

The Lord looks down

(February 1960 editorial)

I have been preaching retreats to couples for more than twenty years. When they enter the retreat house, this 'clinic for soul therapy', most of these men and women are 'anaemic'; but when they leave, they have acquired a new spiritual vitality.

A year or two later, they will need to make a retreat again, since many will have allowed themselves to succumb to anaemia. Once more, they will experience the extraordinary efficacy of these days spent in the presence of God.

What is the secret of this efficacy? Silence, daily mass, prayer...? all good reasons, no doubt. But the primary reason, the most decisive reason is something else. The faith of these men and women had become weak, sickly, sleepy, exhausted, dying. At the breath of God's Word it wakes up, it is strengthened, it comes to life again, for there is a close relationship between faith and the Word of the Lord. Only the Word of God has the power to awaken and nourish faith: this faith that is the knowledge of God, of his intimate life and of his plan for the universe.

Faith withers in those who are not open to the Word of God and do not keep it. By 'Word of God', I mean the Inspired Books and any word or writing which offers the Revelation contained in these Books.

If there are many sickly Christians, it is because very few seek God.

*"The Lord looks down from heaven
upon the children of men,
to see if there are any that act wisely,
that seek after God"* (Ps 14: 2).

On the other hand, those who nourish their faith, who seek to know God - that is to say to know Jesus Christ in whom and through whom the Father has given us everything, said everything, revealed everything, manifested everything - those people are preserved from spiritual anaemia. And because their faith is nourished, their love of God develops and their generosity in the service of God grows. They are 'alive'.

*"This is eternal life,
that they know thee,
the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* (Jn 17: 3).

This is why we attach so much importance in Teams to the exchange of views: that time during the monthly meeting given to seeking to know God, his mind and his will. This is why each couple is asked to work at the study topic in earnest, husband and wife together. This is why it seems to me a very bad symptom when I hear some member of a long established team say: "We could give up the study topic and spend more time praying and sharing".

If Teams do not succeed in giving you the taste and hunger to know God, if, after a few months or years, working at the study topic has not led you to acquire the habit of religious study, there can be little reason for the existence of our teams. We were created to know, love and serve God. If we do not know Him in a living and constantly sustained way, let us have no illusion: we will not love and serve Him truly.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ep 3: 14-19)