

FAITH AND LIFE

by Paola Zampieri

“**W**hen a madman drives his car up onto the pavement, I cannot as a pastor, just be content with burying the dead and comforting the family. I must, if I find myself on the spot, jump up and catch that man at the steering wheel”. Dietrich Bonhoeffer a theologian and evangelical pastor (Breslavia 1906 – Fossenberg 1945) was not afraid of resisting the evil and barbarism of Nazism. He pronounced these words in the German military prison at Tegel answering an Italian prisoner who asked him how he, a man of faith, could take part in a plot against Hitler, thereby showing all the strength of his character. Bonhoeffer was an educated and refined man with extraordinarily profound ideas and tremendous moral strength; he became involved in history and remained faithful to his ideals until the very end, because he was animated by an unshakable faith in God and in his actions.

He was born in Poland into an upper middle class family, Dietrich studied theology at Tubing and taught in Berlin from 1931 till '33. In those times he elaborated his ideas, the conception of a very human Christianity, very down-to-earth and human. “Being a Christian” he used to say, “does not mean being religious in a certain way, doing something with oneself (a sinner, a penitent or a saint) based on a certain method, but it means being human: Christ did not create a kind of man in us, but a man”. He taught his students theology but also to be involved with initiatives connected with the political situation, opposing Nazism ever more strongly. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer's position was more and more compromised, to the point that he decided to go to London for a period and, then after his first return, he went to America; but later he returned to Germany, driven by a conflict of conscience for having abandoned his people and because he was convinced that to “wait idly and stay stubborn at the window were not attitudes of a Christian”.

In 1943 he was imprisoned at Tegel, then in the Gestapo prison at Prinz Albrecht Strasse, then he was transferred to the concentration camps of Buchenwald, Regensburg, Schonberg and finally Flossenburg where he was executed on 9 April 1945.

Bonhoeffer's thoughts, which he did not have time to put into order, transpire in his volume Persistence and



Coherence and freedom

submission, which is a collection of his letters and other texts written when he was in prison. He put black on white his tragic experience of Nazism and imprisonment lived in the light of faith that supported him until the end, till the scaffold, where, once again, he gave an example of coherence between his acts and his beliefs. The camp doctor testified saying that he had never in all of his medical activity of nearly fifty years, seen a man die with so much faith in God.

It was just this faith that enabled him to accept every event in a different light and make him live suffering as a way towards liberty. “Liberation in suffering” - these were his words - consists in this, that a man is capable of totally renouncing keeping his cause in his hands, and placing it in God's hands. With this meaning death is the crowning of human liberty”.

THE POINT

Dear friends, as we do every year we are repeating our campaign for the renewal of your subscription. This is an important moment for the Universal Association of St. Anthony. It is a moment when we ask you to be near to us both economically and with your affection.

We continually receive testimonies of admiration and of affection. This is a sign that *The Saint of miracles* is not only popular but also helps. Many people write to us to express their approval, solidarity and encouragement. We wish to thank you all dear friends: your words are a great comfort to us, above all when the difficulties seem to be overwhelming.

Together with your compliments we also need your open promotion, which you do by promoting our magazine among your friends and relations. You, dear friends, are our only form of promotion for those subscriptions that you renew and those which you have managed to encourage.

Unfortunately many of our affectionate friends who have followed us for many years are deceased and the new generations have difficulty in getting to know us as we, with our limited means, cannot climb onto the bandwagon of publicity. God's people, who should be attracted by a magazine that tries to relive the Gospel, offering the “good news” in so many different ways, are more attracted by those messages in the mass media above all the television, that empty the mind and dumb the conscience, taking away that ability to think and react. So, as the historic members are thinning, there is a lack of renewal which is of vital importance for a magazine. We all know just how the costs of producing a magazine have risen (the paper, printing, postage and so on).

So here is our appeal to you dear friends, so that you may help us to give life - in these uncertain times in which we live - to one of those voices that are really free and try to help the poor following the example and teachings of St. Anthony.