

(English translation)

Rocca di Papa, 20 October 1983

You are everything, I am nothing

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We should always be mindful of the infinite distance that exists between God and us, as between everything and nothing.

The saints, those great Christian men and women, were always aware of this; and the prayer to God that often welled up from their hearts was: "I am nothing and You are everything." The fruit of this was, that at a certain point in their lives, they found that their nothingness had been filled by the One who is Everything: God had entered their hearts with his fullness. Having made themselves nothing, they even participated in his glory. We should heed the example of these truly fulfilled Christians, and do as they did.

I remember that at the beginning of the Focolare, wanting to imitate the saints, we often used to go to Jesus in the tabernacle, and declare repeatedly that he was everything and we were nothing. We did this especially before speaking in public, so that it would not be ourselves giving the others empty human words, but God in us speaking to their hearts. And I can't forget how often he heard our prayer - so often, that I am sure this is one of the reasons why, from the very beginning, the Focolare has been continually spreading.

We must continue to have this attitude toward God, telling him at every opportunity that we are nothing and he is everything. But above all, we must show by our lives that we are convinced that we are nothing.

Through the various spiritualities that have made the Church beautiful down through the centuries, the Holy Spirit has suggested many ways by which Christians can learn to "live" their nothingness. For some the way is to constantly strive to deny themselves and practice acts of mortification - sometimes great acts of mortification. Others strive to extinguish all their "appetites," desires, and so on, so as to experience the "*nada*" (nothing) St. John of the Cross speaks of.

As for ourselves, while we must be mindful of the need for self-denial, we must go about it in a particular way. We are to reach the experience of our own nothingness by focusing our attention on God and his will, and on our neighbour - making his or her worries, sufferings, problems, and joys, our own. In other words, by loving.

If we love in every present moment, then without realizing it, we are acknowledging our own nothingness. And, since we will be living our nothingness, our life will be affirming God's superiority; the fact that he is everything. Simultaneously, however, because we are nothing, as a result of loving in the present moment, God will immediately share himself with us; and so we will be "nothing" of ourselves and "everything" because of him.

So let's resolve for the next two weeks, to make God's will our will - his will insofar as we know it and have planned for it; and also his unforeseen will, that is manifested to us day by day, hour by hour. If we live this way, it will no longer be just our prayers telling Him, "*You are everything, I am nothing,*" but our very lives will cry it out.

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