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"HEARING THE WORD TO LIGHT THE WAY"

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The famous Lithuanian-French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas compared Ulysses and Abraham as paradigmatic figures of their relationship, which is very suggestive in the initiation of this reflection. More than biblical characters, they are anthropological prototypes, paradigmatic figures of human identity.

Odysseus, after the Trojan War, returns home. He lived the adventure of multiple encounters with others and varied experiences. He fought combats, faced endless obstacles, and knew the difference. Covered in victories and glory, he returned. When he arrives, even disguised, "different" from the departed Ulysses, he is still the "same"; his dog, by his nose, and Penelope, by love, recognize him. Ulysses represents the returned hero, who encountered the different only to reduce it to the same in a domesticated and assimilated world.

Abraham heard a voice calling him, and he departed from his land, never to return. His journey was toward the new, the unfamiliar, the different, the Other. No one is waiting for you on a return to the starting point. Only one word of promise calls you in the direction of a future ever further ahead. Abraham listens, walks, and transcends. Their identity is transfigured at every step; it is processual and historical. He breaks with the past, and his exodus goes toward an unpredictable and new future.

What force compels Abraham towards that which he does not know and not familiar? It is the Word of God that transcends you but also resounds in your ears and within you. Abraham does not know the way, but this Word, which he begins to know, which he hears and obeys, illuminates that way and makes him fear nothing. The Word grants you insight into those who might disrupt your security with promises of companionship.

The people of God saw Abraham as their prototype and their representative. He understood himself as a listener of a practical and attractive Word, which seduces and summons but also does what it says and makes it happen, accompanying us. By listening to this Word and practicing what it says and teaches, they became a people in search of the fulfillment of the promise of the One who did not promise Abraham security or ease. But he heard what all mankind wants to hear: I will be with you.

God as Word Found in Scripture

The Brazilian poet Adelia Prado expresses beautifully and originally her desire for the mysterious and surprising language that makes its appearance in the depths of humanity and unveils the mystery of God as Word.

BEFORE THE NAME

*I don't care about the word, it's commonplace.*

*What I want is the splendid chaos from which syntax emerges,*

*the dark places where the "from", the "alias", the*

*'the', 'but' and 'what' are incomprehensible*

*crutch that supports me.*

*Whoever understands language understands God*



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*whose Son is the Word. Whoever understands dies.*

*The word is a disguise for something more serious, deaf, mute,  
it was invented to be silenced.*

*In moments of grace, very infrequent,*

*You can catch it: a live fish with your hand.*

*Pure fear and terror*

In the early days of Revelation to the people of Israel, the men and women who grasped this Word and spoke about what they heard identified God as the Word. A word that cuts through the silence and speaks. But the condition for knowing and affirming oneself to say is because there is a listener: man or woman. Someone who listened, hears. And from there, he obeys and practices. To be human is to be open. Open to listening and responding to what we hear, in the confidence that it is not its own Principle and Foundation, but to find in one another that Principle that recognizes, that Foundation that sustains it, a Word in which we can trust entirely and make the challenging experience of faith.

The revelation of the Jewish and Christian God is inseparable from the experience and practice of the human being. The God of theisms, generically named Supreme Being, Supreme Substance, or other abstract names designating a distant, abstract, and unreachable deity, is not the God of the fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Least of all, Abba, the Father of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor is it the Trinitarian God whom we name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the plots of the history of a people, this God lifts the edge of the veil of its mystery, revealing himself never as the same but always another, found in the need that cries out from the poor, the orphan, the widow, the stranger; of the needy, of the different; the migrant who comes from another culture and speaks another language; of the wounded lying by the wayside. And also of he who practices another religion and praises and worships God; then he names the mystery differently. In short, in a people's history, God opens unknown paths, which will only be discovered by walking to listen to His Word that points out the directions but does not deliver the end of the narrative.

And to be human, before this God, is constantly under question, under judgment, under demand. A demand brought by the face of one another, especially of people experiencing poverty, appears as an epiphany (manifestation) of transcendence. This epiphany brings the responsibility and the need to respond when the Word asks, "Where is thy brother?" It is the story of a love that sets you on your journey and makes you responsible. The brother is the companion of destiny and the journey; it is necessary to answer for him. Their otherness and difference are a permanent call to move forward, walking and finding the way as they walk. found in the Bible, in Sacred Scripture, in the text in which the people of God recorded their encounter and loving acquaintance with their God. The story of listening pushes us towards a path, and we experience a love that reveals itself in the movement of the path itself.

Augustine of Hippo, one of the greatest theologians and saints in the history of Christianity, reminds us of the central importance of Holy Scripture for the knowledge of the God of revelation: "Remember that the word of God is one and the same which is present in all the Scriptures, that it is the same Word that resounds in the mouths of all the sacred writers; he who, being God with God in the beginning, has no need of syllables, because he is not subject to time."

The biblical text is the first mediation where we can find God, for the Christian God is the God of the Bible. The Bible is the birthplace of the God of the Christian faith. There, God can be found and his Word heard. The two preconditions for this to happen are:

First of all, it is not from reason but from faith. The Bible continually warns us of this indispensable condition by which we can draw near to the God it reveals. And so, he says it in many ways: "I will destroy the minds of the intelligent" (1 Cor 1:19ff; Is 29:14). "You hid these things from the wise and learned and revealed them the little ones" (Mt 11:25-26). To know about God, one must be willing not to know (to be small and uneducated), even if one knows that one does not know and because one does not know.

This is what the Gospels teach us about what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. Of him, his contemporaries asked: "Where does this knowledge come from? Isn't he the carpenter's son?" (Mt 13:54-56). That man was of no social importance. Or intellectual in society and the circles of the official religion disconcerted them with his way of being, acting and speaking. He did not resemble the wise and learned of the time. At the same time, however, they said: "No one has ever spoken like this man" (Jn 7:46). They felt that their words and practice were authoritative. An authority, however, that did not come from him but from another.

The second condition is stubborn resistance to any fundamentalism and any fideism. God surpasses all understanding, but He does not quench it. The God of the Bible must also be known with reason.

Because it is a plural and multiform text, the Bible defines several dimensions and aspects that are extremely important when we try to discover, in the intricacies of words, the luminosity of God's revelation and the direction that this light points us along the path we are called to follow.

The Bible is the word. God's communication about himself culminates for us in Jesus Christ, who is both the word and the perfect listener, recognized by those who listen to him and live with him as a saving event. The Bible as a whole, is an integral process. In the biblical texts, the God is named the ultimate referential of these texts. He is implicated by the meaning of the text, by the (biblical) world that these texts unfold.

The great French philosopher and exegete Paul Ricoeur identifies in the biblical text several literary genres that make it multiform and plural:

- The first is prophetic discourse, where a human being appears as the channel, the transmitter, the mouth of God Himself. As in Jeremiah 2:1: "Go shout this in the ears of Jerusalem." The prophet announces himself by speaking not in his name, but in the name of another. Another summons him, possesses him, says in his ear, and sends him to talk to others about what he has heard. Lest there be any doubt that it is God who speaks and not himself, the prophets punctuate their discourse with statements that reveal the authority that speaks through his body and tongue: "Thus saith the Lord." "Word of Yahweh." However, prophetic discourse cannot be separated from narrative discourse or the history of its people. The prophet is not a soothsayer but a member of the people who sits with the people and warns them that faithfulness may come to pass again, and justice may flow like a river.
- The Narrative discourse. In it, the author disappears, and the facts themselves narrate themselves. The narrator is in the background, explaining what is happening and revealing how God is the one who makes the actual narrative. Thus, the listener of the Word is invited to turn his gaze to the things told; that is, he is urged not to yield to the temptation of seeing - always suspected of idolatry in the Hebrew Bible - to listen to the narrative that is told to him from God as the ultimate agent of those facts and Lord of that history of salvation. The Revealed Word qualifies these events in their



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transcendence about the ordinary course of history. The way forward here is to turn our gaze to the historical narrative in which the facts qualified by Revelation precede the oral or written word. In history, God leaves his mark, and what happened in that history and bore that mark will be incessantly narrated and re-told by the people who experience this history as a history of salvation. Thus, the intelligence of history is also the intelligence of faith, which qualifies events.

- There is also the third discourse, which is prescriptive. It is the Law, the Torah, the code of the Covenant between God and the people. It is the practical aspect of God's Word. But it is not an irrelevant law, a mere letter that subjugates and authoritatively obliges. Legislative texts are intrinsically linked to the founding events and are not only legal formulations but also carry an intrinsic relationship between commanding and obeying within themselves. The believer's love for the Torah, for the law, reveals the breadth of ethical possibilities that this same Law opens up since it is the Law of a free people. It is not simply a heteronomous law but must be inscribed in the heart. Being the law of a free people can open up the future of practice and institutions and find its culmination in Christianity in Romans 13:8: "... He who loves has fulfilled all the law". It is like a heart that, in successive movements of systole and diastole, gathers and reminds the people of the heart of the Law: 'Love God and love your neighbour,' and then disperses and spreads it over various prescriptions that regulate the life of the believer from the moment he wakes up until he sleeps, from the moment he is born until he dies so that he can live the Covenant to the fullest.

- Sapiential discourse reconnects ethos and cosmos. It is no longer about what has already been experienced, memory, narration, history, or the law. Instead, it deals with the irreversible situations of life, where everyone experiences their limits and obsolescence. The reconnection of ethos with the cosmos produces pathos, passion, and freely assumed suffering. Wisdom is a gift from God that creates hope, unlike the "knowledge of good and evil" promised by the devil in the Genesis narrative.

- the discourse of the hymn brings supplication, celebration and thanksgiving, where the gratuitousness of the relationship with God appears most clearly. When there is no other human authority to turn to, one can plead to God, cry out for mercy, decline his name, and ask if he sleeps or has forgotten his people. The believer addresses God in the second person - "You" and the hymn becomes a permanent dialogue.

The revealed word is thus the very formation of feeling that transcends the modalities of human emotion.

The Human Being: Hearer of the Word

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength. Take to heart these words which I command you today. Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them on your arm as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. (Deuteronomy 6:4-8)

This Word that comes spoken by God, this Word that is God himself, nevertheless finds its possibility of resonating and making itself heard in the human being. We would not know that God broke the silence and spoke His Word that begets worlds, impregnates virgins and barren, and transforms the desert into a garden if man had not listened.

In this Word, then, the human being finds not only the identity of God but his own identity: to be a hearer of the Word. There is, therefore, an inseparability between theology and anthropology. To speak of God implies talking of the human being and vice versa. In Revelation, the "Adam" made of



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clay and animated by the divine spirit/nesesh, isch, ischa - is person and subject. To be relational, born of the relationship and engendered by it. And yet, to a large extent, it also discovers itself as the product of what it is not, for it cannot give being to itself. It cannot make itself exist. He didn't ask to be born, and he doesn't want to die. And yet, its only certainty is that it is finite and mortal. And dependent on one another. Another has to give him life, and he must receive it from the other. Otherness - the other - is, therefore, the fundamental datum of human experience. The human being only understands himself from the other.

In his trajectory, in his path of self-understanding and self-fulfillment, in search of the meaning that life between an unknown birth and a sure but unwanted death can have, the human being realizes his limits and greatness. He discovers that he is, at the same time, an awareness of himself (that is, of his limits, of his humanity, therefore) and the ability to surpass and transcend himself. It is simultaneously a biological, mortal, vulnerable being like all other beings, governed by the same laws as all of nature. But it is also, and no less fundamental, to anything else or being existing in the universe. It is a finite being that inseparably moves on an infinite horizon—unique and open uniqueness.

All this finitude that coexists simultaneously with infinity and eternity, the human being receives from another gratuitously, without having done anything for it. It's about grace. The human being is a "later being" who comes later. After the one who created him, after the one created things and beings that he, at birth, already finds on the face of the earth. However, the transcendental experience by which it is constituted - an experience that falls within the order of the "unsayable" - comes from a fundamental disposition to everything "prior." Throughout the history of the people of Israel and the First Church, we have called this Holy Mystery God.

Despite his posteriority, however, the human being is created free. That is, at the same time that you are free to say YES, you are free to run away, turn your back and say NO. The transcendental freedom or ultimate freedom that is yours is mediated by reality. That is, by corporeality, by history, by time and space. On the other hand, there is the fellow man for whom he is responsible in an original brotherhood. It is a totalizing dimension mediated by what is contingent and provisional. The dimension of totality is given by the Creator God, who reveals Himself only in or through that which is not Himself but His creation.

The Word gives itself and makes itself heard amid all this mysterious dynamism. And it opens the way of life to the extent that it is listened to and received. It is the mystery of salvation, a salvation that is the reference of the first originality of the human being. Salvation, however, only occurs in history, which is the necessary and not optional insertion of the human being. In this sense, there are not two stories, but only one story: the history of salvation, which can nevertheless also be one of perdition, according to the desire and exercise of the freedom of the human being. Man and woman are referred to as a mystery; that is, they are beings under the mysterious disposition of others. Therefore, they are patient even when agents are unknown to themselves. Salvation is, therefore, something that comes from God, from the Transcendent, but which can be experienced by the human being within his finite limits. This experience takes place in listening to a Word that comes from another and defines him as a listener of the Word.

This listening to the Word that transcends it makes the human being, in addition to being a listener of the Word, a creator and sender of the Word, a being of language. Language discovers reality to human reason and heart insofar as a sign and expression, the means of its condition as a creature. It brings out your creative ability. It makes this same human being discover himself as a listener of the language elaborated and uttered by another and as a language creator. A faithful disciple who listens



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to the Word and puts it into practice will be a servant of that same Word, opening the way for others to hear and obey it.

Disciples and Pilgrims: Language Creators

*The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, That I might know how to answer the weary a word that will waken them. Morning after morning he wakens my ear to hear as disciples do; The Lord GOD opened my ear; I did not refuse, did not turn away. (Is 50:4-5)*

The prophet Isaiah tells us what the prophetic vocation is, which is - in its most profound dimension - the vocation of the whole people of God.

God's people know that they can only be people, live and survive as people if they listen and obey what they hear. That is why the Jew, from the moment he is born and throughout his life, will understand himself as a listener. And by hearing this Word, he will feel that he belongs to his people, the people of God who continually recite the "Shema": Listen to Israel.

Listening to the Law of the Lord, to his Word, is something that must permeate the life of every believer, of everyone who wants to live with the Lord, obeying his will. All the people are listeners of the Word of God. Every human being who finds his reference in the Jewish and Christian Bible equally understands himself.

Being a hearer of the Word, human beings are all configured by language and called to put into practice what they hear. But his practice of obeying and speaking of what he has heard must be a more informative speech, which describes, consigns and proves facts, data, events, news. Such informative speaking would be more compatible with the idea of Logos, which points to reason and privilege, intending to achieve objectivity. However, the human word is not and cannot be purely objective, taking distance from what speaks and communicates. It is also subjective, just as the act of speaking. Every word uttered intended only to inform presupposes the selection of data and the choice of the manner of elaborating and emitting them, which are always affected by subjective motives. It is therefore manipulable. And purely informative talk doesn't exist. There is no escape from interpretation, and any pretense of sticking only to objective facts falls into a deceptive fallacy.

The speech that is the fruit of listening to the Word of God can only be performative: it does not simply refer to reality but to creating and establishing reality. And it's also self-involving. The subject who speaks is committed to the issuance of the message. Language is the creative and transforming action of reality. Thus, we have the beautiful passage of the prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 37, who, urged by the Lord to prophesy, receives the breath of the divine Ruah that joins the word he utters and sees what dry bones were - the house of Israel defeated and destroyed - transform into a militant army.

*He said to me: Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel! They are saying, "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off." Therefore, prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: Look! I am going to open your graves; I will make you come up out of your graves, my people, and bring you back to the land of Israel. You shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and make you come up out of them, my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may come to life, and I will settle you in your land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. I have spoken; I will do it—oracle of the LORD. (Ezekiel 37:11-14)*

Life conquers death by this unbreakable alliance between word and spirit, between divinity and humanity.

In Christianity, some are the proto-words, those who accomplish in the eyes of faith what has resounded from human lips, having instead passed through the ear where the Word has penetrated. They are



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sacraments that receive their form from the word spoken: "I baptize you," "I absolve you," and "This is my body." They are the supreme case of the word that takes place in the key to performative speech.

God's Word is always performative. It discovers and manifests the reality of creation to the extent that it liberates it. It frees the human being from violence, changes from instincts, from routine, from the immediate; It provokes freedom, opening space for it to transform the world. And it leads the one who listens to her on a transformative path to a more robust and whole life.

The human being, therefore, being a listener, learns and receives this word given to him while, as a being of language, he constructs and utters it. Language, then, discovers and reveals him as a being that owes oneself to itself, being incapable of giving oneself to being and having to receive it from another; it finds and uncovers its multiple connections: origin, tradition, belonging, society; it discovers and reveals its reality to the extent that it enables it to make present the invisible, the absent, the past and the future, history and transcendence; it allows him to escape the reductive and coercive present; it discovers reality as a dialogical being and for others.

The language implies freedom. It means that the human being is a being made for communication, created as a free interlocutor of a "You" that challenges him and to whom he is called to respond, being situated amid so many other "yous" that challenge and question him with his difference and otherness. Communication is intersubjectivity, relationality, an essential component of human life. Where there is no communication, there is no understanding or communion. The word has, therefore, a curative, therapeutic, redemptive function, since it returns the human being to himself in his fundamental condition of being made for the relationship with the other.

If this is what the human being is, humanity is an unlimited communication community, as the philosopher Habermas says; This community has been subdivided into many specific languages that no longer understand each other, like a re-edited Babel. From the first and fundamental cell of the human community, the family, to the great national and international organizations, this phenomenon of human non-communication appears as one of the most serious of our time. Never have there been so many means and so few ends. Never before have we had so many communication possibilities and never at the same time has human communication been so threatened.

This is because language is still the very expression of humanity, with its greatness and limitations. Every human being is and exists thanks to language. To the extent that we are relational beings, we exist in our reciprocal speech. But at the same time, language participates in the human being's creation, finitude and limitation. Of its ambiguity, veiling, muteness. He does not escape sin.

The more human he becomes, the more he becomes aware that he is neither the first nor the last word. He perceives himself referring to a word that is not his own or that of others similar to himself: a word that is truth, power, love and freedom. Faith names this fundamental Word that constitutes human life as the Word of God.

Word and language are, at the same time, power and impotence, revealing the reality of the human as a creature that asks himself at the same time about its foundation as a finite creature, about the relationship between creature and transcendence, and feels the limits of its mortal and perishable finitude that is capable of much more and sees itself trapped at a starting point; who desires the infinite, but cannot free himself from the clutches of the finite and the tyrannies of every day that insist on reducing his possibilities. Being ambiguous, but simultaneously participating in the power to say that which is more significant than itself, the human word - which can express everything - can express God. God is the word of our language, in its greatness and limitation. We can speak of God, though never perfectly.



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Human language is also, and no less so, referred to the world. God is different from the world; He is the non-objective foundation of the world. It can only be "spoken" indirectly through finite realities. All reality, therefore, has a revealing character. But it can only be spoken analogically. For example, when we proclaim, "God is Father," we take the human father as an analogical principle. Still, we are speaking of a fatherhood incomparably different from the human father's.

God can and must also be spoken of and above all in a performative way. The word of God opens and creates reality by speaking, introduces changes, accomplishes, sends. Do what you say and do it. This reality produced by God's word can not only be known, but also recognized, and cannot be held captive to injustice. For otherwise God is spoken, but God Himself does not speak, and His Word is not heard. One can only speak of God because he spoke first of himself in a people's history. And his word continues to resonate, piercing all the silences and illuminating the path of God's people.

The metaphor of the path

*Traveller there is no path / The path is made by walking - By walking the path is made / And by looking back / You see the paths that will never be retreaded. Traveller, there is no way / But stars in the sea. (Song of Solomon)*

When we talk about the path, it is inevitable to remember the verses of the great Spanish poet Antonio Machado:

This word - the way - and the metaphor it contains, wishing to signify the whole of human life, will shape Christianity from very early on. In the early days of its existence, the community of Jesus' disciples was known as "disciples of the way." For Jesus does not teach a philosophy, an ideology, but a path, that is, a road that must be traveled with him, in which one learns only by looking for it, by walking.

And when asked what path to reach his God and Father, Jesus himself answers, "I am the Way." Therefore, the way is his person, his way of acting, thinking, feeling, and listening. In Jesus, the two driving forces of the experience of God meet and mutually involve each other: the Word and the Way/the Word that illuminates the path that must be followed by those who wish to experience God's presence and communion with Him. And this same path, when followed, unveils the mysteries of the Word.

*1. In 1:1-4? "What was from the beginning, what we heard, what we saw with our eyes, what we beheld and touched our hands—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. Life has been revealed; we have seen it and witnessed of it, and we proclaim to you eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. We proclaim what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We write these things so that our joy may be full."*

The Word could be heard, but also seen, touched, felt. The Word became flesh, a person in the carpenter of Nazareth, born of Mary and woman. Unlike the prophets who punctuate their discourse by stating that God speaks through their mouth and not them, Jesus does not make this distinction between God's Word and his own. He is the Word, at the same time that He is the perfect listener. He is the incarnate Word, and in telling his hearers that what had been said to them by the ancients was now said by himself with a different and more excellent radicality, he invokes no other authority than himself. Thus, in Matthew 5, "Ye have heard that which was spoken unto the ancients... But I say unto you..."

That Word that had always illuminated the path of the people of Israel who praised it as "a light unto their steps", as in Psalm 118: "Your word is a torch that lightens my steps, a light on my path." He will





continue to illuminate and lead the way of the first community that would later announce the Good News throughout the known world of that time.

We are pilgrims on this path. Like those on the road to Emmaus, we feel our hearts burn along the way when the Master opens the book of Scripture to us and explains to us the dynamics of salvation and what the destiny of the Messiah should be: *"Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer all these things before he could enter into his glory?"*. (Lk 24:26) We are afraid to see that it walks away, the day declines, and the dark advances. But everything is illuminated again when the bread is broken, the Lord is recognized, and his life is proclaimed to his companions and to every creature.

In today's world, the path of following Jesus presents many challenges. We no longer live in a society where faith is the primary perspective for human life and religion organizes society. We live in a secularized and plural world, where the faith that nourishes us is questioned and questioned at every step. Several ways lie before us, listeners of God's Word and followers of the way of His Son Jesus:

- the path of the experience of the other: At the center of the human experience of faith is not only the subject who knows, that is, the I, but the other, that is, the you or even the he or she. The one who, move themselves towards a journey of knowledge with no previously traced paths and no other security than the adventure of progressive discovery of what something or someone that is not me can bring. He or she who is not me, is not that either (something objectified or reified). Still, someone who addresses me, speaks to me and to whom I respond, to someone else, whose difference imposes itself on me like an epiphany, a revelation. The Christian faith in our times, as in other times, but more than ever, is challenged today to rediscover its place and its paths and look to the human as a necessary way to the divine. Therefore, listening to the word of God inevitably implies listening to the word of other and of the difference that will challenge me from their difference.

- the path of poverty of others and compassion: the face of the poor evokes a path that is inescapable for all those who listen to the Word of God and put it into practice. It brings with it the intertwining of faith and politics, between life in the spirit and transformative action. Both can co-occur, as long as they find their correct point of intersection. Social and political praxis, as recently understood by theology, can also be a space and nourishment for an authentic experience of faith. There has been a way since the time of ancient Israel to live a genuine spiritual experience: the encounter with the Lord in the face of the poor. The practice that results from this is one that has as its sole objective the building of the Kingdom of God. It is a practice, however, that in addition to originating from the most authentic experience of God, develops, nourishes and makes this same experience grow to the extent that it is present in the world. It is a precise way of living "before the Lord" in solidarity with all others. It is possible, therefore, to affirm that the journey of the life of faith can find its origin and its environment in the questioning made by the poverty of the other and by the compassion that it originates. This whole movement is ethical and mystical, since in biblical Revelation and Christianity, the two things are not dissociated. Believing is inseparable from practicing justice and right. To oppress people experiencing poverty and deny bread to the hungry is the most direct and quickest way to idolatry.

- the path of the corporeity of the other: Among the "new subjects" that emerge with questioning force when one speaks of God and the experience of his mystery, there is undoubtedly the woman. Her difference, her otherness, in a universe where the talk about God and the thematization of the experience of this God is made almost exclusively by male subjects, the woman enters as a disturbing element in this speech and this universe. And this "disturbance" takes place, more than anything, through its corporeity which, being "other" than that of man, expresses and signals the experience of God differently and adequately. The female body is the condition of possibility of the path through which the woman becomes an important interpellation when it comes to mystical experience. This body,



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however, has often been the source of the discrimination that women themselves have suffered and still suffer in the Church. Within the framework of this bodily discrimination, there is an influential association with women being responsible for the entrance of sin into the world, and for death as a consequence of sin. Because of her open corporeality, women can evoke and transmit spiritual experiences with which men often have more difficulty. We refer, for example, to the experience of feeling oneself the bride of Christ, of living a spiritual marriage, or to the very central experience of being made fruitful by the Spirit of God, giving new body to his Word and mediating the Incarnation again into the world. Violence against women is still a fact today, in society and also in the Church. Listening to the Word of God certainly helps to open a path of love and reciprocity between men and women, companions on the road to building the Kingdom of God. The corporeality of the other - or rather, of the other - source of so many suspicions and prejudices throughout history, is such an old path, but so new, powerfully illuminating and inspiring for the Christian faith in times of new paradigms where the question of gender presents itself as one of the most central issues.

- the path of others religion: Just as there is something that only the other gender can teach in terms of mysticism, there is also, without a doubt, something that only others religion, in its difference, can teach, or draw attention to: sometimes a point or a dimension that we will discover in our religious experience and of which we had not been aware. About the Jews, in the words of the great Jewish philosopher Levinas, "it is important to build a community that goes beyond the limits of confession and makes possible a civilization built on an interlocution that should be sought in God himself." this God, in whom Jews and Christians believe, is the only One capable of being a bearer of hope amid today's Promethean despair. And while the Jewish hope starts from what is not yet fulfilled and pushes towards its incipient fulfillment, the Christian hope, starting from the fulfillment that believes in Christ, sheds light on what is painfully unfulfilled in man and the world. Everything still needs to be finished, therefore, even for a Christian. And Judaism is more than fundamental for the future of a humanity that, by believing itself saved, may run the risk of having nothing more to hope for. The tradition of Israel, which is also ours, reminds conformists of all kinds that all is not well and not settled. And the dialogue between Jews and Christians cannot be based solely on their common belonging to humanity, to the modern world, to the West. But about something much more significant: the Transcendent Otherness that breaks the silence and reveals itself as the Living Word and allows itself to be hoped for not only as the One who made himself present and gave new meaning to history, nor only as the One who makes himself contemporary and gives contemplation and mystical experience actual conditions of possibility. But also, as the One who comes and who will come, and who will surprise with his coming even those with the most intimate and consoling experiences of him. In the dialogue and the desire for dialogue and encounter between religions, one experiences the laceration between love and truth. Between the unprecedented willingness to go out to meet the other and learn from him things that only the Spirit of God in the other can teach. But to do so without losing the identity of one's own experience and fidelity to it. Fortunately, we must also be more open to each other to learn from each other how to expect this future that we are called to build, but which on the other hand is and will be graciously given to us

- the path of coexistence and communion with all other living beings: The interpretation of the genesis mandate in the direction of an absolute and unlimited primacy of man over nature had, however, different consequences, such as the suspicion of an erroneously individualistic conception of the human being, combined with an omnipotent and overbearing economic and technological determinism. And above all, it led to a vision of nature, the earth, and the cosmos separated from the human, thus splitting God's Creation. Humanity has come to see nature as an enemy to be conquered and destroyed with impunity in the name of rapacious and illicit progress and enrichment. The human being's struggle for



life was then transformed into a threatening and aggressive death instinct that weighs on all other forms of life.

God's revelation in the Scriptures makes him a creator and ardent lover of life. The creation account demonstrates the Creator's unveiling affection and care for the earth. In addition to illuminating it with the sky's lights, He fills it with life, in an immense diversity of forms and species.

The image that emerges from the Genesis story is that of the mother of life. Her remarkable body is the host and generator of life. All living beings, including humans, sprout from her womb, all being made of her substance. Made of the earth, made of the earth, animated by the spirit of God, that we are. We are earth. In the beginning, there is a relationship between us and the earth without distance, without vis-à-vis, and without separation. We are one with her. To live is to live together: the human being does not reign in the universe apart from other living beings. But it is created from plurality and invited to coexistence. And this coexistence concerns not only their fellow human beings, but all living beings. Everything is interconnected, everything and everyone is interdependent. There is no life possible in isolation from oneself or another. Life, to exist, needs to be a co-existence. This is how Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* repeats to us, calling the earth "our common home."

The fundamental Christian attitude that emerges from this is care and not conquest: The human being is not in creation to dominate and conquer the earth. Nor to seek its advantage to the detriment of the other forms of life that exist in it. He is there as responsible for life. And therefore, their attitude must be one of care, protection, cultivation, and development of life in all its forms and configurations. Every life matters, every life must be cared for, even the most fragile and insignificant.

Caring for the earth is inseparably building justice: Restoring harmonious relations between humanity and the cosmos requires overcoming certain deterministic, individualistic and economic concepts. It calls us to recover a notion of life that is so present in the cultures of native peoples, who see the cosmos as an epiphany full of meaning, a manifestation of mystery. An instance that demands reverence and respect. The contemplation of the mystery of the cosmos must not, however, be seen as an ascetic or aesthetic concern born only of idleness but as the expression of a primordial ethical concern: the cosmos must be returned to the men and women who have been stripped of what was theirs and what belonged to them in that cosmos. This restitution accompanies the struggle to give bread to the hungry, shelter to the homeless, and water to the thirsty. All this is a salvific gesture to return the cosmos to all those who have been ousted from it."

Conclusion: Listen to the Word Along the Way

The Church is in synod, that is, on a path of broad listening and integration of all segments and sectors of the ecclesial community. This listening is also part of the plural and multicultural society that ours is today, at a time when, as Pope Francis has already said, we are not living in a time of change but rather a change of epoch.

To faithfully live its identity and mission, the ecclesial community is called to listen deeply to the Word of God from the sources of Revelation: Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church throughout history. But it is also challenged by listening to others for the new paths that the Spirit opens to our eyes in this moment of epochal change.

The Word that stripped Abraham of all his security and threw him into the new unknown is the same that we are called to listen to today, faithful to our vocation to be listeners. As listeners, we are also pilgrims and walkers, listening as we move towards what the Lord indicates and that we only desire without knowing how to name it. Beside us, in front of us and behind us, the brothers and sisters, other



travellers, of another origin, of another language, of another religion, of another kind. And the poor, the unfortunate, the helpless, the unprotected, the vulnerable in all types for whom we are responsible, for whom we respond, listening to their cry and voice that wants to live fully.

These many words of different voices converge in the divine and unique Word that, from the source of life, turns to and speaks to, challenges, invites, and sends us. We follow them as people, relational beings open to otherness. But we don't go alone. Let us go together, men and women, children, the elderly, entire families, microcosms of the great human family that today, as always, is invited to be the image of the tremendous Trinitarian community - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - the original and original communion that creates, redeems and sanctifies us at every step and with every breath.

