



SIEBENQUELL

Reflection on Isaiah 49, 3-6

»It is too little that you should be my servant«



QUELLENANGABE: ROSEMARIE MONNERJAHN, DUBLIN 2013

I recently read a novel in which a project leader and his team were forging a plan. An ancient story then develops. After a long period of planning, they execute their plan, but while carrying it out, they notice that it is not enough, it needs more, and their undertaking is insufficient. The plan comes up short.

And now a familiar scene unfolds. As soon as the team members notice that the plan is insufficient, they members divide into two factions. Each faction follows a different course of action.

The first faction chooses the path of resignation. It is not worthwhile to change anything and it is too late. The second faction decides on a second course of action, namely, to stay on course and carry on. They refuse to change anything, because it is too strenuous and probably too late. Sometimes we choose this path, because we do not want to admit that any change is necessary. We do not want to lose face. Occasionally we do nothing, because we are afraid of the recriminations. Who is to blame? Who screwed up the plan? Who was sloppy in the preparations?

However, although no one on the story chooses a third option, there is one. We can take the newly won insight that it is not enough and take it as an occasion to broaden the plan.

This story plays itself out repeatedly in many human situations. Yet, what would it look like if God was the one who had this experience while forging his plans? This is precisely the point in the text of the prophet Isaiah.

God has an original plan for his people. In this plan Israel is to be his servant. The mission of this servant is clearly delineated: he is to reveal the glory of God; he should insure that the people return to God; and he should gather the scattered people together again.

Now the fascinating turn in the plot comes, as God notices that his plan for his people is insufficient. »It is too little that you should be my servant...« It is too little for God that his people should merely »raise up the tribes of Jacob«. It is too little for God that his people should only be employed in »restoring the preserved of Israel«.

God, however, does not become resigned, nor does he simply carry on as if nothing has happened. God takes the realization that it is too little as an opportunity to broaden his plan and our mission. And it is a twofold broadening. First, God undertakes a broadening of our vocation (you should not be a servant but light), and secondly a broadening of our responsibility (you should be here for all peoples not just for your people, all the way to the ends of the earth).

This story of a twofold broadening of our vocation and responsibility is known by Pallottines throughout the world, for it is the story of Vincent Pallotti's heartfelt desire. Until this day, we proclaim this broadening to a Church that does not seem to notice that God has undertaken it. There are those in the Church who carry on as if this broadening does not exist. It is just fine with them if Christians see themselves as servants, but then as servants of the Church rather than as servants of God. And there are those in the Church who want nothing to do with this broadening, because it demands of them a mighty change of plan and a tremendous re-thinking.

The broadening of our vocation, of our calling, means, that I am not merely a servant who carries out the orders of others. I am light. Light shines: it does not merely reflect. I am called to radiate that which God has made me, not merely to reflect that with others have entrusted me.

Light gives perspective and clarity in the darkness. I am personally s perspective and clarity.

Light is a point of orientation. I am called to live in such a way that others can orientate themselves by my life.

Light assists in navigation, as the sun and the stars have done from the beginning of time. I am called to help people find the paths of life.

In the face of this broadening of our vocation there are those in the Church who do not trust us to achieve this and who say, that we should leave it to the professionals. And there are those in the Church who say, it is too much to ask. It is always easier to be a servant who carries or even ignites a light, that to be the light.

The second broadening of our responsibility means, that we are called for all peoples. Our responsibility does not end when we have cared for ourselves. Furthermore, the scope of our responsibility has been expanded to the very ends of the earth, not just for our familiar and comfortable surroundings. In a world of the globalisation of indifference, we have here God's original and healthy form of globalisation, Pallotti's globalisation of care and co-responsibility.

Again there are those who do not trust us to do this and who say that we should leave it to the professionals. And there are those who say, this broadening of responsibility is too great a challenge.

Do I even want more responsibility? Up to the end of the street is at time already too much, but to the ends of the earth? Then we will know ourselves responsible for everything that happens between where we stand and the ends of the earth.

Then we can no longer say that Syria is far away and Egypt is not our country. Then we can no longer claim that migrants are a problem for the politicians. Then we can no longer say that refugees are not our concern simply because they land in Lampedusa and not in Munich. Then we will exercise this responsibility in our choices, be it at the polls where decide to whom we will entrust our concern, or bei t the choice of what we purchase, how much we consume and from whom we buy it. This broadened responsibility will show itself in our sharing. What will I give up so that others can live? Where will I make room so that others can have a little space? How do I live today, so that there is even a world left over in which my children can live?

The globalization of indifference is rightly criticised, but Pallotti offers a clear alternative in his globalisation of care and co-responsibility. Indifference arises with ease when we say that we are not responsible. You need to ask those in charge! That is the advantage of the servant. The servant will never be allowed to make the decisions, but he or she will also never be held responsible for what happens.

God does not choose resignation. He does not simply carry on. God takes the realisation that it is too little as an opportunity to broaden his plan with and for us. Will we allow him to take us into this twofold broadening of our vocation and responsibility? This is the ultimate unmasking. God wants to take off our mask of servitude and entrust to us his world in all our greatness and beauty.

Erik Riechers SAC

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