

(English translation)

Rome, 25 May 1970

Towards Our Homeland

Today we often hear about Christianity as a social message. And it is only right that this aspect should be emphasized. Since God became man, it is plain that he is concerned with every aspect of our affairs. Christ's whole life is, in fact, an example of social involvement.

It must be remembered, however, that what he announced is also and is above all, a spiritual message.

We Christians do great injustices to our faith.

Now and then we pluck up the courage to love God and our fellow men, to be tolerably good and honest. Not infrequently, we pray. In short, we lead a life that has an undeniably Christian flavour.

But there are truths which we neglect, let's admit it, and almost never think about or consider only when we are *forced* to do so.

It happens to me, too, from time to time, and I consider it a real grace, that my eyes open and I become aware of a truth so beautiful that my mind can only barely touch it, because it is not able to grasp the truth: it is too great.

Even so it wakes me up, it shakes me, it encourages me and makes me delighted.

I realize where I am going. I remember that it was announced to me, and I believe with my whole being that if I succeed in performing the duties that God has commanded me, *I shall go ... to Paradise.*

Paradise.

But do we think about this? Do we realize that this is not the place that we should always be improving, making our existence as trouble-free as possible, but that every second of our life is a new step towards another kingdom, another land, towards a homeland where the purest and full happiness we are longing for, will be ours for ever and ever.

And what will be there?

It is better not to risk talking about it. We'll spoil its realities by silly fantasies.

It will be ... it will be ... Paradise !

Today part of society is in protest. Today we have to get rid of masks. The big schemes break down, the `pseudos' are detected. There is a general demythologizing of everything or everyone regarded as an idol until yesterday.

People demand authenticity, truth.

And if in the course of our history and of the present generation, we let God's providence act, we'll see that what Ladislaus Boros, a contemporary writer has affirmed, has come true.

Having made an acute and blunt, but realistic analysis of the thought and aspirations of people of today, he says: 'Contemporary human beings cannot call themselves modern if they do not encounter Christ.

This is it: authenticity means truth and the truth is Christ with all he brought, with all he commanded, with what he promised, with the *place* he is preparing for us in *his* kingdom.

This is reality.

But if this is the way things are, what inconsistency there is in our life, what an inversion of values

!

We carry on as if it was no longer true that for someone making a long journey to his own dear home, the nearer he gets, the faster his heart beats in him.

Who then is more fortunate and, consequently, happier? The little child or the young person awaiting the often lengthy trial of life, with its joys, yes, but above all with its unfailing sorrows, or the

mature adult and, even more, the aged person drawing near the threshold of complete embrace with the love always dimly sought here, and soon to be found there face to face and possessed for ever?

When the first grey hairs appear, when tired limbs cannot be relied on any longer, when age increases and the years add up, how is it that all this, even in us Christians, leads to a feeling of melancholy, of sadness?

We could understand it if we thought that these were the first symptoms of life passing.

But if this is not so, because it is not so, since the greatest adventure for which we appeared one day on this planet still has to begin, how can we justify our reaction? Where has our faith gone?

Have we not got the same attitude as the materialist who only believes in what he can touch and see?

'My kingdom is *not* of this world' (*Jn* 18:36), Jesus said to Pilate, just because, among other things, he would not fear that Jesus would dethrone him here on earth.

Oh no! There is death, but then there is life, the full life that will never end.

And if a small or even a high price has to be paid to attain it, it is well worth it. In the style of his age, the poor man of Assisi who saw clearly, said: 'So great is the good that awaits me that every pain is a delight for me.'

The chrysalis is ugly while it is being transformed, but afterwards it will be a butterfly.

The same is true of people. We should remember that the more something seems to indicate the end and death, the more it announces life.

This is the pure truth.

Many of us, I think, need to reconvert ourselves, so that we can cheerfully and joyfully spread wisdom and understanding in the world, the fruits of experience.

And when we are also drawing near to our flight and are close to our 'birthday', if we can only repeat the words of the apostle John in his old age, 'Love one another' (see *1Jn* 4:7), we will have said much more and much better than all the great speeches of our lives, when we had youth and strength on our side. And, for humankind who still must wait and journey on, we will have offered the greatest and most shining service.

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