

Laudato Si: "Women, carriers of living water"

Water vivifies and restores, that is: it gives vitality to those who have lost it and returns the person, who is the one who gathers us, to the place where it was at its origin. I believe that these actions linked to water and to those who carry it, are more than eloquent in showing us the places to which we as women believers are called to go.

On May 24, 2015, Pope Francis published an Encyclical dedicated to the care of Creation or, in other words, to the care of the World and of Life. According to the logic of *Laudato Si*, to take care is to welcome, protect, foster and ultimately humanise, resting on a relational conception in which God, the world and the neighbour intervene.

Creation is an act of generous and gratuitous love, therefore undeserved, which springs from God's preferential option for man and woman. We are not the fruit of chance or fate, but of an act of fruitful love through which God the Creator places in our hands the goods we need to live, while at the same time giving us the company of our neighbours so that together, in community, we may reach the fullness of our personal and community development.

This harmonious order brakes to the extent that ***the logic of gift*** has been losing meaning to ***the logic of acquisition***. Becoming aware of the gift binds us through gratuity, what make us debtors of the One who created us and of those with whom we relate. On the contrary, when existence is lived from individuality and disassociation according to a conscious process of self-affirmation before God and, therefore, before Creation, what results is a world in which God and neighbour end up being a threat to our freedom. This is what Henri De Lubac described in 1943 in his book *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism* as the greatest heresy of our world.

The spiritual process that nourished this heresy has been nurtured in the last two centuries by the development of empirical sciences and technological research, the will to transform the environment, whether natural or human, and the progressive strengthening of a system of economic production that we can call technocratic capitalism.

This process has been modifying the conception that the human being has of himself, of his neighbour and of the world he inhabits and, therefore, it has been modifying the mode of human action on the world and in relations with others. It could be said that human

action has gone from being respectful to being extractive and, therefore, reductive. The technical reason, which is the logic that dominates this process, is based on domination and manipulation. From this perspective, the goods presented to us before our eyes are seen as opportunities and resources susceptible of being dominated and, therefore, manipulated. The decisive factor is our capacity to subjugate, transform and appropriate because the technology is what allows those who possess it to dominate.

Is it possible to resist this paradigm? Is it possible to resist a world sustained by the logic of domination and manipulation? Are there antidotes to this world? *Laudato Si* speaks of alternative lifestyles and of a counterculture capable of confronting the technocratic paradigm.

I share with the Encyclical the conviction that there is an alternative way of relating to oneself, to others and to the world. I would like us to focus our attention on two attitudes capable of engendering an alternative lifestyle. These are:

1. the gratuity, and
2. care

Gratuity, tells us (LS 220), generates a movement in three times:

1. Recognize and accept the world as a *Gift* of God, which provokes a generous and gratuitous response.
2. Become aware of the bonds of communion with the rest of the creatures with whom we share our existence.
3. To develop the *creativity* that is born from the Faith in God.

The logic of the dominion that prevails in our days demands an ecological conversion that I express in the form of relational conversion that reveals the triad God-world-neighbour. This conversion involves witnessing that the goods at our disposal, beginning with our own existence, have been given to us. This means that love, donation and dedication are creative and, therefore, absolutely revolutionary forces.

The resistance that is born from this awareness of gratuity can only manifest itself in the form of *care*. To take care is not to palliate, nor to preserve. To take care is to welcome and accompany, to encourage, to restore and to vivify in order to achieve, in the end, that our neighbour faces his existence from his autonomy to reach the maximum personal development of which he is capable.

I am absolutely convinced that the woman is particularly well attuned to this caring attitude. I do not understand, however, that the care is feminine. The necessary overcoming of the model of assigning roles and tasks according to sexual difference responds to social and cultural conventions that must be overcome for the sake of a relational logic that accentuates co-responsibility. This is not an obstacle to maintaining, as I have just pointed out, that the sympathy of women with the care, born from the capacity to gestate in their own body, that is, to be a mother, allows them to become aware of the fragility of others and of the duty of care as a response to the gift of life.

This conviction could take the form of two extremely important historical commitments:

1. Education in care.
2. The relentless fight against all forms of women's exploitation.

Care is a social virtue that women must and can bring to the world. Far from being enclosed within the walls of home, it is necessary to socialize an attitude that, moreover, is not exclusively feminine, but essentially human. The attitude of care is pedagogical because it helps to become aware of one's own fragility and the fragility of others, of the interdependent relations between human beings, of the essentially sociable dimension of man and woman, while at the same time, takes down the fallacies of the individualistic logic that understands freedom as disassociation. From this perspective, care is a very valuable social principle that dignifies human existence and contributes to improve the living conditions of women and men. It is a social virtue that must be demanded of all citizens, men and women, of all social institutions, especially the family, which requires the mediation of States and with which the Church must be actively involved.

If it is urgent to promote a culture of care that women should assume as a social duty, the decisive fight against all forms of reduction of women and their bodies to a means of production is no less urgent.

The technocratic paradigm in which we live has made us, women, one of the most profitable objects of production that exist today. Women and their bodies are today a financial producer that is on the rise in the so-called rogue or criminal economy. The woman as a whole or in pieces is tremendously profitable to be converted into an object of sexual, labour and reproductive exploitation that reaches huge numbers. Women are bought and sold for the use and enjoyment of men who understand that a woman's body can be used as a source of pleasure. Buying and selling women is highly profitable because, in addition, they can become pregnant and feed children to those who are

willing to buy them either to satisfy desires for paternity and maternity, or to use them in the world of pornography and sexual exploitation, or as suppliers of organs. Women may be prostituted, while working in agricultural plantations or textile industries. The body of the woman in pieces is a round business because at the same time that we can supply gametes that will be fertilized and implanted in the body of other women, we can gestate children for others. Technology allows us to do it, why should we refuse to do it? I am not exaggerating if I say that the commercialization of a woman's body, whether whole or in pieces, is today the image of a *bioeconomy* in which life understood as **biovalue** is reduced to the category of physical force and in which technology plays a determining role.

The technological civilization must necessarily be accompanied by prudence in the decisions, the strategy of fear and the calculation of consequences, as the philosopher Han Jonas teaches in *The Principles of Responsibility* and Pope Francis presents in the name of the fight against discard in the *Laudato Si*. What world do we want for tomorrow? This is a decisive question that we must ask ourselves as women.

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