

TESTIMONY – 4. “GENERATING TRACES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD”

We have so many encounters in our life, but only some of them earn “the right to be called an ‘event’ in the full sense of the term” (Generating Traces—Worksheet 4). These are exceptional encounters that “force” us to ask ourselves where they come from, to think of their origin. From this encounter begins a story that changes us; it is the beginning of faith. This is what happened to a friend who just had to ask a man he met by chance how that man came to be the way he was.

And what about us? Among so many encounters, do we have a simple and curious heart that looks for the origin, or do we content ourselves with the surface-level impressions that these encounters suggest?

Sometime ago, I was in a crisis because I totally ruined a project I had to turn in. I looked for stationary shops on Sunday and end up at one that wasn't far from my house. When I got there I saw the shutters halfway closed. I knocked on the door and an African man told me that the store had just changed management and now belonged to his wife. I asked him to help me and he said yes. We stayed there making changes to the project and I noted right away that he had an incredible humanity, because of his openness in helping me or because of the fact that he was ready to learn a few computer commands from me, who am fifteen years younger, and thanking me for this.

We finished after an hour of work. I asked him how much I owed him and he told me that the cash register was closed. Then I asked him to go get some coffee. He told me a little about himself and I asked him why he was so kind to me. He answered that he saw I had a task to do, and that today it was his turn to help me, but tomorrow maybe it would be someone else's turn to help him. After this I asked him if he was a Christian, and he said that he was very much one.

At that point we started to tell each other about our lives; it was like he was one of my dearest friends. He told me that he understood God was at work because up until an hour before we had never seen each other, but despite this, he had an incredible freedom with me. He said goodbye and asked me to come back and see him.

In the days before, I had asked myself why I was going through a time when I didn't see this Mystery we always talk about, and I had heard at Mass: “Blessed are the simple [pure] of heart for they shall see God”; and I have to admit that with this new friend I was simple. I was struck by him and so I asked him about his life. I understood that this Mystery can happen with everyone, now. So now I continue to beg with simplicity.