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CHRISTIAN LIVING HEALTHY LIVING

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THE DARK EVIL

5-2-71 Used for Casa Sollievo

The most common disease is undoubtedly neurosis, although this is the case with the term is rather generic and not always exact, because the profound origin escapes use of the disease. Psychoanalysis defines it "malattia of the deep" or "Illness of the person".

They say it's the product of the tumultuous life we live but it's not true. Certainly the tumultuous life favors and spreads it but it did not create it.

If anything, it must be said that before the development of the psychology of psychoanalysis, this disease was less taken into consideration and nerve patients were considered imaginary patients.

We recall that Molière died on stage reciting "The Imaginary Patient". And instead this "dark evil" of one of the most famous novels of these years is a real disease, even if it would be more accurate to define it in the plural, many diseases.

There are what we use to call psychosomatic diseases, because they affect the various organs, which are not in themselves diseased, such as cardiac neurosis, various neuroses of the digestive system, of the muscles (easy fatigue), of speech, and others.

Psychoses come: fear of closed places, fear of crowded places, fear of empty spaces, of darkness, of heights, of heat, of cold, of being ugly and unpleasant. Anxiety about time, always being in a hurry, even when it would not be reasonably necessary.

Character psychopathies: having it out for no reason with someone, fearing that someone is angry with us. Unmotivated dislikes and sympathies. Inferiority and superiority complex. Guilt, widespread indeterminate. Fear of the police, for no reason. Fear of thieves exaggerated.

Shyness, due, psychoanalysis explains, to frustrations and inhibitions of childhood and adolescence, although I believe that we exaggerate by attributing so many of our fears to childhood: there are certainly some that our parents transmit to us by giving us 1st life.

The fear of being judged, the feeling of eyes on us, the difficulty in starting a conversation and on the other hand the sudden and disorderly impetuosity

Memory disorders: not feeling sure that we have turned off the light, the gas, turned off the water tap. Don't suddenly remember the names of people you know.

Like anxiety, anguish, insomnia. The causes of insomnia can be serious and can be trivial. It can be a simple laborious digestion. We fight to reduce working hours and we continue to demand that our digestive system works day and night without bothering us, without proclaiming strikes.

And instead it strikes right in the night keeping us awake. It is true that we can counterattack him with sleeping pills, but certainly not to our advantage: we would have better accept his requests and keep ourselves lighter in the meal in the evening.

But insomnia would always require a search for the causes, to try to eliminate them, instead of contenting ourselves with fighting it with sleeping pills.

There is existential anguish, incommunicability, man in one dimension, and the other revelations of philosophy, sociology and medical science, which touch the immortal soul but do not reach.

Yet, apart from the duty that each one has to cure his ills by recourse to medical science, we cannot hope, for many ills, to reach their deep root if we do not also take into consideration the care of the soul.

Certain forms of neurosis can poison a man's existence, depriving him of that sense of well-being which gives him health and the strength he needs to face the fatigue of living. They can discourage and discourage it.

However, the behavior of the neurotic is essentially different whether he is a believer or a non-believer. We cannot say that faith always succeeds in overcoming neurosis, but in most cases it controls it and prevents it from making us its slaves.

There are not a few neurotic believers who manage to lead a normal life, even a very active one, while continuing to suffer from their illness, but without being oppressed by fear, on the contrary accepting their condition with great serenity and confidence.

They do what they can to treat themselves, but, without anxiety. A believer tells me that he cannot find the causes of his insomnia and does not take sedatives, which he considers harmful: "I call her sister insomnia and we keep each other company, until she no longer likes it and lets me sleep."

The believer fights the neurotic forms of spiritual origin at the root: pride, ambitions, selfishness, disordered passions. If it is true that inhibitions can cause a neurosis, it is also true that resorting to God's help can heal or subdue them, and in any case there is no better cure than feeling helped by God to bear our crosses, including that of illness.

THE KILOMETRE GAME

To go to school in the morning we had to travel seven kilometers on foot. In the good season we took off our shoes to save them and I don't know if the children of well-being will experience pleasures like ours of plunging their bare feet into the soft dust of the street. In D tapes icy or scorching asphalt we didn't know what they were yet.

To help us on the way we played the "kilometer". We counted on having to trip for only one kilometer. At the end of the kilometer we said to ourselves: "Here, we have a kilometer of road to go". Not "another" kilometer, but a kilometer. Those already traveled and the others that followed did not exist. And so we arrived at school quite fresh. We did not know, then, that we had put into practice the Gospel warning: "Every day is enough of its trouble".

What is a kilometer of road? Just a quarter of an hour of canino, at a normal pace. What is a day? Almost a breath.

The afflictions of one day are hardly unbearable, if not we are the ones who aggravate them with those of tomorrow. There is also the pain that crushing, but these days cannot be numerous, we would not survive them. Pain also has its own logic, summarized in this maxim, "if it is strong it does not last, if it lasts it is not strong". Even the moral one, which is the most tenacious, but which we must strive to contain, with the help of God, and always limiting it to today, without continuing to burden us with that of yesterday and to anticipate that of tomorrow.

Tomorrow is another day, and it's unpredictable. What do we know about tomorrow? How much useless trouble, for fears that then did not come true. To the point of undermining our health, we do not know with how much common sense.

Not to mention the trouble we voluntarily cause to lack of intelligence, of things and of men. For badness, for example, and what is bad is not really intelligent.

Or because of a lack of hope and trust. I note the anecdote of the farmer, which applies to everyone. This farmer sows his wheat and begins to live in trouble for fear that it will not be born. The song was born and the farmer fears that the frost will destroy it. The winter frost spares him, spring arrives and the wheat grows which is a beauty, but the farmer fears the rain. It is repeated "May greengrocer (rainy), a lot of straw and little wheat". And the wheat cestisce (makes a basket) that looking at it makes the heart expand, but. The farmer fears 1st hail.

The 1st harvest arrives. The farmer harvests the most beautiful wheat in the area. A friend compliments him, but the farmer sadly shakes his head: "You'll see that next year won't go so well."

We take on tomorrow's troubles and to worsen our condition we transfer our hope of today to tomorrow. "This day was made by the Lord, let us rejoice in it". Not at all. We live by waiting: we wait for the job, then the 1st promotion, the 1st career, the command post. We are waiting to get married, then the first child, then the adult children, then the grandchildren.

We are not capable of enjoying today's joys today, unless they are really great and therefore even these cannot be everyday, because even intense joys do not last, but every day gives us its gift of small joys.

We are alive today, not yesterday, not tomorrow. Those who have the courage to get up early in the morning and walk along the road that separates them from their place of work, overcoming the temptation to take out a car or get on the bus, realize that the world is new, we are all born this morning, all new, all happy to be alive, like sparrows. We are therefore all of the same age, young and old, all children.

This is a new day, to be enjoyed. To enjoy the small joys of having the small hopes of today, to all possible, because everyone is allowed to love, young and old, poor and rich, and in the day it certainly happens to hand someone a glass of water or a smile, and to receive it.

Not one day is the same as another, not even for those who lead a life without shocks, because we are different, we are new, and it depends on our ability to grasp this newness whether today will be a serene and happy day or a misty day.

To each day its troubles and its joys, in that balance that God sustains for men of good will.

THE TWO HOTELIERS

A hotelier builds a new hotel on a transit road . He takes out a mortgage, he goes into debt. When 1st hotel is ready, that road is diverted, and the hotelier goes bankrupt.

A year later, another hotelier built his hotel on the new road and did a great deal.

It is natural to say that the first was unlucky, while the second was lucky. Or was the former reckless and the latter more careful?

Is there such a thing as a mysterious force that has its favorites? And what does it mean to be lucky?

If it exists as a force foreign to the will of man, it is risky to work hard to succeed, because the favorites of this capricious power will succeed, not the deserving.

And who is lucky? Who succeeds, obviously. But those who succeed will not want to admit that they have been helped by fortune: they will tell you that it is all thanks to them, while those who fail will not accept to recognize their mistakes, they will assure you that they have been unlucky.

If there were really the fortunate and the unfortunate in the world, it would not be possible to recognize that the world is governed by a superior justice, which judges according to the merits of each one, and not according to his success.

It would be an unjust world of its own, without the need for men to take the trouble to make it unjust, and life would become a game of chance.

On the other hand, human life is not a game, it is a test. To each his own task to carry out, in the midst of the difficulties he encounters, so that he can prove himself worthy of eternal life.

There is only one failure to fear in life, the final one. The others are all remediable, but always with God's help.

It will be the unjust of this world, who hinder the righteous, the real failures, even if they manage to triumph here. Instead, the afflicted, who seem to be losers, will be the winners.

Success is not to be sought as a source of gain, fame, power, what could be the spacious way to final failure, it is to try to perform the test of life well, according to the service of God, measuring one's abilities, without leaving them idle, but also without presuming higher places than what is congenial to us; one must not lose inner balance, health and serenity of the soul.

When we have used all our strength and virtues of balance, prudence, and wisdom, and we are not able, without being reproached by an enlightened conscience, it is not permissible for us to insist on a path that was clearly not ours, nor to be discouraged: there is always time to begin again, after having better evaluated our abilities and circumstances, even if it will be a more modest way.

The glory of this world passes quickly, and for all, and the first will be the last, and the last the first, and wealth does not possess a throb of its own life, nor can it give it.

That which is worth, life, grace, goodness, love, wisdom, is not acquired with money, which is more often harmful than profitable with regard to health.

There is therefore no such thing as luck: there are different circumstances as an exam topic for each of us, according to our possibilities. Men and deeds can interfere with it, making the trial heavier for us, but without God turning an eye elsewhere, and it is always preferable to find ourselves on the side of the afflicted rather than the triumphants, who "have already received their reward" Not all of us can reach the perfection of St. Francis, who found perfect joy in tribulations and who could sing "So much is the good that I expect, that I ^{delight} in every pain". But it is better to find ourselves on this path, without ceasing to act for our rightful place in life, but always in serenity and honesty of purpose.

WE ARE CONTRACTORS

19-6-71 Used for Home Relief Suffering
xx-12-85 Vita Nova

Paradoxical as it may seem in such a turbulent world, we are not born for action, we are born for contemplation. In fact, we will contemplate God "face to face", and for this we were born.

Work is a necessity, a penance. Our mistake is that we have fallen in love with penance not as a ransom, but as an instrument of gain. Work is a command from God, therefore a good command, but then man invented money, and love passed from penance that redeems to its counterpart that is furious to us.

The civilization of consumption means the civilization of money and therefore the civilization of the devil.

But work remains a good command, for those who still know how to understand it in its true meaning. God gave it to man in penance, but not without softening it in its redemptive aspect, allowing man to make it a creative instrument, almost a completion of God's creation, a completeness of his at the better service of man.

It is also an instrument of union. No one works for himself and everyone needs the work of others: it can happen that we are moved to sip a cup of good coffee at the bar thinking of those who have worked to get it for us, and from several continents.

Work makes us more brothers than sport, tourism, politics, culture, only we know how to preserve its meaning, otherwise the devil, who is the divisor of man, takes possession of it and sets man against man, even in his own home.

But the even higher significance of work is in being a means of contemplation. No one is more joyful than those who, having done a job, contemplate it and recognize themselves in their creative virtues, saying to themselves: "I did it".

I think that the resistance that we still manage to oppose in Italy to the invasion of mechanized industry against craftsmanship is due to this profound artisan soul of ours that is so much a part of our Christian civilization and that we rightly defend with all our strength.

The area where I live is made known by a large mechanical industry, but in the same area there continue to flourish four thousand small craft enterprises that employ twice as many personnel as large industry and which I consider humanly more important than that, where there are few necessary brains and too many arms operated by those brains, like a monstrous statue of Siva.

In small artisan companies, on the other hand, there are almost as many creative brains as there are working people, and although the income is generally lower, there are considerable human compensations, starting with the sense of family and creativity.

I believe that in order to save the civilization of work, on which our Republic is founded, its ancient Christian soul must be defended in Italian work, giving a new impetus to agriculture and defending craftsmanship and every personal initiative, even if organizing it to survive, but preserving a free individual soul.

Work has a great influence on the life of a man and a people. It occupies the best hours of the day and requires the greatest energy. He who works willingly is a serene man and spreads serenity around him, while he who works because he is forced and does not love his work, becomes restless and spreads his restlessness around him.

If we were to look at the root of many trade union agitations which have as their aim the greatest profit and the least work, we would find that the unrest of those workers is much deeper, it is moral and spiritual, it is human.

They are men treated as automatons, without requiring any personal interest in the work they do, while they for their part make no effort to humanize their work.

We see that work has a great influence on the psychology of the worker. Independent and creative workers are more open-minded with everyone, they are more self-satisfied men, they continue to create even in social relationships, while mechanized employees (I know of them in this great industry who every day and every hour make a single identical hole in a piece of sheet metal, repeated endlessly, without a variation) become apathetic, and unions and parties maneuver them as they wish, only to explode in the family, in front of the weakest, such as the wife and children, where they can turn into tyrants.

The Christian defends himself better, because he is more aware of his own value and is able to improve his work or to find another one of greater satisfaction, and if he really does not succeed he makes up for it with the spirit, offering God that heavy penance of his, so that it may serve as a redemption to himself and also to this frenzied society, in the sense that it deprives work of its consoling divine meaning.

THE DRUG OF MONEY

24.2.71 Used for Home Relief Suffering

This guesthouse among the chestnut trees, so quiet, so restful, would be what is usually called a corner of paradise. I say it would be because there are human events that force us to change our judgment.

The owner is a robust man, about forty-five years old, a bit rough, full of energy. He runs three businesses, this Italian guesthouse, another guesthouse in Italy, by the sea, where his wife lives, and a restaurant in Germany, where in the summer they leave their children, a twenty-year-old daughter and an eighteen-year-old son.

A family, as you see, in great affairs, It is said that they are full of money, with it is easy to admit, with all these activities.

But it is also a divided and troubled family, without any real need, because one of the three businesses could be enough to satisfy their legitimate needs, with a more serene life and richer in goods much higher than money.

And this year the bad thing happened, which crushed this man. Suddenly 1st daughter appeared in front of him, with a friend and three friends. He had left the restaurant to his brother to let those German anisons of his visit Italy, and without informing his father and mother, without their consent.

The father was surprised, then looking at her better he was alarmed. She was careless in her clothes, as were her friends, and talked and laughed for no reason. The others laughed in chorus, although they did not understand Italian. They laughed seeing her laugh.

It didn't take long for the poor parent to realize that all those young people were dumbed down by drugs.

He began to cry, without restraint, in front of everyone. And he didn't have there. 1st wife, to comfort him or to weep together. He said, "What will become of your mother?"tag.

In an instant he saw his hopes of making those two children "happy" with so many bank notes collapse. He did not understand, at least at the moment, that the first drug addicts were their two parents, the money addicts, and that the hallucinogens of his daughter (of the son he did not dare to ask) were one of the logical and evil consequences.

Another father, a doctor, earns, according to his own confession, one hundred thousand lire a day, living a hellish life and without real professional necessity. I asked him what he intends to do with all that money. She replied that she should ^{not} leave anything ^{to} her daughter! And the 1st daughter, meanwhile, who is thirty-two years old, lulled by all that money, plays at university without taking exams, suggesting a life that is anything but dignified.

And one last example, among the hundred thousand and who knows how many. I had managed to get a lawyer's wife to give me a hundred lire a week for the poor. I say a hundred lire, not a thousand, not ten thousand. At that time her husband was at the beginning of his career and they had nothing to waste. Then her husband, who is very good, has burned the time and wanting to be prudent we can calculate that he earns two million net per month.

The lady stopped giving me the hundred lire a week for the poor, assuring me, very distressed, that it is just no longer possible for her. And here are two other money junkies.

Recently a Brazilian bishop, who lives among the poor not to invite them to revolt but to help them to redeem themselves morally in order to acquire a more human and more conscious life with their own strength and therefore to make themselves more worthy of greater justice, said that it is very difficult for the rich to remain human: he did not say Christians, he simply said human.

A poor Italian priest in our countryside, speaking of money, told me that it is like the nail: cut too close the flesh gets sick, but left to grow it becomes a claw.

And money is necessary: indeed, economists are alarmed because it is scarce in the world. Economic progress requires more and more. But he must not become the master of men, he must remain a servant. What remains difficult in practice is because as soon as man ceases to serve God he is immediately seized by the demon of money.

THE FIRST AND THE LAST

Is it better, then, to be poor? Definitely. It is a serious matter, but it must be done, and clearly. First of all, it is good to say that poverty understood in the evangelical and human sense is not misery: Jesus and his disciples were poor, but there was no misery among them. Jesus' family and the others lived decently from their work, without lacking the necessities.

Here, then, is the poverty that we must prefer and love: living from one's work, without lacking the necessities, including today also the television, household appliances, small cars, and with some savings according to the conditions and duties of each one, but without wanting to reach wealth, unless this is also a duty, to give work and support to others.

Jesus had voluntarily made himself "destitute" in order to prove that when one dedicates himself directly to the service of God he has nothing to fear about what to eat and what to wear.

But not everyone is required to be heroic, while everyone is required to love poverty, and those who are forced to handle rivers of money channel them towards the love of God, without their hands being immersed in them, much less their hearts.

Just as he is not rich who handles a lot of money without attaching his heart to it, he is not poor who has little money but dreams a lot of it, and envies the rich, even though he fights them.

It is a choice of the soul, either with God in love or with Satan in love of money.

All behavior and the very way of thinking and seeing people and things depend on this choice: those who love poverty for the love of God are free to love whoever they want, without fear of compromising themselves and losing out, while those who love money do not want roommates, they are exclusivist.

We have already seen some examples: those who love money do not know how to love humanly, not even their children.

However, we do not hide the fact that the choice of poverty is difficult, if not almost impossible without the love of God, because in this case one can fall into the opposite extreme, through carelessness, laziness, other vices and non-virtues, one can fall into misery, which is not willed by God.

Sacred Scripture invites us to pray to God to free us from wealth "so as not to forget God" and become unjust and from misery "so as not to become thieves" and we can become thieves in many ways.

Poverty is the most convenient condition because it frees the soul from the great thoughts and worries that distance the soul from prayer and from God, and from the danger of doubting everything and everyone: friends, human relationships, economic development, even relatives and relatives. Wealth always weighs down life and takes away the true freedom of action.

Every day we witness great manifestations of love of the poor but not of poverty: they are people who "fight" politically and socially, in favor of the poor, but to make them rich, (and to better justify their own wealth) and when we were all rich and had nothing more to desire and to conquer with our own strength, we would all be unhappy, because wealth is the drug of the soul, as we have seen.

There is little love for poverty because there is little love of God and because the state of poverty, in order to be lived in its joyful meaning, requires a lot of humility.

Those who want to feel like someone do not accept being poor, because the poor do not enjoy much consideration in a world subject to wealth: it is difficult to accept being the last, in life, in order to be first in the love of God, which is not seen, and which the world shows it does not esteem.

No matter how much we want to talk about progress and justice, everywhere there are first, second and third places, in means of transport, in performance halls, in stadiums, in hospitals: it is always money that distinguishes and separates, and so in all countries, even in communist countries where they are all equal, but there are "the most equal", as George Orwell wittily noted in his book "Animal Farm".

And staying behind, "being seen poor", is not liked, until we have managed to shake off this weight of the "beautiful figure", in exchange for very different values and other substance.

THE BEST PART

It ended as it had to end, although it happened earlier than expected. It is the painful story of the family of a hospital doctor on a fixed salary, with three sons from twelve to eighteen years of age.

This doctor comes from a poor, poor family. His father was a construction laborer and worked in the good season, and the family had to struggle a lot to get their son to graduate from medical school, which is one of the longest and most expensive, as we know, but the son could not thank God for the privilege of having had to fight to succeed because he does not believe in God.

Thus in his soul, instead of gratitude to God and to his parents, a certain resentment and a lively spirit of revenge took place: he got it into his head that his children should not suffer his privations and the commitment he had put into his first to study he later spent in regulating his family.

The children had to lack nothing, they had to have "everything" even the superfluous, even what the salary did not allow.

A little Light of God would have suggested to him that it is good for young people to be "pruned" with some renunciation and would have made him lieto this economic condition not flourishing even if decent, which would have helped him better prepare his children for life, to give good fruits in due time. Instead he began to sign bills upon bills, To the point of covering the entire monthly salary, forgetting the most elementary of the family's rights, that of daily bread.

Beset by debts and creditors, he ended up running out of nerves to the point of requiring his admission to a psychiatric clinic, and his family is paying the consequences. The family that was supposed to cover is seized of the unpaid luxury furniture.

It is true that dignified poverty is not very comfortable, especially if we compare ourselves with those who are "better off", in money and not in virtue, and it is true that the poor always pay and pay for everyone. If things go well, the rich profit, if they go badly, the poor suffer. The dishonest poor, who sell themselves to the rich, are led, whatever office they hold, to take revenge against the other poor and the weak, harassing and oppressing them, to "remake their face".

The poor who love their poverty and who are therefore "on God's side", are the ones who drive civilization forward, and not only because they are the executors (in fact it would be useless to design houses, schools, hospitals, machines, services, if there were no one who builds, operates, nnnnnnnnnn) but because the world would collapse without their honesty, their nnnnnnnnnn, their disinterest, their generosity.

Even in the direct service of God, in parishes, it would be the holiness of a few if there were not these "little ones" who supply the community life of the parish with healthy, generous and disinterested human energies. The rich can contribute money, which is the least that man can give, but the poor give, in addition to money, their activity, without which the money of the rich would be of no use, because God does not need money, he needs generous souls.

The poor who are on God's side have chosen "the best part and possess everything, while the rich man who has not been able to put himself on God's side by not putting his wealth at the service of God and

therefore remaining on the side of Satan, is as if he possessed nothing, possessing only goods of his own life.

We find serene faces and families among the poor who do not love each other to endure their poverty but love it, without any envy of the rich, and very rarely do we find this serenity in those who let themselves be sucked into the current of figures and business

So should "social justice" be left alone? Not at all, but there is time to talk about this again. In the meantime, let us enjoy this serene poverty, which is the greatest wealth, and thank the Lord for it.

If someone feels harassed by those who have more and would like more, let him try to pity him: after all, even the dissatisfied rich bear witness to the Truth, that is, that it is useless to possess all the riches of the universe if we leave our soul in poverty: we remain profoundly sick. And so let us seek from the sea the rich who are far from God as the truest poor and as the sick. We will find that the rich are saved by the prayers of the poor and this too will be right, that those who have everything because they have God give a little refreshment to those who have nothing and are anxious for what is worthless.

THE FREE MAN

5.3.71 Used for Home Relief Suffering

A procession of strikers passes. At the head are the most heated, then as the rows go by the heat subsides and the last ones follow, dragging their legs as if tied to a rope. But suddenly a beautiful and shrouded girl sees me and, knowing me as a believer, comes out of the ranks and shouts at me: "I want to be free to do what I like".

It was clear that he was not alluding to economic or political issues, me. to the personal freedom to feed himself to the first pig he had met. He had seen in me a denier of this freedom.

Freedom is a profound need of the human soul. A worker who worked on the chain in industry was fired for staff reduction and put up a cart selling fruit and vegetables, and these mornings he confided to me: "At first I found myself a little lost, then I felt the pleasure of having to provide for my daily bread on my own initiative. There I was part of the machine, I was a machine. Now I feel free, I feel like a man, and even in politics I have begun to think with my own head".

This is another, truer way of understanding freedom. At a high price we have won political freedom, which is fundamental, but let's join in chorus to cry out for help because we are endangering.

That girl is a symptom: she is the wind of sexual freedom that blows from the north and is investing us, and that sadly makes sex slaves, already old at twenty, wear the dress of freedom.

All the moral filth on which vigorous commerce thrives is a crime against liberty, which is first and foremost moral.

Any legislative initiative tending to replace the activity of citizens with the state in what is not strictly necessary, such as public services, is against political freedom, although here too it would be discussed. I remember two small episodes from wartime, when we traveled as best we could.

I had asked a truck driver for a ride carrying a load of lignite (1st lignite is the poor coal of wartime). I observed that he did not bother to avoid the potholes in the road, and I told him so. He replied with indifference that the truck was not his anyway and therefore if it broke down he didn't care about it.

Another time I was hosted in the cab by a truck driver carrying a load of wood. I saw how eagerly he tried not to stumble into the holes, and I praised him. He told me with a smile that the truck was his and that therefore he had to make it last. It is a meditation to be left to the proponents of a collectivist economy in the hands of the state.

But even free initiative can offend freedom when it becomes a profiteer from it, and it would be advisable to reread carefully the latest social encyclicals.

Even social insurance can compromise personal freedom, see the suffocating bureaucracy that maneuvers them, and when they leave no room for responsibility and personal choices.

Cradle to death, as the Swedes boast, can also mean cradle caged to death in a magnificent national zoo, and zoos arouse curiosity, not joy.

They say that in Russia and China there are no more beggars. It may be true, but where are they? If they are "locked up" in prison-institutions, I do not see why we should rejoice. Even the freedom to beg, however disagreeable it may be, is a freedom. human.

Here is an old woman of seventy-five, deaf and dumb from birth, who lives in a fund, alone. She brings milk to families, she does small services, and if I talk to her about going to an institution she gets angry, and I don't insist because I understand that for her freedom is a supreme good to be enjoyed until the last day.

But 1st freedom has an even deeper and higher meaning. Merton expounds this very well, in one of his most thoughtful books ("Life in Silence", Morcelliana, Editrice, Brescia) where he states that freedom "does not consist in being able to choose between good and evil, but in no longer being able to choose evil".

And is man really free to no longer be able to choose evil? Inclined to evil as we have been since childhood, St. Augustine observes, is difficult to say the least, and for this reason Jesus announced to us that "the Truth will make us free."

Freedom is in truth, in wisdom, in love. It is the path of the strong, open to all, because the truth is "the vigor of the weak"

THE STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS

Man is weak, but the Christian knows it. The difference is fundamental. Modern culture tends to "liberate" man from the need for God by assuring him that he has within himself the power to solve his problems.

The same culture has created the philosophy of anguish, and art describes life as a nightmare.

Meanwhile, wars continue, and a war, even the smallest, is an absurdity so tragic as to leave us breathless: men who kill themselves, and use all their human faculties to kill themselves, only because they wear different clothes, or think differently, or have different interests.

And they kill each other by playing with words: everyone is liberator, everyone wants justice, everyone intends to "fight" for peace. If there were not so much pain, we would have to laugh at ourselves in recognizing ourselves so ridiculous in our ambitions as superior beings.

The Christian does not believe in the boldness of culture, even though everyone and everything respects and suffers for all.

He prefers to believe in the Gospel, where he learns that man is weak by nature and is "bad", even in the sense of "imperfect", and that only God is "strong", he is "good", he is "the ransom of man".

In this recognition the Christian does not feel humiliated at all: it would be ridiculous not to feel humiliated not to have recourse to the physician for a sore throat, and to feel mortified instead to have recourse to the divine physician for the ills of the soul, which no man endowed with reason can deny.

This feeling of being weak and in need of God is the strength of the Christian, who knows how God can do all things. The Christian derives from a truly realistic attitude towards life, without utopias and without tragic errors.

The Christian is not scandalized by the weaknesses of men, because he knows that he is weak in turn and capable of committing any evil if God does not support him.

Why do newspapers live so much on scandals, even serious newspapers? I read in recent days that in London a founder of obscene hangouts and magazines got off a plane and that there were "three hundred journalists" to receive him. I am not interested in that flying pigsty, but it is the three hundred journalists who stabbed me, it is the morbid interest of the public.

And is this the strong man who can do without God? The Christian strives to understand everything and everyone, but he cannot help but weep over it.

We turn the page and read elsewhere: dictators of all stripes who continue to torture their imprisoned political opponents. Is this a sign of strength? Or is it not rather the tragic sign of a great inner weakness and a great fear?

Do you know who makes the greatest victims, who unleashes wars? Not money, not racial hatred, not the thirst for power, but fear.

The fear of being hated, betrayed, defeated. the profound weakness of human nature.

So it is with individuals, as with states. At this time we are at the mercy of two, soon to be three great world powers, which fear each other: the greater the peoples and the more powerful, the greater their fear, the greater the dangers of this mutual fear.

The Christian knows this, sees it, feels it, and entrusts himself to God, even for world peace, for his own peace and for the peace of others. He would like to be able to trust in men, but experience and wisdom keep him prudent: I do not exist

no "great" men, in the sense that they are free from original sin and from the danger of committing great mistakes.

It is true that in the depths of men there is a great desire for justice, peace, freedom, harmony, but only God can grant them, God who follows the events of men in order to derive the best possible good from all their evils.

It is good that wins, but at the price of so much pain, because the true giver of freedom is God, who allows himself to be crucified so as not to harm human Freedom.

The Christian is in it, suffering from it, paying for it, working, with trust and hope, knowing that he is as weak as other men, but full of certainties that come to him from his faith and his love.

Man is weak, and many people who believe themselves to be strong are able to live and prosper thanks to those who are considered weak because they believe, while these in God have become strong and givers of strength,

SOCIAL EVILS

25.11.85 Used for Vita Nova and for Life

The editor of a trade union weekly invited me to collaborate on his paper and I replied that I would accept on condition that I could deal with it on topics of spiritual interest. "In the midst of so many rights," I said to him, "there should be at least one who reminds the workers that they are men and therefore also have duties."

He smiled and we didn't do anything. And this is the climate in which social problems are faced, in terms of opposing forces: work, which is the fruit of human collaboration and which should unite, divides.

Politicians and trade unionists, we are out of touch with reality, and we go on like this with the tranquilizers of reforms and the vitamins of wage increases and career advances, without a goal, without a goal, if not the generic and foggy one of "social justice".

And social evils, instead of being overcome, are aggravated, as everyone who barely opens one eye can see.

This does not mean that they want to reject the system, which is the best possible, and a hundred times preferable to a political democracy. and stormy trade union that does not calm the dead of a "strong regime", that is, violent.

But we would like to give it a soul, and we must strive to give it to it. It should not be difficult to understand that the origin of social evils is in man, but. we Italians are a fun people, and perhaps so are the others: individually we all feel innocent and put together we form, in our recognition, an unjust people. Is it possible that it does not occur to us that a basket of spotted apples is not made up of individual immaculate apples?.

Social ills are a reflection, indeed a sum of our personal ills, and no political and social reform will have the power to heal us socially, if every Italian does not take himself head-on and say to himself: "Friend, and you? Are you really honest? Are you blameless? Do you do all your duty as a man and as a citizen? Are you healthy in conscience and soul, or are you content with small injustices, small blackmails, small mischiefs, small thefts, because you can't do more?

Do you know what justice means? It does not mean ^{that you} have more", but "give to each his own" and -did you give what you owe, to everyone, before asking? And first of all, did you give God his? That is, the love and service you owe him? Do you know that if you do not begin by giving God his own, you make yourself incapable of justice, because you remain sick in conscience?

Do you love your neighbor as yourself, even the one who makes you suffer? If you don't love it like this, you won't be able to be fair with whom you deal, with whom you have communities of interests, with whom you will have to approach and serve.

This is the root of social evils, a deep root, rooted in the conscience of every single man, little or much of his power.

Power increases the proportions of evil, but the root remains the same, and who can reform the reformers but God?

You see that the school does not succeed: it teaches many things, except to grow and become men. Literary education, scientific education, civic education, physical education, soon sex education, but they are still far from a human education.

Still less is the political and trade union world, which does not have the whole man in view, but only the man who has certain needs to satisfy: his soul, that is, his spiritual essence, is still absent.

And so let us give ourselves to private initiative, which over the centuries has always anticipated public initiative, for an inner progress, without which civil progress remains unbalanced and disordered.

Everyone takes care of themselves, to help society to bridge this dramatic Gap (which means, as we have been told, gap, imbalance) of our time, between galloping technical progress and panting human progress so as not to run the risk, already too much in place, of getting behind the wheel of ever more perfect cars while remaining wild in the soul, I. Savages of the steering wheel.

It is too convenient to pour the blame on others for it to be right. Psychoanalysts say that by doing so we discharge our consciousness of our ills by placing them on society. This does not prevent us from disapproving of what we consider unjust, but not without first making a deep examination of conscience: "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone". We ourselves, even in our own small way, can make ourselves accomplices in the great social evils, even if we do not lend our honest and disinterested work in the social and political world.

The "independents" and the "right-thinking" who do not concern themselves with public affairs because it is "dirty", with this accusation, substantially unjust, because "dirty" is every single man, whatever he does or does not do, and not works for themselves, intend to absolve themselves of their laziness if not of their cowardice: where do you think it is filth, why don't you lift a finger to try to remove it? These ^{morally} "insolvent" citizens are the greatest burden that the Italian democracy has to carry on its still young shoulders.

THE PRECIOUS GIFT

29.9.85 Used for Vita Nova

A twelve-year-old boy is sitting on the threshold of a convent with a book in his hand. It is a Latin grammar. The boy is waiting for a friar who will help him with his studies.

I jokingly say to him: "Why do you waste time studying Latin, which in practical life is not needed?"

He looks at me surprised and replies: "But I study it for the love of God"

His answer strikes me and I sit next to him who immediately explains that everything has value for eternal life, where we will be what we have been able to do, especially using our time well, and using it well means using it "for the good", ours and others, and since he "must" study Latin at that moment, he does not find it right to make a passive study of it, but to "use" it for life, for a better knowledge of men, to grow in love.

Time, he tells me, is God's most precious gift, and we should not prepare to mourn it after wasting it in our youth.

How much wisdom in a child! I look at him incredulously, but he doesn't have the look of someone who parrots things that the friar who is waiting certainly heard, he has the bright eye of the intelligent boy, who knows what he is saying.

I would like to take him with me, so that he could repeat his lesson of wise life to all those who complain of not having the time to "do good", while ^{all} the time "must be used for good, whatever we do, because it is the precious currency that God entrusts to us by being born in expectation to see how we will be able to make it return.

And every morning the garbage collectors take away, without knowing it, together with the bags of waste, heaps of lost and badly spent time, steeped in the laments of those who have been left alone to suffer because there has been no one to have had time to comfort them.

And this boy, still alive, is a missionary in India, happy to be of help to the poorest in the world.

THE DIMENSION OF THE HEART

30.11.85 Used for Vita Nova and La Vita di Pistoia

A priest who acts as father and mother to a hundred young people who have no father and mother or it is as if they did not have one, tells me that he is not dismayed to feed them, because providence in the form of food is not lacking, he is dismayed to love them personally one by one as every human creature wants to be loved, with a personal and total love, in short, how God loves each one of us and commands us to love ("Love one another as I have loved you").

And in my poor human heart, this priest who has an exceptional heart tells me with a little bitterness, a hundred are a little tight, and they realize it.

To say how difficult this personal and total love is, I report one episode among the different that made me know

One of its most difficult young men goes on leave for a few days with a married sister, and steals in his sister's house.

His sister tells the priest so that he can punish him, and the priest finds himself having to choose between punishing him and perhaps losing him and not punishing him and giving scandal to the other ninety-nine.

The young man returns with a provocative air and confronts the priest telling him that if he scolds him he will go and throw himself under the train.

The priest understands that the young man needs to relieve his nervous tension and tells him: "Go and throw yourself under the train".

The young man turns and walks towards the railway. Then the priest calls two robust young men and gives them to him. sends behind with the task of reaching him and engaging in a fight with him, to give him a way to unload.

In fact, an hour later all three return, a little battered, but safe.

Those who have a little conscience, before wishing to increase in rank and to have more people in their employ, ask themselves how many people they will be able to know personally, one by one, to love personally as each one wants to be understood and loved as his brother or beloved friend, and to serve in his personal needs, as each one wishes to feel and be served because every authority is an order of service received from God.

In order to preserve the happy balance of human relationships, it is necessary to structure society according to the dimensions of the human heart .

Small villages where there is a lack of necessities and where there are few people to know and love are inhuman, and large cities where personal knowledge becomes more difficult are inhuman.

The teacher who has too large a class should not complain about it because he has to work too hard, but see if love does not suffer personal due to each student, according to his personal needs as true children.

The general should know and love the colonels personally, the colonel should know and love the captains personally, the captain should know and love the subalterns and non-commissioned officers personally, and these every single soldier.

This is what happens in civil organization and wherever men have relations with each other, in a knot that no one has to escape, no one is left to the anguish of feeling alone.

Loving humanity, as an abstract ideal, is good, but giving this humanity concrete human faces is a duty. And it is a growth within us that gives us new vigor every day.

THE WINE

A young man is employed in a large wine industry. They put two glasses of wine in front of him and point a finger: "Which one is the best?". The young man does not know anything about it and lets himself be guided by a wink from an elderly employee and is hired on that small deception.

They teach him the technique of tasting, to trill the wine in his mouth without swallowing it: the evening he is drunk, because he has swallowed so much, but he resists.

The plant manager takes him with him to the farms to teach him another technique, that of purchasing. It is a monotonous technique, similar to that of states: within the first hour of negotiations, the seller and the buyer already know the price of the contract, but they have to prolong the negotiations all day long because it is required to do so in order to preserve their respective dignity.

Subsequently, the young man must return alone to the farms, with the appropriate means and the hard staff, to take delivery of the wine purchased, and must be careful to have that delivered to him, ruby, sparkling, soft, velvety, fragrant, many degrees, many quintals.

Remember well, barrel or tub number one, number five, number eight, number fourteen. If he makes a mistake, he will pay in person.

The young man learns the life of the old Tuscan farms, a life that is still patriarchal, sincere and generous, which unfortunately is disappearing.

One evening they accompany him to a villa, make him walk along a long corridor, and show him the 1st room. The young man opens the 1st window, it is spring, he lets himself be enchanted by the nightingale, then the 1st closes again and he sinks into sleep. In the morning they invite him to the room for coffee and look at him with curiosity until the farmer plucks up the courage and asks him: "Did you hear anything last night?".

The young man answers: "The nightingale".

"Anything else?"

"Nothing else".

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief, and the farmer explains to him: "Forgive us, you know. In the room where we made him sleep "you feel" there are ghosts. To test if they were still there we put her. Then they are just gone, because everyone heard them. Thank you for this assurance."

Another time, in winter, he arrives at the farm in pitch dark, soaked to the bone because it was snowing.

He drives it. among the holm oaks the barking of a dog sticks to the chain of the bell and four come to open it.

They lift it by weight, place it in front of the chimney, throw a bundle on it, strip it and let it bask in the fire. Then they dress him and drag him to the table, where about twenty people are having dinner: it is the "piglet", a Tuscan word that has nothing to do with misunderstanding. On that day the pig was killed and the dinner was based on blood, fat, what remains of hams, salami, bacon, and other sausages. And good wine, of course. There they stuff him to burst, they make him drink.

Then three women accompany ^{you} to a large room that has a bed in the middle with a big bag of corn leaves, and golden corn piled up on the floor. A cold mischief, from that heat of the kitchen. "If he hears noise," they tell him, "it's the rats that come to eat corn."

But he cannot hear any noise, because as soon as the cold is overcome, he sleeps the deep sleep of the righteous hangover.

And in the morning a beautiful girl, fresh and pinato, comes to wake him up, brings him coffee, smiles at him and leaves: it is the good morning of the farm.

The problem of the responsibility of the wine to be delivered, ruby red, many degrees, many quintals, or greenish white or straw yellow, many degrees, many quintals, without defects.

The young man, despite his good will, has not yet made friends with wine, he knows little about it: but he cannot say it, much less prove it, under penalty of dismissal.

So he has to make do and has immediately resorted, from the beginning, to his own technique, which is Christian: he makes it clear to the cellar master that he trusts him, that he defers to Him, he will not control anything.

This game has lasted for ten years, and the young man has not once had to repent of having given his esteem and his confidence to simple people.

BOOKS AND PRIESTS

A traveler of God, who goes to sell Catholic books to parishes, has collected a good sample of priests' souls, and has gained many friendships.

He pins some human samples, with his light and his shadows, because the more we live in the light, the more we cast shadows, but always with a lot of respect and veneration.

We are in Maremma, between Scansano and Orbetello, where the parishes are ten kilometers apart. A young parish priest comes to open the door and invites the traveler in. Immediately that mysterious fluid of sympathy intervenes that you go fishing for where it originates, but here we can venture to say that it is born of the common grace of the Lord.

The young priest wants the traveler to stay for dinner with him and also to sleep. He explains to him that he is alone, completely alone, without even a woman in the house to do his chores, both because he cannot pay for it, and because the country is suspicious and even if he took with him an old woman with a bazza on the floor they would find fault.

He hardly ever sees the face of a confrere and even for confession he has to make long journeys.

The next morning they greet each other by hugging each other and the traveler discovers a yellow wrapper on the seat of his small car: he takes it and inside there is a wheel of pecorino cheese. The traveler is moved if he clasps his chest as if he were a relic of goodness. And he thinks later, sadly, that Jesus sent him, apostles two by two, knowing the needs of the human soul, which alone struggles so much and is exposed to so many bad weathers.

But the Church continues to send them alone because the people of God deny her an abundance of priests.

Let them be on the Apuan Alps. The traveler greets the parish priest: "Good morning, Reverend." The priest opens his arms to him: "Did you tell me, Reverend?" He now takes him by the arm: "Blessed be he." If only you knew how long it has been since I heard myself called reverend!"

The traveler asks him: "Or what do they call him?"

"Do you know what they call me? They call me "a lù", which here means "or she".

He was alone too, among five lumberjacks' houses.

Other mountains. The traveler stops the small car at the end of the climb and walks another two kilometers, with the suitcase of books in hand, along a path through the chestnut trees, up to the church and the parish priest's house.

A priest in his forties shows up, who looks like a dried chestnut pole, and asks him annoyed what he wants.

11 The traveller repeats his introduction twice and manages to sell him a book worth a thousand lire, but the poor folded chestnut stick gives him only nine hundred, then claps him on the shoulder and says:

"Blessed are you who grow rich behind our backs!"

The traveler calculates that that book, between expense and effort, cannot cost him less than three thousand lire and swallows a little bitterly, but he understands: this is an involuntary anchorite who has not been able to resist loneliness and has dried up his heart. And she prays, as she can, for him.

Let them now be in a spacious rectory, with the tools to entertain the boys with the hope of leading them to play Christ.

The parish priest, robust and soaked by the sun because he cultivates his own vegetable garden, invites the traveler to lunch.

An elderly and kind woman brings the soup, then waits and asks;

"Is it good?"

The parish priest lifts his head from his plate and says to her smiling:

"Every time you want to be praised!"

The woman is unperturbed and replies:

"You too are pleased to hear that you have explained the Gospel well ." Soup is my explanation of the Gospel."

The traveler collects that joke as a precious pearl and takes it with him, in his family and in his relations with his neighbor; Saying "bravo", saying "thank you", to the wife, to those who serve us, to those we approach, costs so little and yields so much, if it is sincere and comes from the soul, because it is God's oil on the many wounds of human relationships.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH

2.7.85 Used for Vita Nova

Americans, fond of statistics, have found that in their country only eleven percent of intelligence is used socially for progress and the common good.

The other remains idle or is used badly, for selfish purposes. And with that little escape of intelligence put into society they manage to do, it must be admitted, great things.

So it is tempting to think at what point human progress would be if there, and here and everywhere, that small percentage of intelligence put in place as the first capital for social works were only doubled.

And she was not prostituted to evil works, to those that destroy.

But we must start from the origin and recognize that intelligence is the breath of the spirit, it is a gift of God, who gives it in unequal parts precisely to give us the way to put it in common, for the benefit of all.

As long as a man short of intelligence is left to fend for himself and a less provided people is detached in the path of progress, we cannot boast of being intelligent creatures, because intelligence is communication, not restriction.

But intelligence alone is short of breath. I know men who have seen their name printed in the newspapers because of their intelligence applied to science and art, who outside their projector are dark and in their private lives are first-rate chiorbons or who have remained barbaric and bad at heart.

First example. A twelve-year-old middle school girl writes in an essay that she would like to die.

The teacher, impressed, takes and questions maternally. The little girl bursts into sobs and tells her that her parents don't love her, they all love her seven-year-old sister .

It is jealousy. The father is a scientist, the mother is a woman of letters, and with all their knowledge and wisdom, with all that great intelligence, they had not been able to understand the soul of a child, or rather of a daughter, who for them was only a "bad" daughter to be treated harshly, leaving all the tricks to the "good" and good daughter only because I had won them all.

It is true, intelligence needs nourishment, and the school must give it to it: culture, at least at a certain level, is necessary for everyone, otherwise we remain underdeveloped, but let us not entrust culture with the solution of human problems, we need something else.

Second example: a chemist who has had a brilliant career has a mother who lives alone. The mother falls ill and needs help, and humbly begs her son to take her into his house.

The son does not even answer her, and the next day this poor mother, who has given everything to her son, sees a litter arrive, which takes her far away, to an old man's shelter. She understands and cries, she knows that she is now alone in the world.

Another widowed mother runs a cream and packaging shop together with a twenty-year-old son. His other son, the eldest, has crossed the ocean, his intelligence has taken him far away. The newspapers deal with him, but he sends his mother a greeting card for the holidays, for now, and nothing else.

A journalist goes to interview her and asks her if she feels proud of her son. The lady looks at him and answers him with another question:

"Of which?"

He meant: "Of the one over there whom you exalt and almost no longer shows up with his mother, proud and selfish, or of this one endowed with less talent, but with so much heart and so much good will?".

Without goodness, intelligence is lost and it would be preferable to have less, in order to make fewer mistakes and do less damage.