



## PRINCIPLES OF DEATH, PRINCIPLES OF LIFE

Since I left home at 14, I have not stopped being a gardener. And from what happened to me last week, it is convenient that I put it into writing. On Saturday afternoon, after eating with my

community, Arnaldo suggested we make a visit to the abandoned garden, which is a bit far from our 4th floor. We went down with our tools to carry a little soil and to get new plants for our community. In the end, there were many small, slightly exotic plants there covered by grass. Indeed, it is a neglected garden. I did my best to extract some of them from that habitat and offer them something different. I looked for some pots; I prepared them and planted one by one. Especially this one that you see in the image. When replanting and watering it I said "welcome!"

Arnaldo laughed a little and said, "Why don't you tell to the little plant this is the best place for her?" I replied that I could not and should not. That she, the plant, had to make her experience for herself. I didn't want to lie to her or chew on an experience instead, just like when someone wants to join the congregation we don't tell them to come because this is the best place. No, rather, we open our doors for everyone to have an experience. Well, just two days later, the leaves of this small plant withered noticeably. Viewed from above, it doesn't look good at all. In fact, I thought about my possible failure to move it from its wild environment to our own. Today is the third day in which it was necessary to change the perspective in which I view this "warrior" and seen from below the sprout that comes from the center of the same root is evident and clearly visible.

This is what gives me so much encouragement: in the face of the obvious principles of death that confront us, it is possible, if we change our perspective, to find what in reality are principles of life. Today, because the corona virus causes us to keep our distance, without classes at the university, one tends to react like my little plant: we get upset, we think that "it's not so bad", that "those are pure tales -fake news". And we see with as much ease as with superficiality that our "leaves" decay quickly because we cannot leave, nor use transport, nor travel. Governments take care of their peoples by closing borders and airports; or those who get out of control and run to empty the food centers. It bothers us that they change our environment this drastically, in this manner, so unexpectedly. It seems we are forced to live longer with those members, married couples in their apartments, brothers or sisters in religious communities.

We like to be informed, influenced by opinions, and even adapt with some ease, even annoying. But there is still something to do: that after the three previous steps we allow ourselves to be "recreated" by the delicate situation. It sounds funny that here among us, that we are twenty brothers of community who are in a continuous reconfiguration to maintain an active and healthy life. Yesterday we started taking food at a greater distance. A maximum of two or three brothers for each table. In fact a small group has to go to the room next to the dining room. And what to say about our cooks; they cannot come because nobody can leave their house. We have made a list and everyone is free to cook for the community. We who made vows to serve the poor

would like to do pastoral care, and today we are all asked to stay home. There are not even any public Mass celebrations in the city.

Here we are recreating each other. I am getting to know my brothers more, I see them more and I see them better. We laugh more and know what we think. I didn't know, for example, that Arnaldo cooked is a good cook. From eating all together to eating separately invites me to open myself to personal and direct communication. We have the time to better prepare our liturgies and celebrations. Or it may happen that there are those who only stay informed and isolated as long as possible not to get infected, not to die, especially when one needs to get some vegetables from the shop.

There are small gestures that show us that we are *flourishing*, and that in this delicate situation there are too those who suffer, and there are signs of life in our midst. A virus is mobilizing us all to recreate our social, family, and community environments for the better. It is true that it is not the end of the world. But will it be good to imagine what will happen when the virus has passed; will we have a better reality? Will I have a better relationship with my brothers, with my parents, with my neighbors? Maybe we still don't see the new shoots, but like this *little one* in our garden, it only requires a change of perspective and the ability to let ourselves be recreated and not just be informed.

From Europe, at least here in Rome we all celebrate Saint Joseph, following his example of silence. It is curious that the city lives this stillness, without so much movement of transport. From this silence, from this quietness, we pray and offer our celebrations for those who have lost their lives, and for all those willing to participate and receive Holy Communion.

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