

VERY HUMAN, VERY DIVINE (II): We Have the Way Within

Saint Augustine's life was a constant search for God: an impassioned search that did not always lead him along the right path. As a young man it was his love for literature and rhetoric that captivated him. His ardent impulses sometimes led him astray, and he even embraced systems of thought distant from the Christian faith. But his sincere search for the truth and his diligent reading of Sacred Scripture little by little brought him closer to Christianity. Perhaps with his own experience in mind, and knowing many learned people who were eagerly seeking the truth but failed to find Christ, Saint Augustine wrote: "Every man desires truth and life; but not every man finds the way. That God is a certain Life Eternal, Unchangeable, Intelligible, Intelligent, Wise, Making-wise, some philosophers even of this world have seen ... But we had no way by which to reach the fulness of Truth. The Son of God, who is ever in the Father the Truth and Life, by assuming man's nature became the Way. Walk by Him as Man, and you will come to God."¹

We reach God through Christ

It may be hard for us to grasp that the God whom we seek as the aim of our life, and who has placed this longing deep in our heart, is also the *way* to reach Him. We reach God through Himself. And it was to enable us to travel along this path that He sent his own Son into the world, so that not only could we listen to Him, look at Him, and touch Him, but even share in his own Life. Jesus "did not limit Himself to showing us the way to encounter God, a path we can walk on our own by being obedient to his words and by imitating his example. Rather, Christ opens for us the door of freedom, and becomes, Himself, the way: "I am the way" (*Jn 14:6*)."²

The liturgy of the Holy Mass confirms this for us when, at the end of Eucharistic Prayer, the priest proclaims, raising the consecrated Bread and Wine: "Through Him, and with Him and in Him..." We can reach God only *through* Christ, *with* Christ, and *in* Christ. His Person is the Way by which we need to travel, the Truth through which we reach our goal, and the Life in which our own life acquires meaning. Therefore, from that first time in the Cenacle, each Eucharistic celebration culminates in Communion with the Body of Jesus. God makes himself food for our path: the path that He himself is.

By undertaking this path we are led to the fulness of life. "Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love ... Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time."³ As Saint Josemaria stressed:

¹ Saint Augustine, Sermon 141, nos. 1,4.

² Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Placuit Deo*, 1 March 2018, no. 11.

³ Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, no. 4.

“Jesus is the way. He has left on this earth of ours the clear marks of his footprints ... How I love to recall these words! Christ Jesus, the same who was alive for his Apostles and the people who sought him out, lives today for us, and will live forever.”⁴

Three beams of light

The fourth Gospel tells us regarding John the Baptist: *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light (Jn 1:6-8).* The light to which John bore witness also wants to be made manifest in every baptized person. As we proclaim in the Creed, Christ is “Light from Light.” And therefore Christians, who receive that Light and *believe in his name (Jn 1:12)*, are also light from that Light. Thus when we ask God for “light to see,” we are praying that we too, like the Baptist, may be witnesses to the Light in the world.

We need a light that accompanies us from within, a strength that sustains us interiorly. This is the role of the theological virtues in our soul. Faith, hope and charity are like three beams of light, the three primary colors of God’s Life in us. “The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man’s faculties for participation in the divine nature: for the theological virtues relate directly to God.”⁵ Through the three theological virtues, “Our Lord makes us his own; he makes us divine with a true ‘godliness.’”⁶

Faith, hope and charity correspond, in a certain sense, to “the three dimensions of time: the obedience of faith accepts the Word that comes from eternity and, promulgated in history, is transformed into love, in the present, and thus opens the door of hope.”⁷ Faith comes first. It tells us not only where we come from, but also where we are going; it is not only the memory of the past, but also a light that illuminates the future; it opens us to hope, and leads us towards life. Between these two poles charity unfolds, which always works in the present. With the strength of faith and the trust of hope, we can say to ourselves: right here and now, for this person, in this situation I can be, with all my limitations, God’s light, God’s love.

The newness of living with Him

“The world is in great need, my children,” Saint Josemaría once said, “because millions and millions of souls do not know God, they have not yet seen the light of the Redeemer. Each of you

⁴ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 127.

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1812.

⁶ Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 98.

⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Communio. Un programa teológico y eclesial*, Encuentro, Barcelona 2013, p. 303.

must be, as our Lord wants, *quasi lucernae lucenti in caliginoso loco*, like a lamp lit in the midst of darkness.”⁸

The light that enkindles this lamp has two sources. The first comes simply from having been created in God’s image and likeness. This source, which never abandons us, is shown in our ability to grasp the truth, in our will’s inclination towards the good, and, even more deeply, in our human dignity that results from having come forth from the hands of a Creator who is infinitely intelligent, loving and free, and not from blind chance. The second source is the new life that is poured into us by “the rebirth brought about at Baptism that causes a Christian to have, ontologically, a new life within.”⁹ This sacrament restores the divine life that the sin of our first parents deprived us of, and enables us to bring God’s light to our surroundings.

These two great sources – being created in God’s image and our Baptism – enable us to reflect God’s light to those around us. When a teacher of the law, under the cover of darkness, came to Jesus to ask how he could live close to God, Jesus answered: *whoever does what is true comes to the light* (*Jn 3:21*). Our actions too can generate light if we let ourselves be led by God’s grace. Over time, familiarity with God’s light, the facility to choose the greater good that God wants rather than apparent ones, becomes “a sort of ‘connaturality’ between the human person and the true good. Such a connaturality is rooted in and develops through the virtuous attitudes of the individual: prudence and the other cardinal virtues, and even before these the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.”¹⁰

Identification with Christ results from the growth of this “connaturality,” through grace and the welcome we give Him in our soul, with God made Man, which gradually enables us to have the same sentiments as He (cf. *Phil 2:5*), the same attitudes. The more we advance in intimacy with Jesus, the more we realize that seeking sanctity is not mainly a question of the struggle to achieve a specific moral standard, but a path on which we are accompanied by the incarnate God Himself, sharing in his sentiments, loving with Him, suffering with Him. How well Saint Josemaria expressed it: “When you find yourself tired and exhausted, approach our Lord trustingly, as that good friend of ours did, and say: ‘Jesus, see what you can do about it. Even before I begin to fight, I am already tired.’ He will give you his strength.”¹¹ This is the responsibility of each Christian: to share our life *with Him*.

Christian life, understood in this way, is not a matter of accepting a system of ideas, but of placing our trust in a Person: in Christ. This is what so many holy men and women have done throughout the course of history. Today we possess no other message or means. Like them, we have the task of lighting up with world from within, as one of the first Christian writers graphically

⁸ Saint Josemaria, Notes from a get-together, 2 June 1974.

⁹ Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, “Vocation to Opus Dei as a Vocation in the Church,” in *Opus Dei in the Church*, Four Courts Press 1994, p. 173.

¹⁰ John Paul II, Enc. *Veritatis splendor*, no. 6.

¹¹ Saint Josemaria, *The Forge*, no. 244.

said: “What the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world.”¹² To be a soul for the world: that is our way, and we have the way within. It is Christ, who wants us to be, like Himself, both very human and very divine.

Carlos Ayxelà

¹² *Letter to Diognetus*, VI.