

Scaffolding hope



It's a Friday morning, after a busy week, a cloudy day that seems unsure whether to linger a little longer in winter or move on. I've just arrived at the office. My laptop is already on and my screen displays a long list of emails, waiting impatiently. But I let my mind wander for a moment and look outside. I take a look, because something is happening today, down there on the parking lot. For months, they formed my view: tall, large, grey scaffolding that hid the rear of our familiar St Michael's Church from view. Poles, planks, tarpaulin, with workers clambering and hammering, scraping and sanding, dressed in fluorescent vests and speaking in unknown tongues. Perhaps, just like you, I walked past them all that time, often without paying them any mind. It became a habit, a sight we no longer noticed. Scaffolding, large and imposing, which we no longer even noticed. As if they were a matter of course and, paradoxically, yet always temporary ...

Yes, everything passes. Today, they are being dismantled, once again, pole by pole and plank by plank. I see it and watch it, from behind my window. Two men, in no hurry, methodically and carefully dismantle plank by plank and reveal, bit by bit, what had been protected and hidden for months. Slowly, what was concealed appears: the stone, no longer dull and grey, but a soft pale yellow. The round arches sharp once more, the cracks and fissures healed, the masonry reborn. An

old church, centuries-old, comes to life again, as it were: familiar and yet completely different, as if it were rediscovering itself.

My gaze reaches a little further to the stately, old tree that stands there — perhaps not quite as long as the church, but far longer than most of us — patiently growing and blossoming, without us doing much for it or even noticing it. Its lower branches bend downwards; they form an arch and reach upwards. I don't know if you've ever seen that... As if it were saying: "Come and rest here for a moment, sit down, sway gently with the wind, but keep your gaze lifted. Plus est en vous!" From my window, I cannot yet see the buds of spring clearly, but I know it. Deeply rooted in the earth lies its strength. And soon, as every spring, buds will sprout and its life force will become visible once more. Year after year, unperturbed — untouched by our haste or our fear, by our worries or pain, or even by our boundless joy or happiness — it grows, it grows stronger, and it trusts in the return of spring. And that spring comes, just as unperturbed, comforting in its constancy.

My musings bring me to our faculty. Here too, something is emerging, not something new out of nothing. But just like the church or just like the tree, from ancient roots towards new life: reborn in its strength, yearning for healing where cracks and fissures have appeared, yet time and again revealing what has been and still is essential, for six hundred years now. Six hundred years of thinking things through, pondering, groping in the dark, cautiously surmising, reaching out to touch what cannot always be put into words... It requires deep roots. It does not simply disappear. It may occasionally become buried under a layer of dust, which can even settle temporarily, but the core is uncovered time and again. And yes, in our era, it is up to us. It is up to us to let our faculty shine in that new light together: reborn, clear and lucid, contemporary. Our faculty knows its past and dares to face its future.

Perhaps it is like the tree: just as it carries spring within its roots long before a bud is visible, our faculty carries its future within itself. In the questions we ask today and dare to ask. In the dream that leads to reflection, in the reflection shared in conversation, in the conversation that becomes action. In the willingness to look ahead together, not merely from what was or even from what is, but from the perspective of what can be and become. And no, that reality does not arrive with a clap of thunder. It breaks through gently, like spring: in the days that grow a little longer, in the light that dawns a little earlier, in the colours that become a touch brighter, in the earth that thaws. Deep from the roots, in the strength we share and in the only perspective that sustains hope: that of ever-renewing life, that of ever-returning and tireless optimism, that of Life and Love, stronger than death. And suddenly I thought how close this insight comes — or perhaps even coincides — with the core of what we believe: God, who in beauty, truth and goodness is stronger than any death. Let us hold that hope high...

Outside, a strong man is loosening the final bolt. The scaffolding shifts; the stone is released. And the tree, it still stands there, patient, yet full of anticipation for what is to come. Onwards to new life!

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