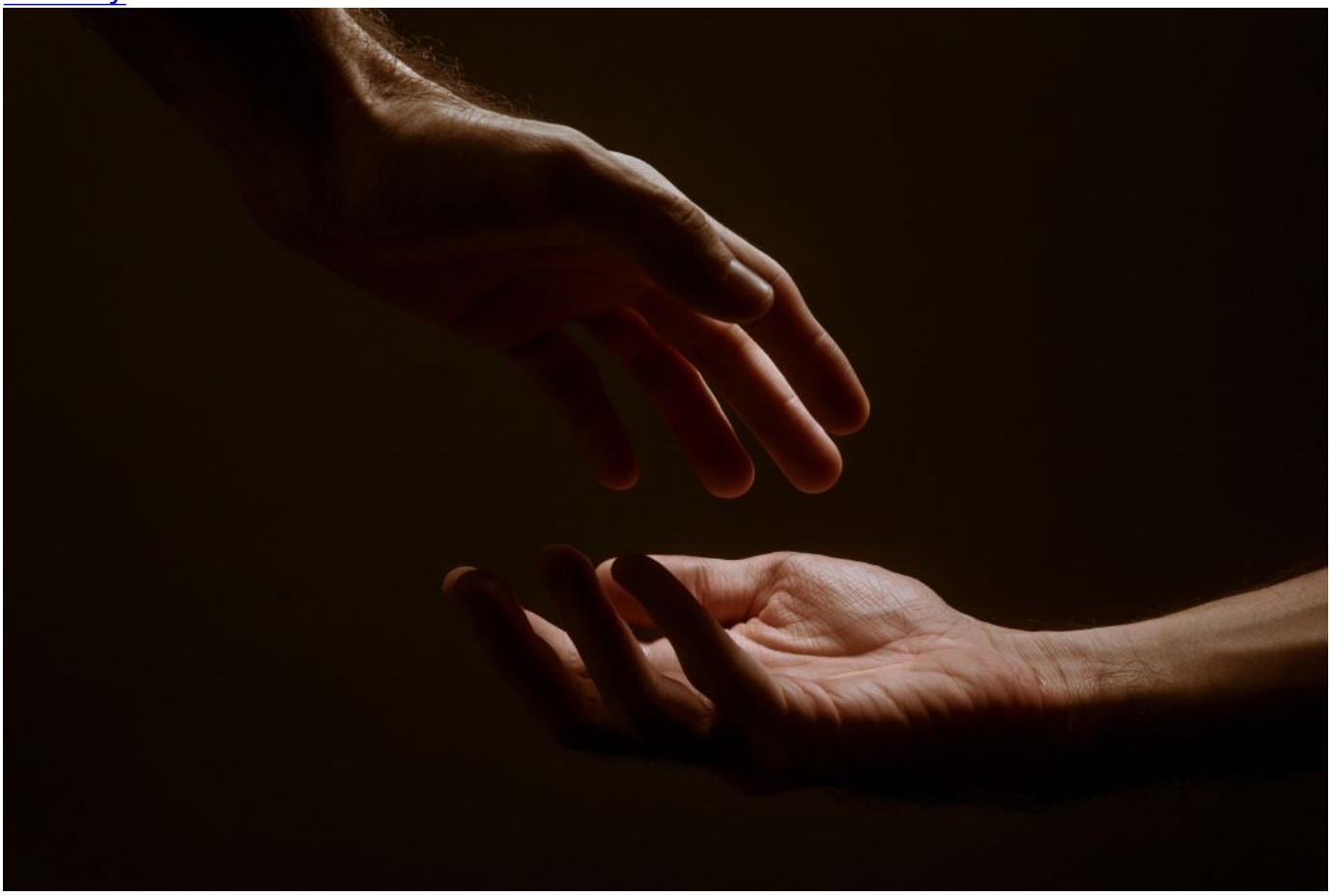
Columns
Ministry



(Unsplash/Jackson David)

by Ana Siufi

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

July 24, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Who has not experienced the anguish of uncertainty? Even Mother Teresa of Calcutta doubted; she once wrote about this: "In my own soul, I feel a terrible pain. I feel that God does not love me, that God is not God, and that He does not truly exist." This feeling accompanied her for many decades, as she wrote in her letters.

And perhaps it accompanies us. However, we know that doubt is part of our life, the dark night of the mystics.

The apostles also experienced uncertainty in abandoning Jesus when he was condemned. They fled Jerusalem in fear and later assembled outside the city with locked doors. Locking doors revealed fear, anxiety and a defensive state. However, they remained together, until Jesus appeared before them, because they were a community united by him — despite their fears, questions and weaknesses — and because, for Jesus, locked doors did not exist. They had to recognize in his wounds that the same Jesus, whom they had seen crucified and dead, had now risen. They had to recognize the One who lived and lives in God, the One who showed them that, after failure, it was possible to begin again.

On that first day of a new creation, Jesus breathed the Spirit into them, the life of God within each one, recreating the moment when God, in Genesis, breathed into the first human being, newly made of clay, the spirit of life.

Jesus, who was transformed, now has the power to transform us as well. From now on, his friends will be enlivened by that astonishing experience, and by the Spirit who represents the transforming power of love, peace and forgiveness.

Christian community members can offer and receive these gifts of the Spirit in moments of difficulty or infidelity in life. It is essential to preach "Life" with a capital letter and the love, peace and forgiveness in each one and the community. It is imperative to preach the reign of God to the whole world.

Advertisement

Thomas, the apostle, also experienced uncertainty because he did not believe what his companions told him; he needed to see Jesus in order to have that experience of encounter. The Gospel text says that, while the doors were still closed, Jesus appeared and, showing Thomas his wounds, made him touch them. Then Thomas surrendered and expressed his faith, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God! (John 20:28) And Jesus' response speaks of a profound faith: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). So, blessed are those who discover in the signs the reality that is revealed. The faith spoken of here is that of a community that embraces, in heart and deed, the person of Jesus, and is faithful to His values.

Now, Thomas also awakens and finds Jesus in the center of his own heart; he trusts, surrenders, is reborn and rises with the One who tells us: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if they die, will live" (John 11:25). We can say that the resurrection of Jesus began during his life when he did good, freed the oppressed, recognized himself as Son of God and loved to the end.

Jesus teaches us that we can be dead in many ways: through hatred and self-hatred; violence or indifference to those who suffer; false relationships; addictions and consumerism; inner blindness or paralysis, ambition for power or money; a sense of superiority; or relationships of exploitation with people or nature.

And yet, we believe that we can rise with Jesus and that our faith in love can free us from the bonds of death. This is because we already experience Resurrection and Life. Living as "daughters of love" here and now frees us from self-centeredness, and gives us new hope and strength on our journey.

A great example of this transformation is St. Oscar Romero. He was fearful and comfortable, but he found Jesus, present among the poor and persecuted, and was transformed by love. Being transformed, Romero rose from the dead and began to take risks, accompany the crucified, denounce injustice and preach the Reign of God, even to the point of giving his life.

It is crucified men and women, with the suffering and powerlessness in their wounds and scars, and in ours, who show us the saving power of God. The faithful love of God invites us to be "de-crucifiers," and to dream and work for a world where no one is crucified and where all have the same rights. We must place ourselves in the context of those who suffer. We must make their sufferings and hopes our own, defend them and join their struggles with compassion. We must shake off our comfort, distractions or indifference that keeps us locked up, as if in a tomb; these tombs must remain empty.

Faith in Jesus implies believing that each of us has been given Resurrection and the Life in Jesus, that we are daughters and sons of God, even if we also experience the crosses that come our way.

Believing does not consist in submitting one's life to a dogma or a particular ideology, nor in maintaining a cult-like spirit. Faith in Jesus requires us to embrace his integrating and inclusive project as our own, and to work to eliminate violence and all discrimination and injustice.

Taking a stand for the marginalized means taking responsibility for being caretakers of their lives and assuming the consequences of this commitment. In these dark and uncertain times, we need the courage to sow seeds of hope against all despair, and to carry the cross of those persecuted by this system of profit and death that favors all types of abuse, injustice and war in the name of the god of money.

May Jesus help us to "live on the sacredly human side of life" (as a song said). Let us remember that, through the cross of the poor, the mystery of love, life, eternity, justice, and peace is revealed to us. Therefore, let us live in unity with the poor, the downtrodden, and those hated by the system, and let us listen to their cries! They evangelize us!

Beatitudes of the de-crucifiers

Blessed are those who:

- believe because they have seen with their hearts the presence of Jesus in every situation.
- take down from the cross those who have been crucified and help them to rise from the dead.
- are compassionately encouraged to touch wounds to soothe or heal them.
- can shrink their ego by being reborn from the Spirit of Love, peace, and forgiveness.
- present themselves to others as they are, without masks and showing their wounds.
- truly live what they preach.
- can follow in the steps of Jesus by being with the last ones and letting themselves be evangelized by them.
- understand that we are part of a living earth and care for vulnerable human life and that of every ecosystem.
- trust that each person is life and Resurrection like Jesus.

Blessed be the community that values differences and seeks to transform itself to be more faithful to Jesus. Amen.