that God is a Father who understands and forgives, and that he makes just demands for the good of his son.[18] “The history of the decline of each man and woman tells us about a wonderful, valuable, most unique child with many qualities, who has lost the sense of his own worth.”[19] It is very difficult to put this right later, by giving classes on the love of

God.. Someone has said, and rightly so: “What you do makes so much noise that I cannot hear what you are saying.”

There are many people who have not been able to develop that “original confidence”. And as they don’t have it, they move in an atmosphere of “original anguish”. They don’t want to know anything about God; they develop a sense of fear, and even terror, towards Christianity. This is because for them, God is only a severe judge, who punishes and condemns, even arbitrarily. They have not discovered that God is Love, a Love that gives itself and that is more interested in our happiness than we ourselves are.

That is why it is so important to believe in the capacities others have and to make them realise this. It is quite striking, sometimes, to see how much people can change if we treat

them as if they were already what they ought to be. There are many men and women who know how to encourage others to be better, through a discreet and silent admiration. They instil in them a certain self-assurance on there being a lot of good and beauty in them, which, with patience and constancy, they are encouraged and helped to develop.

When someone knows he is loved, he acquires a joyful confidence in the other and begins to open up to greater intimacy. The transmission of faith begins – at all levels – with non-verbal language. It is the language of affection, understanding and of authentic friendship.

III. Talking about the faith

When I know someone well, I also know his experiences, his hurt, his hopes. And if this knowledge is reciprocal, the other knows what I

have gone through, what makes me suffer and what gives me hope. Friendship is never one-sided. In a climate of mutual understanding, it is easier to speak about anything, including the faith.

1. A common search.

There are some people who have a strong Christian identity, and yet, do not manage to convince anyone. Today, when someone is too certain about a truth, no one accepts it, in principle. There is a tendency to reject “great feats” as well as the “bearers of the ultimate truth”, because we know very clearly that no one can know everything. One hears about preaching “from below” not “from above”, not from a pulpit instructing “the ignorant poor”. This way of behaving is no longer effective, and perhaps it never was.

One can recall what Pope John Paul II said during the Second Vatican

Council. In one of the plenary sessions of the Council, the then young bishop Wojtyla asked to speak and, unexpectedly, sharply criticised the project of one of the most important documents that had been proposed. He explained that the project was only fit to be thrown into the wastepaper basket. He gave the following reasons: "In the text as presented, the Church is teaching the world. It places itself, as it were, above the world, convinced of possessing the truth, and demanding that the world should obey it". But this attitude may express a supreme arrogance. "The Church should not instruct the world as from a position of authority, but has to seek the truth and the authentic solutions to the difficult problems of human life together with the world." [20] The way in which the faith is presented should never become an obstacle for others.

2. Learning from everyone.

In our day what is more attractive is not certainty but sincerity: it is better to give one's own reasons for being convinced to believe, and also talk about the doubts and questions involved.[21] In fact, it is a matter of taking the side of the other and trying to find the truth with him. I can certainly give him a lot, if I have faith; but others can also teach me a lot.

St Thomas states that any person, however erroneous his conviction may be, has the truth in some way: the good can exist without any mixture of the bad; but the bad does not exist without a mixture of the good.[22] Therefore, not only do we have to pass on the truth which, with God's grace, we have learned, but we are also called to deepen constantly in it and to seek it wherever it can be found, that is, everywhere. It is very

enriching, for instance, to talk with Jews and Muslims, for new horizons always open up. The truth, no matter who says it, can only come from God. [23]

As we Christians do not have a full grasp of all the riches of our own faith, we can (and should) move forward, with the help of the others. Truth is never possessed in its entirety. Ultimately, truth is not something, but somebody: it is Christ. It is not a doctrine that we possess, but a Person whom we allow to possess ourselves. It is a process that has no end, a successive “conquest”.

3. Taking human needs and desires seriously.

We can ask ourselves: why does this or that ideology attract so many people? Normally, they show the deepest desires and needs of our contemporaries (which are our desires and needs). The theory of

reincarnation, for example, manifests a hope in a future life; transcendental meditation teaches how one can separate oneself from external and internal noises; and skinheads, or punks of the 1980's (and 1990's), the goths of the 1990's (and 2000's) and rappers of today, offer a solidarity – a sense of belonging to a group – that many youngsters do not find in their own families.

However, the faith offers answers which are much more profound and encouraging. It tells us that we – and Christians in particular – are all brothers, called to walk together along life's road. We are never alone. When we talk to God in prayer – which we can do at any moment of the day – we do not separate ourselves from the others, but become united with him who loves us most in this world, and who has

prepared for us a life of eternal happiness.

If we manage to present this divine mystery in the key of love, it will be easier to arouse the interest of modern man. There have been considerable attempts to do this.[24] The God of Christianity is the God of Love, because he is not only One; he is at the same time Three. As loving consists in relating with a “you” – a giving and a receiving – a “solitary” God (only one person) cannot be love. Whom could he love, from all eternity? A solitary God, who knows and loves himself, can be considered, in the end, a very disturbing being.

A God who is One and Three is, really, the God of Love. In his essence we discover a life of mutual gift and dedication. The Father gives all his love to the Son; he has been called the “Great Lover”. The Son receives this love and returns it to the Father;

he is the one who never says “no” to Love. The Holy Spirit is the love itself between both; or “*con-dilectus*”, as Hugo of Saint Víctor puts it: manifesting an open love, where another is included, where we also are included.[25]

“To be in the world means to be loved by God”, says Gabriel Marcel. That is why, a believer can feel himself protected and safe. He can have the experience of having his deepest desires fulfilled.

4. Concentrating on essentials.

When we speak about the faith, it is important to go for what is essential: the great love God has for us, the fascinating life of Christ, the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in our minds and in our heart... We have to reject what those who wish to take away the force of Christianity do: they reduce the faith to morality, and morality to the sixth

commandment. In any case, it is important to make it very clear that the Church is all in favour of love. And to safeguard love, she says “no” to all the deformations of sexuality.

Benedict XVI has decided to follow this same line. After the “Fifth World Meeting of Families”, in Valencia, he gave Vatican Radio an interview. He was asked: “Holy Father, in Valencia, you have not talked about abortion, or about euthanasia, or about gay marriages Was that intentional?”

And the Pope answered: “Of course it was... Having so little time one cannot begin immediately with negative things. We first have to know what is it that we want to say, don’t we? And Christianity... is not a bundle of prohibitions, but a positive option. It is very important to see this again, because today this concept has practically disappeared. A lot is said about what is not permitted, and now we have to say: We have a

positive idea we want to propose. Above all, it is important to stress what we want.”[26]

5. A clear and simple language.

When I was a student in Cologne I once had to prepare a long and difficult study for a University seminar. Before handing it in to the lecturer, I showed it to an older colleague, who read it with interest. Afterwards he gave me a friendly piece of advice that I have never forgotten.: “It is good,” he said. “But if you want to get a good mark, you have to say the same thing but in a much more complicated way.”

That is the way we are. We sometimes think that what is complicated denotes intelligence, and we forget that God – the highest truth – is, at the same time, utterly simple. The language of faith speaks simply about ineffable realities. “I would rather speak five words with

my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue,” says St Paul.[27]

Images may be used to bring the Trinitarian mystery closer to our understanding. (We find more truth in simple images than in grand concepts). One of the most used is that of the sun, its light and its heat; or that of the fountain, the river and the sea, a comparison much appreciated by the Greek Fathers. [28] (As the Fathers of the Church very often use images, their theology is always modern). One can also tell stories, use quotations from literature or even examples from films. During the Second Vatican Council, the experts were invited to speak in an accessible language: “Let all old-fashioned and dry speech be abandoned, just as all distinctions full of conceptual affirmations. Let us use, instead, a more vivid and specific language, in line with the

Bible and that of the ancient Fathers. Let all excessive secondary arguments be abandoned together with all matters that are mere erudition... Starting some abstruse, hardly intelligible, discourse ... is offensive and shows lack of respect for the truth as well as for people who have the right to be presented with comprehensible arguments.”[29]

If someone cannot understand what another person is saying he cannot express his doubts, he cannot investigate freely on his own. He has to depend on the other person and can be easily manipulated by him.

6. An existential language.

Equally, the other person has the right to know the whole truth. If we withhold a part of the faith, we create an atmosphere of confusion, and we are not being really helpful to the other. Daniélou says so clearly:

“The basic condition for a sincere dialogue with a non-Christian is to say: I am bound to tell you that one day you will meet the Trinity.”[30]

We have to explain to others our own faith as completely and clearly as we can.[31] In this way, in fact, sincerity is improved in the human relationship: We want to let others know our own identity, that is to say, in our case, the Christian identity. The other person wants to know who I am. If we do not speak carefully about all the aspects of the faith, the other person could not accept us as we really are. Our relationship will become increasingly superficial, more disappointing and, sooner or later, will break down.

But we do not only wish to let others know our own programme of life. We wish to encourage others to be conquered and loved by the bright figure of Christ.

Here is where the existential and dynamic character of the language of faith is manifested, which invites others to enter, little by little, into a Christian life, which is a dialogue and an intimate correspondence to love and, at the same time, a great adventure, “the adventure of faith”.

Final note

To believe in God means to walk with Jesus Christ – in the midst of all the battles we may have to wage – towards the house of the Father.[32] But for this, effort is not much use, and sermons even less. Our language is very limited. Faith is a gift of God, and so is its development. We can invite others to ask for it, humbly from above, together with us. The aim of our talking about God is to lead everyone to talk with God. Even Nietzsche, who fought against Christianity for many decades, at the end of his life composed an

impressive poem, “To the unknown God”, that can be considered as a true prayer:

“Come back, with all your torments!

Oh come back

To the last of all solitaires!

All the streams of my tears

Run their course to you

And the last flame of my heart –

It burns up to you!

Oh, come back,

My unknown God! My pain! My last
... happiness!”[33]

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Endnotes

[1] F. NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science* (1887), Palma de Mallorca 1984, n. 255.

[2] Cf. statistics published by J. FLYNN, Religious Illiteracy, in “Zenit”, 3-5-2007.

[3] Cf. M. GUERRA, *Historia de las religiones*, Pamplona 1980, vol. 3.

[4] Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4.

[5] R. GUARDINI, *Letters from Lake Como*, San Sebastian 1957.

[6] D. BONHOEFFER, *Predigten, Auslegungen, Meditationen I*, 1984, pp. 196-202.

[7] Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Situation and Tasks of Theology today*, Salamanca 1970: “If the Church wishes to come closer to the problems of the world today, it must open a new chapter of

pastoral-theological epistemology. Instead of starting only from the data of revelation and tradition, which is what classical theology has generally done, one would have to start, from facts and problems taken from the world and from history. This is much less comfortable; but we cannot keep on repeating old matters, starting from ideas and problems from the XIII or XIV centuries. Starting from ideas and problems of today, as from new data, which has certainly to be clarified by data from the Gospel as always, but without being able to make use of solutions already prepared calmly based on an established tradition “, pp. 89 and ff.

[8] The Council changed the usual theological reflections and began to look at today's world, with its imbalance, fears and hopes; and opened itself up to the signs of the times. “ The People of God believes that it is led by the Lord's Spirit, Who

fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labours to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human." (GS, 11 and 44; Cf. 4-10. Cf. JOHN XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis* (25-XII-1961), in which the Pope convoked the Second Vatican Council.) See also, Encyclical *Pacem in terris* (11-4-1963), 39.

[9] Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, 6.

[10] J.L. MARTÍN DESCALZO, *Razones para la alegría*, 8^a ed., Madrid 1988, p. 42.

[11] Cf. E. SCHOCKENHOFF, *Zur Lüge verdammt*, Freiburg 2000, p. 73.

[12] SAINT AUGUSTINE, *Confessions* 1, 8. At the same time, the expression of feelings is modulated by culture. To be able to understand the meaning of a gesture, a look or a smile, indicates that one is part of a certain culture.

[13] J. DANIÉLOU, *The Mystery of History*. A Theological Essay, San Sebastian 1963, pp.39f.

[14] S. WEIL, *Gravity and Grace*, New York 1952, p. 117.

[15] Gertrud von Le Fort, *Unser Weg durch die Nacht*, en *Die Krone der Frau*, Zürich 1950, pp. 90 and ff.

[16] Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 14 y 36.

[17] Is 43:1-4; 49:15-16.

[18] Following the same line one can partly explain the phenomenon of

radical feminist theology. Why are there so many people who no longer want to speak about “God the Father”? For quite a few it is impossible to address God as “Father”, because they have experienced disagreeable relations with their own father.

[19] Cf. J. BRADSHAW, *Das Kind in uns*, München 1992, p. 66.

[20] M. MALINSKI; A. BUJAK, *John Paul II: History of a Man*, Barcelona 1982, p. 106. In certain situations, however, the Church has to teach with authority, but not in an “authoritarian way”, that is to say, with both authority and humility.

[21] Some propose a “narrative theology” which tries to discover the action of the Spirit in the world through concrete facts and events. Some authors describe their own life (Cf. J. SUDBRACK, *Gottes Geist ist konkret. Spiritualität im christlichen*

Kontext, Würzburg 1999, pp.3-31), others take examples from literature or history to illustrate how God acts in all that happens (Cf. V. CODINA, *Creo en el Espíritu Santo*.

Pneumatología narrativa, cit., pp. 11-27 y pp.179-185). Narrative pneumatology sometimes becomes hagiography. The fact that some great saints are converted by reading the lives of other saints is significant. For example, Edith Stein discovered the faith by reading the “Autobiography” of Teresa of Avila. Hans Urs von Balthasar y René Laurentin, among others, began theology by taking saints who have a very particular message for their own and later generations (Cf. R.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Thérèse de Lisieux. Geschichte einer Sendung*, Koln 1950. R. LAURENTIN, *Vie de Bernadette*, París 1978. IDEM, *Vie de Catherine Labouré*, Paris 1980).

[22] “Bonum potest inveniri sine malo; sed malum non potest inveniri sine bono”. SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* I-IIae q. 109, a.1, ad 1.

[23] “Omne verum, a quocumque dicatur, a Spiritu Sancto est”. Ibid Cf. IDEM, *De veritate*, q. 1, a.8.

[24] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical *Deus caritas est* (25-12-2005).

[25] Cf. SAINT AUGUSTINE “There are three: The Lover, the One Loved and Love.” *De Trinitate*, VIII,10,14: PL 42,960.

[26] Cf. BENEDICT XVI, An interview given to Vatican Radio and to four German television channels before his journey to Germany, Castelgandolfo 5-8-2006.

[27] 1 Cor 14:19.

[28] These are evidently very imperfect images that require further explanations.

[29] G. PHILIPS, *Deux tendances dans la théologie contemporaine*, en *Nouv. Rev. Théol* (1963/3), p. 236.

[30] J. DANIÉLOU, *Pagan Myths, Christian Mystery*, Andorra 1967, p. 123.

[31] The time comes when some “technical” terms, may be carefully introduced; terms such as person, relation or nature, which were used when great dogmas were formulated. Theology – as with any other science – has very precise terminology which we cannot disregard. Many words found in the dogmatic formulae come from a philosophical background; after a long history of disputes between faith and philosophy, they became the specific expressions of what faith can say about itself. These words,

therefore, do not only form part of the language of Plato, or of Aristotle or of any other philosopher, but belong to faith's own language. Certainly, revelation is superior to all cultures. But in transmitting the Good News of Christ, a certain culture is also transmitted.

[32] Cf. Phil 3:20.

[33] Cf. F. NIETZSCHE, en F. WÜRZBACH (ed.), Das Vermächtnis Friedrich Nietzsches, Salzburg-Leipzig 1940.