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(Testo in Lingua Inglese)

In the Hellenism, the word “Martyr” meant the witness who bore evidence a propos of a truth given not only with the simple verbal affirmation, but above all, through the participation of all their life. To give to the word “Martyr” the meaning of evidence – given to Christ in the church and in front of the world – were the persecution of the “Faith”. These persecution have characterized the first centuries of the Christian era, and above all the awareness of the meaning of the Christ’ s death. The same Jesus told: “*nobody has a love bigger of this: to give the life for his friends*” (GV 15,13).

In this rich and following meaning, the word “Martyr” is the Christian, disciple of Christ who knows of belonging to him. The Christian follows Christ’s footsteps till the end of his life. He knows of being supported by the force of the Spirit.

Many people can consider this meaning restrictive because it has defined only in its religious aspects. In this moment we can make some questions: can we extend the concept of Martyr beyond of the ecclesiastical circle and of faith? How can we recognize the Martyrs today?

The positive answer to the first question seems certain only if, in connection to the original meaning of the word “Martyr” we identify some constants which qualify the “Martyr”.

However it isn’t correct to leave off the following christian meaning that is Christ as model of all “Martyrs”. Christ, who gave his life on the cross for love of God and his brothers. Who takes Christ Crucified as model for his life “*can be a Martyr but he will not be a jailer*” (MnD 26). These were the words of Giovanni Paolo II. When we move the word “Martyr” away from the paradigmatic reference to Christ, it risks to identify, as often today happens, people who commit actions which are against the man and law of love.

If the force that pushes the “Martyr” to give his is the love for God and the brothers, in that case the Martyr can be identified, far from the Faith, only through the availability to give his life, without renouncing to the solidarity and to the involvement with the human cause, defending the valours, for example the justice, which represent the slightest love.

In this case we speak about “availability to give the life” because the word “Martyr” identifies not only the hero that sheds his blood for the above-mentioned motives, but also who consecrates his way of living as evidence of determinated valours, leaving out of consideration the concrete bloodshed.

So “Martyr” is the man that affirms in his way of behaving the high dignity of his being in fraternal relationship with his fellows and, for Christians, in relationship with the Christ. Who that “unveils the man to himself and manifests him his highest vocation” (GS 22).

Reflecting on the martyrdom, the contemplation of the human reality touches one of the highest point.

Only the artistic expression or masterpieces of life like Massimiliano Kolbe, Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi can express the true meaning of the word martyrdom in a way certainly not reductive even if not exhaustive. This happens because the man able to love – his own brother and even his own enemy – is a infinite mistery like the mistery of God.

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