



## **8th Friday after Pentecost**

### **The Gospel According to Matthew 17:10-18**

*"...a man came up to Him and kneeling before him said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me."*

Belonging to a "faithless and perverse generation" is a reality that appeared clearly to me this past week, when talking with a parent whose child, who is now an adult, looks defeated in the battle with one of the demons of our time: addictions. We know well the reality of this illness from within the mission and we encounter it frequently there, however listening to the pain of a parent gives you a better understanding of this wound that goes deep down in the human soul and spreads also among many. The experience allows you to touch this pain and also to realize how helpless we are, having no faith to offer to those who bring the pain, and no integrity to help in finding a path towards healing. This is the place in which we are now. A real desolation. A place that asks only for prayer. Because only God could intervene, since we are paralyzed by not having any good news to encounter the pain of the parent.

#### **Matthew, 17: 19-21**

*Why could we not cast it out? Because of your unbelief..." However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.*

**"Food is a metaphor, which leads to a bitter reflection: we are no longer used to believing together and hoping together."**

**Enzo Bianchi**

We share in a faithless generation only the pain and despair with the others because that is what we know and experience collectively in our own isolation. Lack of faith within our own heart is the result of a missing experience today that we hardly remember. The lack of church, when two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, produces the lack of hope and despair in isolating hearts. It is not addictions that isolate people in their pain today. They are a consequence of the lack of church. The lack of gathering for the sake of the Truth, that's what the children don't know today. When they experience it though, it really touches their hearts and they cannot believe this is really the church. (That's what a child told me about the camp this year. It was very good but this was camp and not church. I had to contradict and say this is the real church and not camp).

We could say community but we don't, because not every community is gathered for the sake of Truth in order to believe and hope together. Most communities are born to satisfy their own needs. This is not the Truth that makes us free.

It is good for the parents to know where the problem really starts in order not to blame themselves for personal mistakes but rather try to discover bits of reality and live it, when living is possible these days. What really pushes ourselves to detach from each other is the cause of the illness and not the illness itself. It is so also when it comes to faith; it is not that we don't know Christ from within the heart, the lack of faith is that we cannot share and live with Him together. It was also our experience at the camp, maybe more than before, to understand how important it is to pray together, to believe together, to hope together and to eat together. That's how disbelief is turned into belief and this is how the path for healing becomes clear. It is true that this is countercultural today and stretches the heart of those who try it. But in the end this really helps you to see the hope that speaks to us from the tomb today.



***But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"***

***(From today's gospel; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28)***

The Mother of God knew the Word from the solitude of her heart. The angel found her alone with God when he brought the good news. She listened and pondered the Word in her heart, doing the Truth as we hear today in the gospel. She did all that in a discreet way. Without bringing attention to herself. She is the gate of heaven and the heart of the church because she is the listening heart that lets us hear the voice of God. The apostles gathered today at her dormition to share together from the hope and the belief that came from the tomb. This becomes for us a sign, to share as a community the hope and the faith that comes from the tomb, that otherwise spreads fear and terror if it is approached with a closed heart.

We do that because of the listening heart of the Mother of God and the listening hearts of those who have known her love and her pain within the community for all these years.

We are invited to share in their faith and hope in order to become, as a community, a listening heart that does the Truth, in a city that is suffering more and more.



### **From the Refuge**

The Refuge this year did not not only teach us about the presence of God through the beauty and the effervescent creativity of nature but also about the human heart. Nature at the refuge, the one that is prayed upon, gives you in return for the prayer, a better understanding of what it means to be really human. Among other things, it revealed to us that the violent human heart can be touched only by the “gentle breeze”, as God appeared to Elijah on the mountain.

God is fighting his “intimate friend” with weapons that we cannot resist. Eventually He wins also because the “gentle breeze” finds a home in the heart of the Mother of God, who can forgive even when, or rather especially when, her heart is pierced by the extreme act of violence - seeing her Son crucified on the cross. It is the “gentle breeze” that turns that incomprehensible pain into

forgiveness. Through time, in Christ’s resurrection, this forgiveness becomes the remedy to every evil thing. It is this precisely that the Mother of God does not take with her in the tomb for herself but shares with us as we gather for the feast of her Dormition. God is the God of the living and not of the dead, because death has no power over a heart where the pain was turned by the “gentle breeze” into forgiveness, so no more violence can settle in.

### **More from the refuge on the gipsy moths**

At times it looked like a desolate place. Not so much the place though but rather the trees, many trees. From what I understood from Julio it was much worse before we arrived. Healthy big trees were totally overwhelmed by their presence. Some might not recover. The gipsy moths devoured ferociously without thinking about what they would eat the next day. The scene was even more intense because of the smell that you felt in the forest. It came from them as well, we could not figure out the reason but we knew the cause. They also created a few days of bewilderment seeing what really happens when the larva turns into moths. They were continuously flying with no purpose and no direction. A generalized act of confusion with no beginning and no end.

It looked more and more like modern people and our society in which we live. Humans who devour and waste everything they have with no recognition of others or for tomorrow only to act

and live chaotically with no purpose and no meaning. They look cute without being innocent. The scene is even more frightening for us because at the refuge, we saw the trees being full of new gypsy moth eggs getting ready and prepared for next year. We tried to clean some trees but this is rather symbolic compared with the second wave to come for next year.

Where is the hope if there is one? ... Some of the trees were more affected than others. I was told that the oak trees were the first ones. The pine trees were second; these we saw and many were dry and dead. The oak trees somehow became more relevant this year in general. Because we tried to clean some of the forest, we paid more attention to young trees that cannot grow because of others who spread more rapidly. The oak trees and the maple trees we tried to save. Maple trees are more at the refuge, the oak tree though is much rarer. So we tried to save them as much as we could.

Knowing that the oak tree was the first one to be attacked by the gypsy moth, we even used an oak branch to sprinkle the holy water in our procession at the refuge with the holy cross. As a symbolic act in search of healing and hope...

And they came, when we discovered a young oak tree full of flowers. Something we did not expect, out of the ordinary, brought us a sign that life is touched only by beauty. This what really becomes its garment and not the presence of greed that at times makes you wonder if anything will be left.

Coming back to the city, we can see and encounter the same invasive presence that rapaciously consumes without planting. We are still looking for the "blossoming" young oak tree as a sign of hope in the city. We have not seen it yet, what we do know is that those who are affected the most by the greed that gets to us today are those who are first deprived of a decent life. We are still searching knowing that the refuge does not lie to us, but rather reveals to us forgotten realities.



### **Paraklesis on Wednesday**

The icon of the Mother of God for the Paraklesis on Wednesday was the most beautiful we ever had. Father Roberto thought that and he saw many over the years. The icon was decorated with flowers by Ana and Daniela on Wednesday afternoon. The flowers came from the Mission garden. Most of them are from the hydrangea tree that Br Luke saved from the garbage last year. I remember when he planted the tree, without much reason to believe that it would blossom again, because it looked dry and abandoned. The flower tree actually speaks about the mission itself and what the mission is here for. To testify life where life is abandoned. To plant dry bushes and flowers that may look dead, to water them and to hope, to teach others to do so and to render them to the Mother of God when they blossom with beauty. And once in a while you get to see the miracle.

## **Much more from the refuge**

### ***What is the Spirit saying to the churches? Rev 2:22***

Each week we came together in a spirit of hope to pray and humbly hear one another seeking to better hear and understand God's will for us as a community. We called this gathering a synaxis, a better word than a meeting.

The youngest among us were invited to speak first. The groups were divided into men and women. This gave an interesting perspective.

The theme was "Keeping the water fresh". It was given to us in one of father Nicolaie's sermons at the start of our stay at the Refuge. The questions were based on the description of the Acts of the Apostles 2:42, as they describe the early church. We called them the four pillars that keep the church real and fruitful

These four pillars are being **1) devoted to the teaching of the apostles and 2)community life, meeting for 3)the breaking of the bread and 4)prayers.**

We will print in September what was said during these synaxis and we hope what was said will inspire all of us in the coming year not to lose " the freshness of the water " for which the world and each of us thirst.

### **A non research based understanding of the vaccine**

The Russian Orthodox Church position on Vaccines

"I now constantly face such situations when people come to a priest in order to repent that they did not vaccinate themselves or their loved ones and that they became the unwitting cause of another person's death,"

"And it is difficult even for me to say how to live with it now," I reply to them saying "You'll have to atone your whole life for the sin you committed — that you thought about yourself and not another person."

**Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk,**

This week prayers:

These people have come to St Zoticos and asked for prayers today (Wednesday)

Marina: very difficult health situation. The family has many trials, they have difficulty feeding themselves because of some of the very expensive medication their child is on.

Sandra, whose son Chris is not well mentally, had a breakdown from the stress of being an engineer and now is depressed and at times violent to his mom...

Wjie Kumari had many losses of close family members both in India and here in the last year ...very tragic family situation.... She is Hindi and always cries when she talks to you. She fell a few weeks ago and disfigured her face and teeth. She never leaves without falling on her knees in the middle of the room asking for a blessing.

Leon

Susan

### **Memory Eternal**

Sree died suddenly of a heart attack. He had a family with several children. He was living on the street and was a heavy alcohol user, at times aggressive but always respectful to the church. He would always approach us making the sign of the cross and bowing . The local leader of a group of men, all victims of the trauma of a terrible war that left communities scared with atrocities. These men just never have been able to be "normal ". They all left marriage, family, homes to end up on the street and mostly hang out around the "Church" (St. Zoticos) . They are not appreciated by the more affluent Tamil community.

Sree was a regular, he will be missed for his "kind heart".

When there was the Easter bombing in Colombo he came to the church really upset, he himself a Hindu, nonetheless he could feel the pain of the Christians, a rare feeling in a country torn by hatred and violence.

Keep in your prayers the catechumens:

Linda, who is going to be chrismated in September



Please pray for the sick:

Leon

Marina

Sandra and her son Cris

Wjie Kumari

Susan

Dalalzaki

child James who broke his leg

Aaron (surgery)

Sylvia's ankle to be healed.

Father John and Pani Eleanor

Pani Deborah and Father Michael

Father Lawrence

Tharshini and her two children.

Ann Tyron and her family

Sandra Gomaz's children.

Amy (young mother with brain tumor)

Paola (James's wife)

Elisabeth to cope with putting down her cat.

Anne Brown to recover from her surgery.

Matthi went to Montreal to get surgery where her close family can help her

Sameen for his eyesight.

Sophia

Amy

Swetha and children

Levalin's children (Children are regular at sick kids)

Charitha (Dengu fever)

Jitesh's parents

Elisabeth

Demene

Carol

Gloria with some type of infection in her leg.

Hawa Bibi(some type of heart condition

Vimaladevi

Tharsini and her child.

Sana's Sister going through cancer treatment.

Ann T. Husband

Lynn

Michelle

Emanuel (Mani)

Stefanie

Geoff

Joey  
Evangelia  
Sophia  
Melanie  
Césare  
Tanya  
Piper  
Darius  
*Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral*  
*Brenda*  
Anna Avairo's daughter going regularly to the emergency room.  
Vol Gomaz heart condition and immigration matters  
Levlin's two children who are sick  
Sri's  
Helen  
Paul.  
Wafaa and Sana sister (cancer)  
Rejoice  
Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly;Tom;

Please pray for health and salvation:

Mauro, Prayers for Ted's family (incarcerated son to be free)  
Dameal asking prayers for his future wife Fathima to be free from addictions  
Liz Gibicar asking prayers for her mother; Mom waiting for baby Tejasree;Prashastha  
Maria and Dingo;Crisent;Helen;Greta;Elizabeth;Dean ;John ;Liz ;Crisent;Ann Brown;Elizabeth  
Sifie; Allen; Leon;Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting; Aaron, Anastas,  
Olivia, Gelly, Frank, Eva, George, Rebecca, Andreas, Cathyann, Reigan, Stephanie, Peter, Christine;  
Christian family from Bangladesh, Sandra. Peter, Angel, Bless, Grace, Swetha family; Atlaw  
single mom at shelter, Vernevil family; the family of Kenide;Saathiya; Sena;Vinothiny  
Yvienne;Abdul; Sakanthalathevy;Jumke;Naimi;Anish; Joshua DanielJMaria Lolita Soliman Torres,  
Jonathan , Richard, Richard, Mary , Elizabeth, Michael, Bill, Robert, Alan, Joanne

Please pray for the deceased:

Sr. Mary Magdalena, Joice, BettyAnn, James, Pauanasuy Kamthasang, Maria (Covid), Andrei  
Agostina ,Carminda, Vimaladevi sister; Sri's mother, Carol's Mother and 23 year old nephew  
passed away in Haiti. Demene's mother

St. Silouan Chapel, August 15, 2021

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