

The power of the Resurrection

Earlier this year Random House published a book called *Made to Stick*. It is an interesting analysis of six characteristics that make ideas sticky. It was written to help communicators - from teachers to professional marketers - communicate better. One of these six characteristics is credibility. Credibility is the quality of an idea that makes people believe in it, makes them buy into it. Among the examples the authors give of how to make ideas credible, they mention something that marketers call The Sinatra Test. This comes from Frank Sinatra's famous song, New York, New York. A line from that song that says, "If I can make it there (in New York), I can make it anywhere." The "Sinatra Test" is precisely that - a single example or test case that proves credibility without any room for doubt. For example, the authors explain: if your company is in charge of security at Fort Knox, that's automatic credibility; if your company caters events at the White House, that's automatic credibility. You'll have a very good chance when you bid for other jobs. Christ's resurrection is what makes Christianity pass The Sinatra Test.

Christ didn't die just in appearance. He faced real death. Perhaps one of the clearest depictions of this is a painting by Hans Holbein, the Dead Christ. In other paintings, even the dead Christ appears as glorious, his body surrounded by an aura of light. But in Holbein's painting, the Lord appears as someone whom death has completely crushed, a terrified expression in his face, stiff limbs... upon seeing this painting, Dostoyevsky, the great Russian novelist, was shocked. He contemplated it in silence for several minutes. He then said to his wife: this painting could cause someone to lose his faith.

He said this precisely because death appeared in that picture in all its atrociousness. Not softened or dissimulated. But it is precisely that very real death what Christ defeated. That's passing the Sinatra Test. If He came out triumphant of the worst sufferings, of all that hatred, abandonment, betrayal, scourging, that whole torture that His Passion was, it means that He can redeem us from any suffering, any sin, any evil.

It means that He has the power to give us a new life. This means not only that He promises eternal life after this life, but also that He can quicken with His grace whatever is dead in us now: any thoughts, relationships, loves, good desires... He can transform someone who is lazy and apathetic into a driven person; someone who is shy and not very sociable into someone who can connect with others and develop good friendships; someone who is focused only on work and making money into someone open to God and to spending time with family; someone who is enslaved to vices into a truly free person; someone who is selfish and greedy into a loving and noble person. Isn't that transformation a true resurrection of the soul? Can you imagine what humanity would be like if we could allow Christ to transform us completely in that way? Can you imagine what our families would be like, what our offices and schools and stores would be like? Can you imagine a family where children never fought or disobeyed, husband and wife never argued? Where children and teenagers always trusted their parents and were ready to talk to them? Where parents would dedicate time to their children? Families where

time dedicated to Jesus was a priority? Families open to others and ready to help them in their need? Wouldn't that be the closest thing to heaven?

I remember from watching the movie *Bella* that there is this fascinating moment when Nina, the main character, visits Jose's family. She is utterly amazed at the joy, the conversation, the openness she finds there. Nina's childhood had been pathetic: she hadn't met her dad and her mom spent her life almost like a vegetable in front of the TV because she suffered depression. That was all her family life growing up. She looked at her friend as someone who, in comparison, had been raised in paradise. That difference is the difference between our lives before and after the transformation Christ can bring.

To give just one example: many years ago, in a mission, I met a family who, in my eyes, had no hope. The man was alcoholic and abusive. The woman was constantly distrusting him and depressed. The ambience of the house was just awful. It was one of those situations in which many would recommend them to divorce. What we did is invite them to a retreat, to encounter Christ. And both of them did... I saw the transformation of this family and I couldn't believe it: he stopped drinking and being abusive, she became a joyful woman; they began to pray daily together and to be involved in the church. In fact, they even visited families together, as a way of paying back the blessing they had received. But more than that, you should see how they care for one another! When people meet them now they say: aren't they just a lovely couple! And I, who know the back story, wink at the Lord saying: Lord, you really do the most amazing things! That's the power that the Resurrection brings into our lives. You see, in the Resurrection, reality becomes more wonderful than myth.

The Lord invites us today, on this feast of His Resurrection, to enter the new life he has won for us. And to receive that life means to seek it actively. Sometimes we Christians have a very fatalistic approach to God's guidance. We think: I'll see what plan the Lord has in store for me; I wonder what His will is for me. As if that plan or will were suddenly to fall from Heaven. Christ was Risen, but He manifested himself to those who actively sought after Him, to those who had believed and followed Him in His public life. We have to run to the tomb like Peter and John. That may mean many things: praying daily, reading a good book to learn about my faith, being more involved in the Church, joining a small faith community, going to adoration, forgiving and restoring some relationships, overcoming sins that are dragging me down... Whatever that may be, we need to be proactive in seeking Christ. God's plan is not going to be fulfilled in us without our active, intelligent and willing cooperation.

If you have this resolution, I invite you to pray with me in your heart: Lord, I believe that you rose from the dead to give me new life. I believe that you are alive now, that you are real, that you are listening to me now. I want to seek you, so that your will may be done in me. And to do this, this is my resolution for this Easter time (say it to the Lord). I praise you, Lord, for your victory. I believe you have the power to make me a new person in your image. Clothe me with the power of your Resurrection. Amen.