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WORLD FORUM
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC
JULY 17, 2022

Dear friends,

When you invited me to preside the opening Mass of your Forum, I read the agenda, and the presentation of the various speakers. I perceived a permanent concern about the way to deal with the “future” in what is clearly a change of time. Obviously, it appears that you are firmly decided to discover -or even, maybe- to “dominate” this “unknown” of such future, and, in order to achieve so big a challenge, your discussions about what you call an “Inspirational Paradigm” will certainly be quite interesting.

What is at stake, is, as you say, “the future of Jesuit education”. “Education” is the key concept in a time when it is more difficult to communicate to new generations what is truly needed to “ignite human splendor at work” (cfr. Intervention of Inma Martinez).

What is such a “human splendor” to be ignited “at work”, that is in the hearts and lives of those who are called to be the actors and participants of such work?

As you all know, God speaks to us in all circumstances we are living in. This afternoon, precisely at the beginning of this Forum, we heard the passage of the Gospel of Luke about the encounter between the Jesus and Martha. We are invited to meditate on the words that filled the heart of Martha: “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.” (Lk 10:41-42).

Is not Jesus introducing in her life a new “Inspirational Paradigm”? Can we identify it?

Obviously, when Martha heard such words, putting the accent on the reproof she perceived in them: “Martha, calm down, you’re too agitated for a thousand things. Don’t disturb your sister. Let yourself be educated by your sister’s relationship with Me. You who always think you are, and above all, have to be best and most indispensable”, this increased her agitation with feelings of resentment and sadness.

But Jesus did not respond with a condemnation. He wanted to reach her, in the same way that He had reach out her whole family with a core message: “There is need of only on thing”. This is the word Jesus wanted to penetrate into her heart, so she might assimilate it, so it could do her good, do good to her life, heal it, save it, unify it from dispersion.

The meaning of this word is Christ Himself, the meaning of Christ for Martha, the gift of Christ for Martha, which is already a shared gift even before Martha becomes aware of it. The meaning of this message is that only Jesus responds to the fundamental desire of the heart and of life: the desire of unity, the desire to find a meaning that holds everything together, that keeps us all together, that saves communion, a unity that embraces everything and everyone.

Jesus offers Martha the word that puts everything together again in the one thing needed, which is Jesus Himself, as a gift already present and shared, as a gift that He gives everyone.

Mary had already welcomed this gift. Maybe also her brother Lazarus. The Virgin Mary had been the first to receive it ...but also John the Baptist, Elizabeth, Joseph, the shepherds of Bethlehem, Simeon and Anna, the Magi, Andrew and John, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, Matthew the publican, Mary Magdalen, and other women following him.

And us, you and I?

In his first Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium", at the number 7, Pope Francis tells us that "Sometimes we are tempted to find excuses and complain, acting as if we could only be happy if a thousand conditions were met". "To some extent this is because our 'technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy'".

Is that not the reason why we have so easily, in this country and in our Church, fallen into the trap of looking for the kind of security offered by the ideological systems we have created, and which have made of us soldiers of cultural wars?

At the end of the same paragraph, Pope Francis likes to repeat the words of Benedict XVI "which take us at the very heart of the Gospel:

"Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction".

Allow me to quote the following number 8: "Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?"

Dear friends, please keep in mind these two paragraphs, I am convinced they will help you elaborate the "Inspirational Paradigm", able to shape the future, while igniting in us and in the world the "human splendor", fruit of an encounter with a person which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

Amen.