

Office for Unity on Thursday, November 18, 2021

Meditation text

TO BECOME A MAN IS TO SHARE THE SUFFERING OF GOD

I remember a discussion I had in America thirteen years ago with a young French pastor. We had simply asked ourselves the question: what do we really want to do with our life?

He said to me: "I would like to be a saint"; that impressed me very much. I later understood and continue to have this experience that it is by living fully in the earthly horizon of life that one comes to believe. When one has given up altogether trying to become somebody - whether it be a saint, or a converted sinner, or a clergyman, a righteous or an unjust, a sick or a healthy person, and that is what I call the earthly horizon: living in the multitude of tasks, questions, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities - only then can we place ourselves fully in the hands of God, only then can we take seriously not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world, and stay awake and alert with Christ in Gethsemane. And I think that is faith, that is metanoia; this is how you become a man, a Christian.

How can successes make us insolent or failures disturb us if in earthly life we are sharing God's suffering?

You can understand what I mean, even if I say it so briefly. I am grateful that it has been given to me to discern this and I know that I was only able to do so because of the path I once took. That's why I think of the past and the present with gratitude and peace. May God lead us with benevolence through our time here on earth; but above all may he lead us to him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (letter from captivity of July 21, 1944), written in captivity

Intercessions Prepared by our brothers and sisters at the Notre-Dame des Dombes abbey France.

(To be adapted according to the place)

1 / The 4th Paris Peace Forum has begun on Thursday November 11. It brought together important members of the society: heads of state or businesses as well as various representatives of associations and churches to continue reflecting on a more just world, on facing together the challenges of today, such as the pandemic, digital developments, the issue of migration, etc.

Lord, lead us in this search for peace. May this concern for a more just world draw paths of unity between our Churches.

2 / Last Friday, the climate conference (COP-26) in Glasgow ended. Some applauded the measures taken, others remain sceptical and expected more. All in all, we thank you Lord for these moments of sharing and exchange that allow us to move forward together with respect to this issue.

Lord, come and change our hearts so that we have more concern for our planet. Inspire us with concrete paths of ecological commitment and keep us in the hope that the world can change.

3 / In recent years, many ecumenical links have been created between our Churches, especially in training gatherings and centres.

Thus René Léonian, pastor of the Evangelical Armenian Church, was appointed holder of the chair of Armenology at the Catholic University of Lyon this year.

Caroline Bauer of the Protestant Church and Georges Vasilakis, Greek Orthodox, are also professors at this Catholic university.

Thank you, Lord, for these possible collaborations that have been made possible nowadays between our Churches and for the confidence they reflect. Come, O Lord, and make this spirit of collaboration grow in our Churches.