

## SIMPLICITY

by Antonietta Augurso

*"Child, / if you find the kite of your fantasy, / bind it with the intelligence of your heart. / You will see the sprouting of spellbound gardens / and your mother will become a plant, / which will cover you with its leaves. / Turn your hands into two white doves / to take peace / and the order of things everywhere. / However, before learning how to write / mirror yourself in the water of sentiment"* (Alda Merini).

### At Nazareth

I keep alive in my memory my visit to Nazareth, a city that is not as small as I had imagined, through the narrations, which granny Betta made on the Annunciation

It is not easy to make a detailed description of it. Near the narrow streets, leading to the little sisters of Charles de Foucauld, there is a big emporium of aesthetic products, where the Palestinian girls are clothed exactly as European shop-girls, transmitting the common message of global consumerism. However, the search for the mystery pushes us necessarily elsewhere.

Nazareth is the town of Mary, thus the echoes of childhood surface once again! Nazareth has hosted silences, disquietudes and, above all, dreams. The dream of Mary who, in her listening, was ready to welcome centuries of Biblical memories. The dream of Joseph, the young carpenter, who trusted an angel and, like children, put every calculation aside. "Here everything has a voice, everything has a meaning. (...). Oh! How much willingly we would like to be children again and sit at this humble and sublime school of Nazareth. How ardently we would like to start afresh, near Mary, to learn the true science of life and the superior wisdom of divine realities!".<sup>1</sup>

It is somehow an obligatory phase, a backward journey towards childhood: an invitation to think once again of children's life, of children who will see *the sprouting of spell-bound gardens*. A journey in which the children's games are to be re-discovered.

Nazareth moves far from life, when the dimension of games weakens, when games seem to be useless and not enough fecund, thus giving way to a monothematic adulthood, where autarchy, rampant tendency and indifference seem to be the true pillars of maturity. This is a programmed maturity without hope, where the perceived menace is one's own humanity itself.

Expectations and hopes are perceived at Nazareth. They can be caught from the face of the Palestinian child with fear in its eyes, but also with the dream of becoming an engineer in future. As well as in the smile of Noemi, who incarnates very well the meaning of her name ("she who is sweet"), and waits for the great men of history to feel, as she did, the desire of playing with the children of others.

The visit to the places of Tradition, the well of the Annunciation, the house of Joseph, invite us to meditate on the great and complex gift of Incarnation: the stupor of still adolescent Miriam, the games of her child. A human and divine history; «Nazareth is like a school, where everything has a voice, a meaning; where we can learn the true science of life and the superior wisdom of divine truths!».<sup>2</sup>

### In the season of old ages

The science of life can start afresh from our becoming like children, not in a robotised and virtual childhood, but in a deep commitment to conversion, in the desire of looking at the vicissitudes of history with the awareness of him who entrusts himself "like a little child in its mother's arms" (Psalm 131): it is the infancy that goes on also in the phase of old age.

We can turn our hands into *two white doves*: an interior attitude, which changes radically our relation with reality. This means the wish to have once again the stubbornness of desiring the *beautiful* dimensions of life, thinking that it is meaningful not to give in to the cynicism of power, which is typical in adults.

After his stay at Nazareth, several times Jesus invites us never to abandon the spirit of children, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew: 18,3). He speaks like this, above all, when someone does not know the clear sense of the sequela and seeks eventual positions of prestige (Matthew 18, 1). This is a disquieting indication for those who are used to think of immediate results, to judge if a town can survive with its internal gross product (the famous PIL).

To become children again does not mean to refuse the seasons of life, presuming to be eternal adolescents. It is the matter of renewing one's own vision of the world, stubbornly committed to hope that it is still possible not to evaluate every aspect of history only through a utilitarian and functional vision, leaving the doors open and remaining astonished by any idea or project, which, in immediacy, could appear a little possible of being planned; continuing to look beyond, because, "All that does not start with a dazzling light will have no future".<sup>3</sup>

It is not correct to look at the past with the "if", but it would be difficult to imagine the continuity of events, if Mary had not been childlike, despite her perturbation and her question to understand the sense of the greeting (Luke 1, 22); if Joseph had remained shut up in his reasoning; if he had simply abided with what the law prescribed in similar cases. The most usual schemes of thought would not evaluate their attitudes to be productive. Generally we make calculations only by keeping in view the present: however, this is salvation history!

### **To recuperate our childhood**

A look at our daily experiences proves the sensitivity of the global panorama: we rarely meet people who do not speak of the index of the "stock exchanges", of its ups and downs causing the crisis of robust economic systems; or of some interesting experiment, which would like to catch the secret of the universe, with frightening costs and results which cannot be comprehended by common intelligences. It seems that even the fears which we experience are calculated in the line of profit.

We become even more perplexed when the media transmit news on political "welcomes": is it still possible to call them so? They use the expression: *zero tolerance*, an index of closure and refusal. Yet we know that we cannot eliminate anyone or everything that threatens us: it would be a drift in the infantile and fanatic idealism. We have the impression that the great people of history try to render the situations of mediation asphyxiated: thus every man finishes by playing all alone.

This is just the contrary of what healthy children do: they get annoyed if they play alone; thus at times a child shows an incredible disposition to be reasonable, provided he succeeds in finding a companion of games. We witness in astonishment the *meetings* and the *vertices* of various ministers and, after days of *flash* and artificial smiles, they go home without any agreement on great questions about the future of man. Endowed with infallible technical instruments, with a cynic way of reasoning, they limit the dreams of anyone: it is true that, if we commit ourselves, the cities can be kept clean, "however, after all, this would not stop the over-heating", they affirm!

### **In contact with interiority**

"What kind of freedom is the one that frustrates our imagination and tolerates the impotence of free persons in questions that concern them?"<sup>4</sup> A certain psychological terrorism characterises also the texts of the economists. All of them are very much worried because of China's progress and the falling of the stock-exchanges, but very few of them remember the poor countries chocked by the interests on the "external debt".

In a similar picture, what do we mean by the expression "to recuperate the childhood?" «Your salvation is in conversion and tranquillity, your strength in serenity and trust» (Is 30,15). The Biblical texts clearly indicate conversion as a free gift. Man must keep the desire of looking at history without considering himself as the unique protagonist, the absolute arbiter, *who flees on horses* (See: Is 30,16). The Word invites us to recognise our own state as creatures, without abandoning ourselves to deliriums of omnipotence, which make the paradigm of childhood appear to be ingenuous.

This is not the matter of a banal simplification or of a psychological state; it is, rather, a way of living a deep contact with our interiority; it is an exercise of *humilitas*, of reconciliation with our own humanity; «It is from the feeling of its own weakness that the child humbly draws the principle of joy itself».<sup>5</sup> To remain little implies also the courage of not fleeing away, hiding oneself because of fear (as we read in Genesis 3, 10), cultivating a realistic relation with oneself. The obstinacy of hiding the precariousness and frailty to which we are exposed, often carries us to the loss of good humour, forgetting that, "the fundamental concepts of good humour : freedom, measure, completeness, game, are at the same time intimate issues of the religious man".<sup>6</sup>

The jesters, instead, are like children: they jump, they do away with dramatisation and sing the truth!

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1. From the "Discorsi" of Paolo VI at Nazareth, 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1964, during the *Liturgy of the Hours*, I, 419-420.

2. Cf From the "Discorsi" of Paul VI at Nazareth, 420-421. 3 C. SINGER, *Non dimenticare i cavalli schiumanti del passato*, Servitium, Troina 2007, 28.

3. C. SINGER, *Non dimenticare i cavalli schiumanti del passato*, Servitium, Troina, 2007, 28.

4. Z. BAUMAN, *La solitudine del cittadino globale*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2000, 9.

5. G. BERNANOS, *Diario di un curato di campagna*, Mondadori, Milano 2007, 17.

6. A. GRÜN-M. DUFNER, *Spiritualità dal basso*, Queriniana, Brescia 2005, 110.

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