

Urgently seeking "passage"

The Hebrew word "pesah/pesaj" and the Spanish word "pascua" both mean "passage." With these words, we commemorate the "passage" of the people of the Old Testament across the Red Sea and their resulting liberation from slavery in Egypt as well as the "passage" of the first Christians to their "new" life, i.e., the transformation of their lives following the death of Jesus of Nazareth. This is a transformation and new life that they attribute to the Crucified One, to whom they now confess as the "Risen One," because this transformed their lives.

During these weeks, Catholics find ourselves celebrating the Easter season when we commemorate the Resurrection of Christ and our resurrection through Him, a resurrection that embodied, among the first disciples and must embody today in us—as I said—a "passage" to a different, transformed, and new life that seeks the construction of better existences, societies, histories and a better humanity.

This inspires in me some reflections that I will share with you within these lines, through which I intend to compare the men, women, lifestyles, and society of our historical conjuncture against the "new man," as St. Paul calls him, stemming from his own conversion experience and detailed in his theological explanation of the paschal event.

I do not shrink from my position as a believer in Christ, but I understand that the truths and criteria of the Gospel have universal validity insofar as they coincide with the deepest and most genuine values engraved in the heart and human nature of every man and woman, believer, or non-believer. These are values that every human being expresses as tendencies. They are: life, goodness, truth, love, solidarity, justice, peace, etc.

Jesus of Nazareth lived and taught these values, which constitute the criteria and logic of the Gospel and contrast against the logic of our world. These are the values that are constituted in the "renewed mentality" of the "new" man and that we see in the ways that those who are new and good live and work.

It falls to us to live in this global culture and time, in this transition from modernity to postmodernity, characterized by principles and values that contradict the human and universal values mentioned above.

Ours is a historical juncture characterized—following two world wars and countless failures—by the meaninglessness of history, a history with no future, a funeral of hope. We live immersed in a consumerist culture and society where everything can be negotiable, fashion determines moral behavior, and the abundance of material things is the reason for living.

This generates materialistic societies and standards of living where "having" prevails over "being," in an immanentism and reluctance to place oneself higher, to transcend.

Apathy for the greater good and our society as a whole characterizes this "light" man, culture, and society because it is within this individual, personal and private "sanctuary" that happiness occurs. This leads—where universal truths and certainties are lacking—to a "moral relativism," subjectivism, sentimentality, moral permissiveness, and laxity.

In a world where each person constructs "à la carte" their own half-truths of consumption through mediocre life projects, where "truth is defined by what is convenient for each individual person" and in which the happiness, enjoyment, and pleasure of the immediate, here and now, are imposed as the norm and measure of life.

Our societies are naïve. They are lacking in hard work and sacrifices. They are lightweight, with lifestyles imbued with facilitation, and surrounded by the disposable, superficial, and banal, by façades and appearances, exteriority, and the disengaged.

Confronted by this panorama, our society and world urgently need models of humanity who pursue well-being and happiness by following the principles of the Beatitudes, taught by the master of Nazareth, and eschewing our culture's siren songs that have been built upon the shifting sands of worldly vanities.

We have grown tired of clay-footed models elevated by "light" advertising. We need men and women who are role models, witnesses and examples of authority and truth, who model coherence in life, their words and deeds, and their professional titles and lifestyles.

Today's world urgently needs rulers, religious leaders, parents, teachers, and professionals in all fields who have moral authority and live lives worthy of being followed and replicated.

We are fed up with social leaders in all fields, who do not "lead by example." We have grown tired of social authorities and dishonest professionals who live public and private lifestyles that disregard the noblest values that should guide every human being and moderately healthy society.

Our society and all humanity urgently need "new" women and men, authentic and capable of building, through their deeds, words, and attitudes, new paths that enable "new" societies, i.e., just, solidary, fraternal societies, in which we can hope for better times.

Those who—foolishly, ostentatiously, and boastfully—dedicate themselves to "losing themselves" in the "craziness of life," in the traffic of this frivolous, superficial and materialistic world, the banal and light world of brands and labels, the hedonistic and pansexualist world, a world of comforts, luxuries, waste and bacchanals, proceed through life confusing immediate success with happiness. They attack fundamental human values, but they—also—insensibly turn their lifestyles into an impudence, a shame, and an affront to a world plagued by needs and the needy, by hunger, inequities, fratricidal wars, violence, injustices that cry out to heaven, etc.

"To whom more is given, more is demanded." Our society urgently needs leaders in all fields and professionals in all branches of knowledge who lead consistent, adequate lives and conform to the exercise of our social roles. They must lead exemplary and integral lives and not the double lives and double standards that today, in this world of moral relativism, are so celebrated and applauded.

I invite us all to ask ourselves about the coherence between our deeds and words, between what we believe and what we live, to ask ourselves about the coherence between our private lives and the public exercise of our professions, about the coherence between the lives we live and the society and the world for which we yearn.

I invite everyone to live life as an everlasting "Pascua," or journey, a daily and permanent "passage" to be better human beings and professionals who seek the construction of a better society and a "new" world.



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