

Calm and Strong in Times of Crisis

By Franco Maggiotto

Alpignano, Italy - October 1998

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” Jer 17:7-8

In areas where water and shade are considered to be the most highly prized commodities, a tree full of leaves and fruit is the ultimate image of life in all its fullness. The believer who trusts in the LORD lives in a deep dimension of grace: nothing can overcome his faith. We're talking about a blessing that is also a promise for the future; a promise that doesn't exclude the eventuality of truly difficult life situations. In fact, the believer has the same things in common with all humans.

The promise primarily consists in the ability to bear up in the face of adversity, to be an ardent participant in the human condition with the full knowledge that the final word of our existence is that one pronounced by the LORD on our behalf. A tree provides shade and gives fruit not for itself but for the benefit of those who seek shelter under its leaves and seek its fruit to appease their hunger. Moreover, the beauty and the power of the tree come from the wellspring into whose courses the tree's roots have insinuated themselves. In other words, all goodness comes from God, the wellspring of life.

Every generation goes through a season of drought. And in order to deal with it when it arrives, it becomes necessary to rely on every single resource available. Good intentions are not always adequate; in these extreme situations it is only the LORD who sustains us, taking us in his hand, giving us water from his fountain. It is natural, nonetheless, that each one, in his human effort, searches for positive solutions to his own personal agony and in so doing turns to whomever promises immediate relief. Today's spiritual marketplace offers numerous choices for the shopper: you can find a quick-fix remedy for what you think fits your particular case.

Whoever places faith in “new” religions, old religious philosophies revitalized or the reassurance of fundamentalism, does so

because he evidently doesn't consider our viewpoint valid; because the heart of our position is the proclamation of the LORD Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected. God forsaken on the cross is an answer which, in the immediate sense, really cannot compete with the spirituality currently in vogue today, in which God has to be a winner and we have to be instant winners. Yes, people want everything today. Instead, we live with the promise: the future is our new frontier.

But if we remain firmly planted in the LORD and in his WORD, we find the way of testimony and that which seems to be unreal today becomes real and edifying. We don't have to worry ourselves about appearing to be “in style,” rather our concern is being faithful to the LORD. We don't have to fear giving an answer directly from the Word of God, but with frankness we can proclaim the Gospel, even when that answer is uncomfortable or unpopular. In this way, Christian ethics will be an act of faith to the LORD, the Living Water. The creature faithful to God is also taking responsible action in the world, with the task of carrying out justice and liberation from disillusionment so that men and women can live like mature adults, freely and responsibly.

I also, from the standpoint of the difficulties encountered from my contradictory position (i.e., a married priest, a reformed pastor, in a Roman Catholic world), dream of a community of women and men which, in this season of drought, is like a strong fruit-bearing tree, one that does not fear evil but opposes it with armies of agape-love, the love of God that is free and unconditional for all those who he has called by name. Amen.

In His service, *Franco Maggiotto*

