**Spirituality in Action, Everyday Challenges**

**Anita Saisi -** The Grail in Italy

This invitation makes me think of a poem by Saint John of the Cross:

*That eternal spring lies hidden How well I know its hiding place,*

 *Even when it is night. In the dark night of this life*

*How well I know in faith the sacred spring,*

*Even when it is night. I do not know its source, for it has none,*

*But I know that every source comes from it.*

 *Even when it is night.*

In this time when so many problems afflict us, the war in Ukraine that seem to have no ending, I find help in this poem by repeating within myself “even if it is night”. Every night brings us a new day and, since I have learned to listen to the message of nature, in the morning as I get up, I gaze at the dawn and let the new light give me energy and hope. This is the first challenge of the day. The second challenge is my study and reflecting on the meaning of the Hebraic word shalom. We all know that peace is not only the absence of war, therefore, going deep in this meaning of shalom, I engage myself to let peace grow in myself and in the people I meet and with whom I share my life. Shalom describes a dimension of human life that has reached its fullness, therefore, our spirituality needs a special care in order to let this peace make roots in ourselves. My profession as a psychotherapist has taught me that we spend many of our energies in dealing with unsolved conflicts, imagine how important it is to spare these energies and use them to build peace . It is up to each one of us to discover, in the context of one’s life, how to engage ourselves to create peace that has the aim to reach that fullness that will make this humanity a better one. To explain what I mean I think of the words by Etty Hillesum when she said that she did not hate the Nazis so that hate would not grow into the world. This means that if we create peace in ourselves and around us, peace will grow in that mysterious way that unite all human beings. Our efforts are oriented to spread all the possible Good in order to stop Evil. The third challenge is not to yield to feel powerless in front of such enormous problems, this implies to accept our limits, in a positive way because they exist, but it is necessary to keep the door open to hope and to dreams. I like very much a poem by Emily Dickinson which says:

*To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,*

 *One clover and one bee,*

*And reverie.*

*The reverie alone will do, if bees are few*.

This poem accepts limitations but do not give up dreams. The fourth challenge is provided to us by learning from nature. The changing of Seasons teaches us how to stand the cold of winter, how to allow a re- birth at spring, to enjoy the sun in summer and the beautiful colours in autumn. We can ask ourselves in which mood is our soul and then observe the nature so that we can behave as nature does in the different seasons. There is a lot of wisdom in the way nature accept its changes because she knows that they are useful to perform her task. Recently, we have been reflecting what to learn from the pandemic and the war after many years of freedom, at least for most of us in the western world, the thought that struck me most comes from this poem by Robert Frost:

*The tree that the tempest with a crash of wood*

 *Throws down in front of us is not bar*

*Our passage to our journey’s end for good*

*But just to ask us who we think we are.*

These dramatic events “ask us who we think we are”. It is a lesson of humility, the word that comes from Humus, the earth we are made of. This consciousness let us to feel united to all human beings, especially those that suffer more. Here we come to the fifth challenge that is to grow in a deeper understanding of suffering in our life, in the life of people we know and love in order to arrive to make ours the suffering of humanity. This has nothing to do with masochism of course, on the contrary it helps us to grow in a spirituality that embrace this dimension that is part of our daily experience, to learn to accept it, and of becoming more able to be close and to help those who suffer. It helps us to discover real solidarity. Spirituality in action is very demanding, we should not forget this, and the wider is our comprehension of the different aspects of life, by meditating on the events we go through, the interior life becomes so rich that the whole world is necessarily enriched. Some years ago, I heard the witness of Liana Millu, a woman who was in Auschwitz when she was a young girl, with the question what was left in her by that terrible experience, she answered: “Love for our Mother Earth and a deep, great compassion for our human condition.” I have never forgotten these words because they express the best answer that we can give to every challenge, big or small, that we experience during our life.

 Anita Saisi, Milano, April 2022

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