

**FAITH EDUCATION
AND INTEGRAL FORMATION
(2/2)**

Brother Paulo Dullius

4. Emerging anthropological aspects.

Up until now we have seen, following the Genesis narrative that God made all things good and that he created humankind in his image and likeness. The question that we are faced with now is, if this is only a single story or if we can learn something more profound, that is to say, about a relationship concerning God and humankind.

There is a positive answer to this question. In fact, it is important for us to see what type of ministries we are carrying out. It is also important to analyze and appraise the order followed by God himself. It all began with light (symbol of the reality of his presence that is perceived by us), water, earth, sun...and it ended up with the creation of humankind. In this there is a qualitative and sequential rationale which is at the same time an anthropological and contextual process.

God started with material reality. This reality is the first thing that we face on a day-by-day basis, at least if we take our feelings as a reference point. But it also reflects the values in our innermost being, in our heart. There exists a material reality outside of ourselves (world, nature...) and also within ourselves (our body). It is well made like the bodies of other human beings. Within this we perceive, above all, the concept of what it means to be "well made". It is up to us to develop the same spirit with which God created it and to establish, on our part, structures of respect for the body.

Faith education begins with and is carried out by means of the mediation of the body, by being reconciled with its departures from the original purpose for which it exists. Around the body there is a material structure that needs to be maintained as being "well made" or those elements that "are no longer good" need to be made right. God put man in contact with nature in a harmonious manner, beginning with our own bodies. We know that state of existence as "paradise" and for that there is both a sense of loss and a sense of hope. There is a sense of loss with regard to the memory reference of the original intent of God; there is

hope in terms of the task for which we are all responsible, especially those teachers who are privileged to be familiar with it both intellectually and emotionally.

As God created humankind, he said to the couple "Grow and multiply". The order that God gives is first "grow"; that is to say, "try, first of all, to be adults". That puts us into contact with ourselves and those around us in terms of the commitment to growth; that is to say, of developing within ourselves an ever-present love, of awakening and developing our capacity to know, to live with one another, to make decisions that favor truth and the common good, starting from a reference point that is more lasting. This reference point was revealed to us by God himself in the person of Jesus Christ. He, Luke tells us, grew in age (physical level), in wisdom (intelligence, knowledge of being the Messiah, of restoring the original form of relationships, in a value system, in the ability to interpret intellectual laws), and in grace (spiritual level, the ability to know and to opt for the will of God). What he says about Jesus serves also as a pedagogical method: to grow on the intellectual and spiritual levels. All of this follows a rhythm that is in part chronological but also anthropological.

After the "grow" came the "multiply", which in the reality of faith education means an apostolic commitment, that of conveying to others the identity obtained after "growing".

The Bible also tells us that God was a very close acquaintance of Adam and Eve: he conversed with them especially as night fell. Adam and Eve also conversed with him. This type of speaking derives from all that preceded: being good with themselves and with the Creator. This "speaking with God" is also a celebrated rite: they used to speak with him, generally at nightfall (at a special time, different from other times) and the dialogue had a specific content.

While an equilibrium was maintained between being in a physical paradise, following a growth pattern and allowing God to be the ultimate reference point for dialogue, everything "was good" and what was being done was also "well done".

Through this we learn that the equilibrium maintained itself by creating, maintaining and recovering structures on three levels.

One of the goals of the faith teacher consists in first making himself similar to God, acting as he would act, being attentive to the surrounding reality, especially to persons, in order that the structure, the quality and the equilibrium of the aspects that make up the human reality be maintained.

This interest converted into action is the "grow" and "multiply" process.

5. From the basis of the spiritual level.

The spiritual level is more demanding than the physical level or the psychic level and it is that which defines the quality of the other two. Therefore, it is the first that should be taken care of. The disfiguration of the three levels, as it appears in Genesis, came about as a result of something significant that happened at the spiritual level: “You will be like God, you will be Gods”. This temptation brought about the fall of Adam and Eve and changed everything at that very moment in the overall view of life and its circumstances.

Today this temptation translates into self-sufficiency, abandonment of the spiritual area, the relativity of values, egocentrism, undue exploration of the physical, intelligence manipulation, degradation of human relationships, hedonistic decisions, the rejection of history and its values, the denial of tradition, projection and transference to external realities (such as the country, the society...) of the responsibility of the general malaise (“it was the serpent who gave it to me”)...

The faith educator has the privilege and the responsibility of centering his energies on the spiritual level. It is his responsibility to seek out spiritual values, clarify them, experience them and, based on them, to reinterpret affective relationships, cognitive content and the customary guidelines in making decisions. It is also up to him to clarify and discern the true moral use of material reality, nature as well as persons in terms of those who possess a body and also the use of material goods.

The faith educator’s task is to contribute to the continuing appraisal of true “growth” in all its senses, updating, for the world of today, the new forms of seeing things of a corporeal nature, the conquest of nature, the new forms of human expression, the various ways of accessibility to God and to material realities, etc.

In this sense, the Genesis narrative is enlightening and serves as a type of continuing discernment. In all of this, the faith educator is privileged but also has the corresponding responsibility. It is necessary to accept and to live this in a responsible way both as an individual and as part of a community.

6. They lived happily, they knew good and evil and they decided to live harmoniously with God...

The content of the experience of Adam and Eve illustrates some other important facts about the human experience. They lived happily, in harmony with themselves, with nature and with the Creator. Happiness is a satisfying experience that is the result of a way of life: in harmony with nature, with themselves, with others and with the Creator.

So happiness is not a goal but the result of the expe-

rience of living according to the original nature of human life. Since happiness is something that is very much sought after, the biblical narrative shows us the way to reach it. Essentially it is an experience which is linked to a way of understanding: the name given to all animals (knowledge), rules for living, life guidelines (knowledge of the tree of knowing good and evil), and also it involves a decision to continue living in friendship with God.

The existential change began in a question proposed to one’s intelligence (why don’t you eat the fruit from all the trees?), but this also refers to the general meaning of life. This question led to a distinct decision and an opposite quality and it ended up as a negative experience. This process reminds us of the importance of the emotional component of the intellect and at the same time of the responsibility involved in making our decisions.

In general any intervention in human potential causes an alteration in the other two. This intervention can be planned or it can be spontaneous when it comes into contact with reality.

The faith educator is aware of this. From this the importance of keeping in mind in his growth and in his educational work the necessity of carrying out meaningful experiences based on the spiritual level naturally follows. It is also important to have access to and allow others to have access to positive items on the spiritual level and to find the best ways and methods to make decisions that are in accord with the meaning of and are based on spiritual values.

All of this demands an objective and clear plan in terms of references, goals, results, practices, etc.

7. Conclusion.

The Genesis text has allowed us to always appraise our own “growth” continually and that of our students. It also invites us to think at all times about the totality of the person as seen on three different levels and with forms and potential that are inherent to human behavior.

Also the Genesis text offers us inspiration and it is a reference point about true happiness, about a harmonious way to live with nature, with ourselves, with others and with the Creator. Living in this way, we repeat the “way of being” which is proper to God and it will be able to be said of us that “all things were done well”.

So the reality, the task and the commitment of the faith educator is as follows: he is the alternative and he takes care to point out the path to those who need guidance, to the weak, to those who have not found it in a definitive way and to those who have been seduced by the serpent. •