

AN UTTERLY SURE LIGHT



The key to every discussion about eternal life is without a doubt the theme of hope—a virtue in very short supply today in a world that seems unable to inspire this virtue, indeed which seems to discourage people by offering them prospects that fuel their anxiety. But it is hope that gives “breath” to our daily life. As St. Thomas says, hope is not the expectation of something we are unsure about receiving, but of something we can be utterly sure we will receive, even though it cannot be obtained on our own. Hope is God’s gift to me. Christian hope is the hope of Christ dwelling within me, leading me to eternal life. “Christ in us: our hope of glory,” says St. Paul.

Speaking about death is taboo today: not the death of high-profile figures who are always un-der the scrutiny of the public and whose deaths are often turned into a media show, but the hidden and humble deaths of people close to me, of people dear to me, of my own death. In reality, it is great wisdom to reflect on death so as to relish the present moment to the full.

It is important to think about death. Looking it in the face, I see the spectrum of my whole life, from beginning to end. Contemplating the conclusion of my life compels me to be myself. Theologian Carlo Molari says that when death arrives, it asks the person: “What did you become? Did you become yourself?” When confronting a Christian, it asks: “Did you grow to the full stature of Christ?”

Death and identity are closely linked. Those who aren’t concerned about death don’t know who they are. Before she died, St. Therese of the Child Jesus said she was entering the light. This “entrance into light” is the consequence of a life lived in the truth of who one is. In re-counting the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, the Gospel of John declares that “whoever lives the truth comes to the light.” This means that those who read their lives with the eyes of Christ (this is the truth: the news that we are in the light of Christ) move toward the light, clarity and simplicity of their profound vocation to be totally themselves.

What will become of us? Faith tells us that our destiny is Christ: to be in him. This can be de-duced from a very simple divine attribute: *God is love*. According to John, love is the sub-stance of God: he created us out of love and his love does not run out like sand in an hour-glass. It does not change. It lasts forever. So we can be *utterly* sure of this light.

To the degree we adopt the perspective that everything is light, then death too can illuminate our horizon. It makes us wise here and now by helping us understand that a sunny day is life; contradictions are life. It enables us to see that there is no such thing as life opposed to non-life. Instead, everything is and always will be *life*. The important thing is knowing how to take situations that seem to be death and transform them into life.

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