



## DISCERNING WITH THE WORD OF GOD LIGHT FOR THE JOURNEY

*When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”  
(Lk. 21:28).*

When certain things happen, in the Church and in the world, it is logical that we worry and suffer as a result. It would seem, at least, that we have not lived it such a drastic way as others but it seems absurd that after twenty centuries of Christianity that it continues to happen.

It would even seem that Christian life itself is losing its' evangelical effectiveness and has stopped being “salt of the earth and light to the world” (Mt. 5:13-16)<sup>1</sup>. This is the challenge that, as the religious family of Augustinian recollects we have to face and ask ourselves: what type of salt are we in this world? Are we that which gives flavour to food, or the opposite: are we so salty that makes it impossible to eat? What type of light do we give out? Is it really that of the Gospel? And are we able to see the goodness that exists in the world since the beginning of creation?

When this happens we feel asked to direct our lives in all possible seriousness towards God, and ask Him what he wants of each of us. That is, what type of

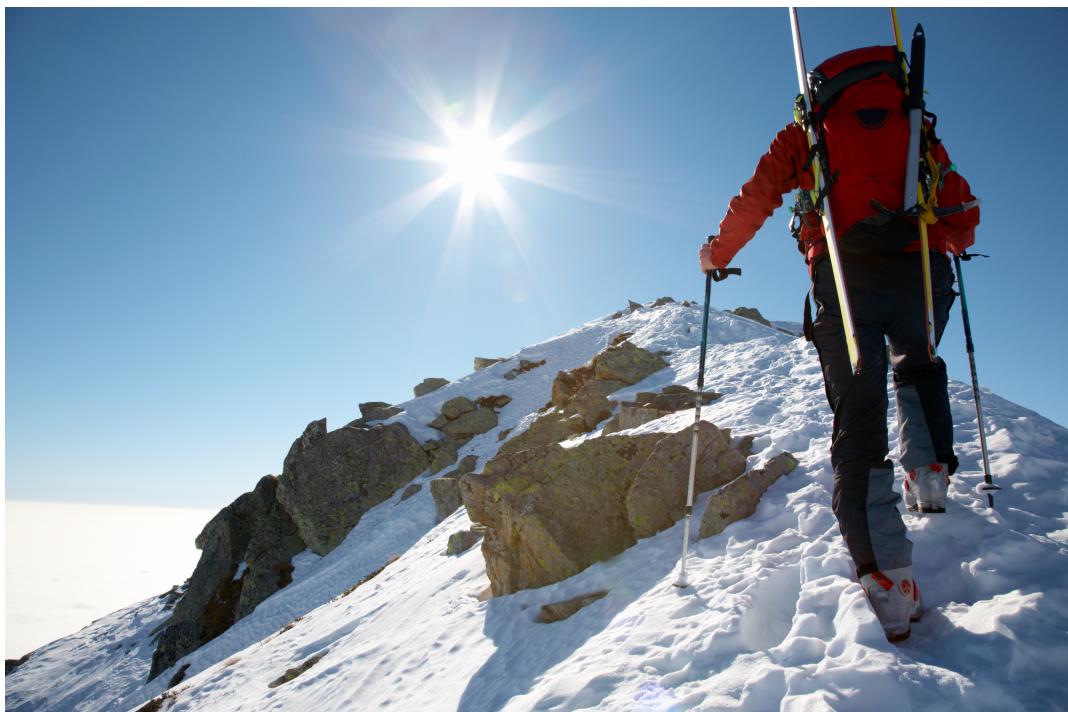
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<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Pironio, *Renovación de la Vida Consagrada. Los religiosos, testigos de la esperanza y de la alegría pascual*, (Renovation of the Consecrated Life. Religious, witnesses of hope and pascal joy) Paulinas, Bogotá 1977, 15.

disciple does he want us to be, and if this is the road we must travel in order to live out his promise. It is then when there appears on the horizon the reality of discernment, which is not an activity undertaken purely and exclusively by lone individuals, but rather a journey we must make together.

The masters of the spiritual life have always highlighted that discernment must come from relating to the Other. In the relationship between God and man which is fulfilled in the Holy Spirit: the divine person that makes it possible for man to participate in the love of Father and Son<sup>2</sup>. Discerning is based on relationships<sup>3</sup>, as is faith: we need others, because in truth, they are part of love's reality. To discern is to respond to a love which calls us beyond who we are and what we are capable of; it is a free response based on being sincere, frank and firm.

This experience of relating should take place not only between God and man, but also between human beings, and between them and the natural world. Discernment is the art of understanding ourselves, taking into account this holistic base, and seeing ourselves united because we see with God's eyes the unity of all life<sup>4</sup>.



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<sup>2</sup> Cf. T. Spidlík, *La spiritualità dell'Oriente cristiano. I. Manuale sistematico*, (The Spirituality of Oriental Christianity. I Systematic Manual) San Paolo Edizioni, Roma 1985, 25-30.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. Rupnik, *Il discernimento* (Discernment), Lipa, Roma 2004, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M. Rupnik, *Il discernimento*... 15.

This knowledge of God is not an abstract knowledge, something merely theoretical. God can never be reduced to a mere doctrine, or a series of precepts in some kind of aesthetical exercise. We can only know him by experiencing Him and communicating ourselves reciprocally with Him, where the real initiative belongs to by God the Father in a freely given relationship of love. Man responds to this with an act of faith, which in truth is at the same time and act of love. For faith, from the moment that we recognize the Other in all objectivity, enables us to make an act of adhering and orienting ourselves radically towards him<sup>5</sup>.

Discernment is, therefore, the art of the spiritual life in which I understand how God is talking to me, how God saves me. Discernment is that art in which I experience a free commitment to God who, in Christ Jesus, trusts freely in my hands. An art in which realties in myself, in the natural world, in the people around me, in my personal history and in everything in general stop being mute witnesses and start communicating to me the love of God<sup>6</sup>. Discernment expresses an intelligence which knows how to contemplate. The meaningful spiritual things in the Church never came about because someone had decided to do them, but rather because God had found someone disposed to radically accept it in such a way that He could be made manifest, and bring about their salvation<sup>7</sup>.

Finally, discernment for us cannot be detached from the Church and her spiritual and teaching tradition. The Church fulfils in its tradition, in the liturgy, and in its teaching authority discernment about Christ. Also about the salvation which continues to come forth from Christ's heart, for men of every age. Personal and community discernment is done if the experience of God becomes a reality lived by actual people and communities in very concrete situations. The community should accept salvation responsibly, freely adhering itself to Christ its Lord and Saviour in its choices and attitudes; taking concrete steps which penetrate its whole life, mentality and culture. Thus it weaves its history with Christ's texture, not as the sum of its individual parts with personal histories, but rather as a living organic community. For only in this way can salvation be achieved<sup>8</sup>.

In the pages which follow we will dedicate ourselves to discerning with the word of God, searching to reive the Word in our lives and in our communities. We will take inspiration from the first chapters of the book of Genesis, for they already show the continuous discernment that man has had to make in order to

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *CIC*, 25; V. Solov'ëv, "La critica dei principi astratti": Id., *Sulla Divinohumanità e altri scritti*, Jaca Book, Milano 1971, 197-210.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Efrem il Siro, *Inno sulla Fede*, 31. Partial translation in Italian in S. Brock, *L'occhio luminoso. La visione spirituale di sant'Efrem*, Lipa, Roma 1999, 66-68.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. M. Rupnik, *Il discernimento...* 26.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Rupnik, *Il discernimento...* 30.

carry out his task in the natural world, from the moment that in which God entrusted to him all his work (Gn. 1:28). But not knowing how to discern led man to disrupt this beautiful and emotive dialogue with his creator. The break in this relationship led him on different paths, listening to other voices that little by little came to consume and take up his life.

But in communicating his word God has a certain weakness: above all when it is directed towards man. Then it was when Abraham appeared that a dialogue could be undertaken in a sincere way, full of trust. In order to discern it is necessary to participate in dialogue, but a dialogue based in trust and on faith. A faith which frees us from mere politics and political manoeuvring; that makes us free. It frees us from narrow-mindedness and parsimony, opening to us to the beautiful world of God's will. For neither the eye has seen nor the ear has heard, not even has the human conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him (cf. 1Cor. 2:9).

#### **DISCERNMENT IN GENESIS: CREATION AND FALL**

The first chapter of the Bible presents us with a teaching on discernment, as far as it allows us, and at the same time it invites us to see the world which surrounds us *with the same eyes with which God looks at us*. We could even say that this is truly the most all-encompassing definition of discernment: to see as God sees. The first chapter of Genesis from the third day of creation, that is from the day in which he starts to prepare the living environment for man, does not present only a God who creates but also a God who contemplates, who takes pleasure in his work.

In discernment this is he who is able to see God's work in the world, and the stages of life, sensing that it is essentially "Good". The less able have minds full of the shadows of pessimism; and worse still are those who do not see the goodness and love which surrounds them. The creative work in the first days of creation are not directly related to humanity, but all that which has some connection with man is seen by God as a "good thing". Everything the world or in life takes place is permitted by God, and therefore in relation to man is "good". Those with expert discerning eyes will come to realize that this is true. Others, fooling themselves, will not be aware of the intrinsic goodness of God's work. There is in this a constant invitation to discover harmony and "goodness" in all things: "and God saw that it was good". For the Hebrew word *tob*, as well as meaning "good", also means "beautiful", "attractive".

Chesterton said that "We are perishing for want of wonder, not for want of wonders": we are losing the capacity to wonder, to admire, to contemplate, to be

still and silent<sup>9</sup>. What is evil, in fact, has another origin. But it will be the second chapter of Genesis that it will take on this problem. For the moment, the narration from the Priestly source affirms a perennial truth, obvious to those who see things as God sees them: *all that exists is good*. Nonetheless, the intrinsic goodness of all that God *wishes or permits* is never evident to the ordinary knowledge of man.



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God's works are shown as good in relation to the diverse parameters of those suggested by nature and good sense. That which God works in our life is in fact essentially "good", in relation to the growth in Christian sanctity. But the demands

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis (I-II)* (The Book of Genesis, 1-11), Herder, Barcelona-Madrid 1992, 36.

of sanctity do not always coincide with earthly well-being. Only sometimes do they come together, and when they do not we should not necessarily conclude that God has stopped loving us. The future is also beyond our grasp: sometimes God allows things to happen for the sake of a greater good later on. This is what happens with Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was expelled by his family at the age of seventeen in order to later wisely govern Egypt some twenty years later (cf. Gn. 37-50). Summing up, a lack of knowledge about the future impedes the human point of view of capturing the full meaning of events that God permits at a particular point in time.

In the second chapter of Genesis the story of creation is retold, but not now from God's point of view but rather from man's. Here Adam is depicted more often in the act of discernment: he discovers above all *his vocation* in terms of the created world, and his daily work appears *clearly* as a participation in the creative work of God: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Gn. 2:15). In reality, work is in itself a participation in God's creative work and should be carried out with love and creativity; in the hope of realizing a project designed previously by God himself 10.

At the same time, man sees *the call of love*, and the fundamental act of discernment in this context consists in recognizing that not everyone can establish with him a personal relationship, but only those that possess *a particular likeness*. God in fact says: "I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gn. 2:18). In the moment in which Adam finds a woman, that God had thought of as his companion, he realizes that she is *similar to him*, that is like himself in feminine form (cf. Gn. 2:23).

A person who does not discern runs the risk, in truth, of not really distinguishing the ideal partner for himself, giving importance instead to certain diverse points of interest or conscious choices which go in different directions. Substantially, for God it is not enough for a man and a woman to be similar *in character and in tastes* in order to be able to form a partnership; it is necessary that they should above all be similar in *the way of looking at life*.

\*In the third chapter of Genesis we see, for the first time, a meeting between a human being and a spirit of darkness. In this we see a move from a luminous presentation of harmony (that of man with God and with his partner in this world) to a darker scene. Here the Yahweh tradition shows us the rightly called "original sin"; so called because it is the origin, root and source of all sin<sup>11</sup>.

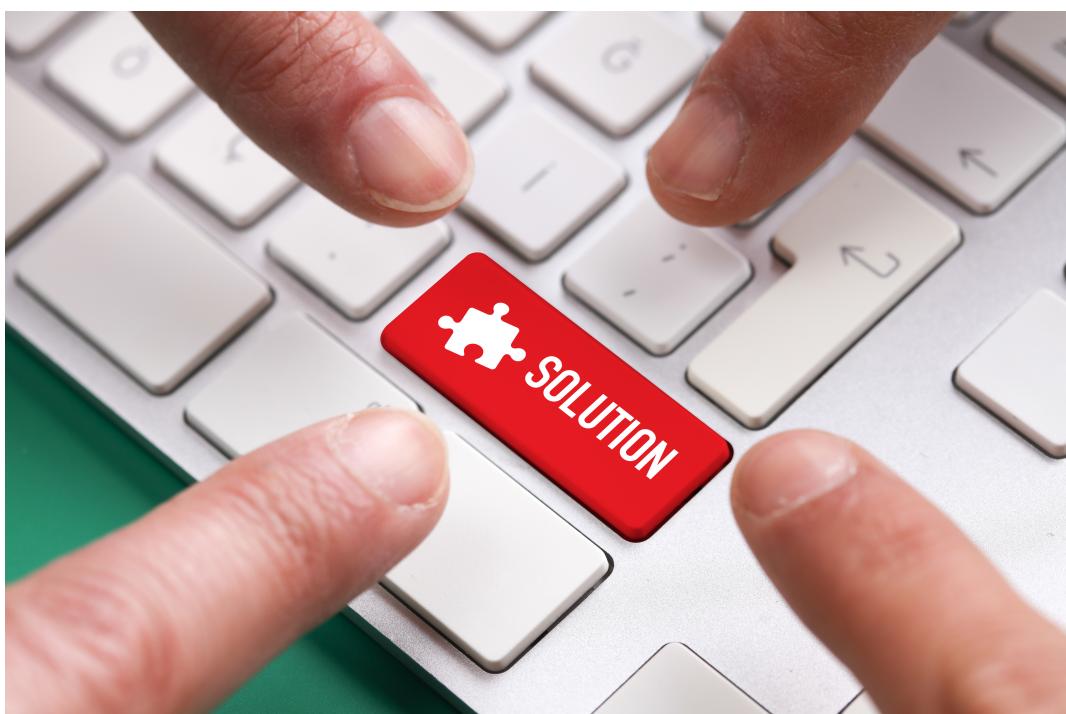
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<sup>10</sup> Cf. G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis...* 74.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis...* 86.

The discourse on discernment is enriched with diverse elements, and this gives us a masterly representation of the subtleties of temptation, together with that of Mt. 4: 1-11 in the New Testament (cf. also Lk. 4, 1-13).

Genesis offers us clues in order to understand the thinking suggested by the tempter, that of a merely human way of thinking. The question is directed to the woman at the foot of the tree and has some value: "Is it true that God said: you shouldn't eat of any of the trees in the garden?" The tempter makes suggestions to the woman's way of thinking based on the power of some level of truth. The human mind is naturally attracted to truth, for God on creating us has wanted us to have a profound connection with the truth, guiding with it our intelligence.



*We want to find quick solutions that allow us to sleep peacefully at night, knowing that we have found a way of resolving all the conflicts. Discernment for the Christian, however, requires faith and patience.*

The provocation of the serpent comes from a false affirmation, but which is very attractive to man: God has not forbidden all the trees in the garden (v.1). God has not restricted all potential freedom, rather only that of moral value; that is, the tree of knowledge for good and evil. The woman knows this full well, as her answer shows (vv. 2-3). But, cutting off the pass, the serpent introduces the suggestion of breaking all ties, of mistrusting God also on this unique and fundamental precept. He presents with malice the divine command as a hostile

and absurd envy against men: “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (v.5).

There is here a perfect definition of sin: it is an act of rebellion, in which man takes the place of God and assumes his wisdom, his divinity, his power over good and evil<sup>12</sup>. The question supposes that God leaves aside people without listening to them, and their many needs as creatures. *It is a philosophy of mistrust and suspicion.* This thinking is inevitably orientated towards temptation, based on a vision of the limits and imperfections of the present, and infers that God *has denied us that which we need*. Anyone could quickly assume this thought. God, in reality, doesn't give us all we need so hastily. In minds illuminated by God's Spirit we typically see instead an optimistic openness towards the future, and patience: waiting in the hope that, in time, something better is always on the horizon.

Another aspect is that of a lie dressed up in the cloak of truth, an exaggeration of what God's will demands of us: “Is it true that God said: you must not eat of *any* of the trees in the garden?” The tempter interprets God's will with an excessive bitterness, whereas God has said to man: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gn. 2:16-17),

When Jesus' temptations are portrayed we see a model of spiritual warfare indicating the necessity of *not responding* to the devil, opposing in this the thinking proposed by a word taken from the Bible. The woman's response allows the serpent to place into her mind a further suggestion, up to the point of obscuring the paternal image of God: “God knows that when you eat your eyes will be opened, and you will be like Gods”.

To all this the woman responds: “From the fruits of the trees in the garden we can eat, but the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden God has said: we may not eat”. The only intelligence on the part of the serpent is to avoid dialogue, and through this tactic the serpent overcomes the woman.

When dialogue is broken, our capacity to understand and judge God's will in discernment is taken from us. It is for this reason that this text on the woman and the serpent is an important moment, for now lying makes its way into relationships. This is true of relations between man and God, as well as for between men and women, or that between man and creation. Lying frustrates any attempts at dialogue, and with it, of seeing with God's eyes and vision.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis...* 89.

### **ABRAHAM: RETURNING TO THE ORIGINAL STATE**

God talks with Abraham as he did with Noah (Gn. 12:1; 13:14; 17:3), that is without declaring in the beginning his identity or making a promise. Abraham listens to the word which is directed to him, and starts out on a very pronounced journey of fellowship and following. The promise made to Abraham is directed to all peoples and has a strong universal appeal. From the very first moment, Abraham recognizes that what takes part between him and the Lord goes beyond him and his life.

After Abraham has followed the indications of the Lord, directing him with his word, it is written that “the Lord appeared to Abram” (Gn. 12:7; 17:1), and later on: “This word of the Lord was given to Abram” (15:1)<sup>13</sup>. When the text refers to this last form of communication by God (17: 1; 13:17) it adds that Abram prostrated himself on the ground. Before this there was no mention of either apparitions or visions.

Another new element is that Abram does not only receive words and visions given by God, rather he is also before him in prayer, invocation and interceding for others (Gn. 18:23+, 20:17; 21:33). In Abraham we see the dialogue between God and man being reconstructed, something which seemed would never be possible, but to which God is always committed.

The image which the Lord offers of himself continues to be hidden, naturally, in the experience that Abraham has of him; but reveal some touches that are nonetheless expressed by holy scripture. Here the Lord is not only Powerful, for he is also the one who has a plan which cover all time. He is the one, furthermore, who hears the prayer of he who is faithful to the alliance, in which broken and betrayed faith is rebuilt. But it is also true that the alliance comes about after a test: “Sometime later God tested Abraham” (22:1).

### **THE DRAMA OF THE PROMISE: BEING PUT TO THE TEST**

There are three dramas which Abraham faces with respect to the promise. These dramas serve as a path, to guide and light him in order to live out his faith in God:

1. In Gn. 12:2 Abraham receives the promise of offspring, a promise that will guide his life and journey. The first obstacle in the life of the patriarch is shown to us is in terms of a serious discernment about the will of God, which we find in Gn. 12:10-20. A huge famine takes place,

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<sup>13</sup> The expression from chapter 15:1 is typical of the prophetic literature and makes no other appearance in the Pentateuch. See G. von Rad, *El primer libro de Moisés. Génesis*, (The First Book of Moses, Genesis) Göttingen 1961, 154.

and Abraham decides to go down to Egypt in search of a better life, and escape the crisis which he experiences in the country of Canaan. From the beginning, in these verses, we encounter a reaction which will put in danger the promise made by God. Abraham asks Sarah to deny she is his wife: “I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you” (12:11b-13). Indeed, in the discernment of the promise made to us by God all of us can pass through this crisis of faith and trust. For the promise, although it was made to Abraham, cannot be fulfilled without Sarah: being exclusive is not something which helps us to discern. Life in society should makes us think that our actions have an effect on those around us (if I don’t save myself, it’s possible that others won’t either). On the other hand, if I understand that the promise is for everyone – as was announced by God – I should understand that my life is for others, not only for myself. Therefore, the crisis of exclusivism can make the promise crumble or collapse; not by the one who promised it, but rather by the one who received it. That is those who give more importance to themselves and their well-being than to the one who looks after their well-being. This type of crisis also impedes dialogue, for those who look to themselves cannot raise their eyes to look at the one who addresses them. But in the same way as happened with Abraham, God always looks for a way to take up again the dialogue which he wants to have.

2. With the passing of time, the promise is put off and Abraham falls into another more personal crisis (See Gn.16:1-16): that of despair. Time passes, and the promised son has not arrived and the human resources seem to have worn out with the time of God becoming ever more prolonged. Again man wants to look for a solution to things without counting on the help of God: Sarai, Abram’s wife, has not given him any sons. But she has an Egyptian slave called Hagar. Sarai says to Abram: “Now that the Lord won’t permit me to be a mother, go to my slave girl<sup>14</sup>. Maybe through her I can have children”. And Abram

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<sup>14</sup> “The narration goes together with a juridical praxis witnessed in the articles 144 and 146 of the Hammurabi Codex (13<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E). According to this legislation, those born of slaves are given to the head of the clan so that in the case of sterility by the official spouse he could go to other women in the harem in order to have a child. The new born was officially considered as a descendent of the “principal” partners. The most curious fact in the story is the forced fleeing by Hagar, proud of her fertility in front of Sarah the official spouse. In the quoted article 146 of the Hammurabi Codex we read: “Is someone marries a free woman and this one gives a slave girl to

acceded to her wish". Nevertheless, despite this, God's promise will be fulfilled. Man tries to bring forward the wait, wanting quick and immediate solutions, and doesn't hesitate in recurring to quick fixes. With the son of the slave legally bound to her mistress, the conflict will be resolved between the suffering of sterility and the divine promise; but God rejects such an awkward agreement<sup>15</sup>. It is one of the temptations that happens in the moments of uncertainty, something that we all live through and suffer. We want to find quick solutions that allow us to sleep peacefully at night, knowing that we have found a way of resolving all the conflicts. Discernment for the Christian, however, requires faith and patience. Without faith I cannot wait; neither can the capacity or the serenity to wait be found. Faith should be a radical trust in the Other, in God, that is: committing ourselves entirely to the objective existence of God<sup>16</sup>. God continues to write his saving history, disregarding human ploys to the contrary. Faith is an almost permanent process of self-questioning; for faith makes us avoid pre-arranged human schemes, breaks open the precarious balance of human astuteness and eliminates the small barriers put up for the sake of maintaining good relations. Faith is knowing how to accept God's times and paths: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is.55:8-9)<sup>17</sup>.

3. Lastly, the great test comes, represented by the sacrifice of the promise. In the time which has passed since the first encounter with God (See Gn.12:1-3), Abraham has deepened his own faith and has learned to totally abandon himself to the one who always fulfills his promises. He is now a mature believer, and has come to the end of his days having developed a full obedience to the directions entrusted to him by God. It is, therefore, when Isaac is an adult that there comes for Abraham *the hour of a new knowledge about God*. After the call and the promise sealed by the alliance, after the confirmation and realization of the birth

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her husband and this second woman brings children into the world, if later the slave girl puts herself on the level of her mistress for having brought children into the world, her mistress...will again put on her the slave brand". (G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis (12-50)*, Herder, Barcelona-Madrid 1994, 82).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis (12-50)* ... 84.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. M. Rupnik, *Il discernimento*... 19.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis (12-50)* ... 85.

of Isaac, now is the time when the promise is put to a severe test<sup>18</sup>. How should you react inside yourself faced with this petition by God? How can we live on trusting in God if he asks of me even when it hurts? These are without a doubt questions that we have to discern together with Abraham. That is to abandon everything, leave everything, stay with God, stay with what we ultimately profess as the most important. But when the time comes it might be that it's not on our list of priorities, which is often occupied by my health, my family, my friends or my current lifestyle. How can I establish a dialogue with God if he asking me to give everything? Is it not that we might want to come to an agreement, to negotiate, so that he doesn't ask of me "everything" and that I might keep hold of "something"? The 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Genesis is not only about the praising Abraham's faith, more so it is about the glorification of God. The patriarch Abraham discovers the great gift that he has received in his son: it is not only the realization of bearing children, rather it is the action of a transcending promise. He must give up the son he felt was his, in order to reobtain and reinterpret him as a true and pure divine grace. Isaac the son "is not a gift that can be retained under the title of any right or in virtue of human demand or recognition. The question that God poses to Abraham is to consider the gift of salvation as effectively a pure and simple gift" (G. von Rad). The aim of the text is not to eulogize man; we must instead praise God" (C. Westerman)<sup>19</sup>. In the greater details of the promise God can examine man, and scrutinize him in order to purify his own attitude. But above all, this is done in order to bring him to take a step forward in a relationship of reencounter which has to be mended - full of confidence and trust. In this sense the test takes on the meaning of a true and personal divine discernment, of a teaching method, in order to come to a union which will be unbreakable.

In this one man and individual (Abraham), the Creator pursues a common truth for all humanity. In the new situation, which has come about after the fall, man is not able to return to the relationship he had before, given the condition in which he now finds himself. But thanks to the divine initiative, he can now return to the

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. E. Bianchi, *Il sacrificio di Isacco*, visto el 16 de enero de 2016 en <http://www.monasterodibose.it/priore/conferenze-e-omelie/omelie-e-lectio/864-lectio-divina/8703-il-sacrificio-di-isacco-genesi-22-1-18>

<sup>19</sup> Cf. G. Ravasi, *El libro del Génesis (12-50)* ... 168.

state of obedience from which he had tragically removed himself from. In this way, man can again have an experience of communion with God<sup>20</sup>.



*To discern is, therefore, to incarnate in our daily life the Word that God directs to us so that the world may live.*

God's action is directed completely towards man, when he is recognized as being made according to the original "image and likeness". But a man too far from this ideal cannot know or recognize God. The only situation which allows man to re-acquire this recognition is that of re-establishing relations and union with God. This recognition will make him known to God, and will make the very same face of God familiar to him. Thus God still presents and declares about himself to man: "I am God Almighty" (Gn. 17:1). This indeed is a God who again must explain to his favoured creation what they have to do in order to return to him: "walk before me faithfully and be blameless...you must keep my covenant" (Gn. 17: 1. 9.). That which was not to be said must now be said again and again,

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, "Esperienza di Dio nella Bibbia dei Patri": *Strumento Internazionale per un lavoro teologico: Communio* 30 (1977) 4-15.

and solemnly reaffirmed. This is the way back and the blessing, the obedience of one thus establishing a platform of hope for all: “all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me” (Gn. 22:18)<sup>21</sup>.

## BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

As these chapters from the book of Genesis show us, there can be no serious discernment if there is a lack of serious dialogue. In Sacred Scripture dialogue is based on some *premises*. The first is that of the *value* of the divine word. This word is creative, it is not lacking in meaning or content (See Gn. 1-2). God, and his word, are not worldly elements like the cosmos nor reducible to a merely human level - for his word is on a very different level from that of the human one. The Word of God implies a demanding relationship, but are we attentive to this demand?

The second premise is that of *human freedom*, which can “clash” with the Word of God. There is no page in the Bible where this idea is not held to be true. In effect, everything is centred on this human freedom, where “human freedom” means to say that human beings have before them, (as the book of Ecclesiasticus 15:11-20 says), the possibility of choice. This is a choice between being on God’s side or facing alone the adventure of life; that is, being the one who decides about our lives, running the risk of minimizing this relationship. In fact, the book of Ecclesiasticus says if you want to, you can enter into dialogue. It is important to take into account this way of things. If we are able to talk about dialogue it is because we have two wills acting that clearly express themselves: the human capacity for decisions and the divine one; which the Bible defines as a decision in favour of all humanity.

With his instruction (see Gn. 2:17, previously discussed), God presents himself as the one who shows to men the way to carry out their lives: thus making God the model of the wise man who knows how to live. As men and women it falls to us to recognize in this divine will the possibility of life, or to reject it as an impediment for a full life. These are the premises for dialogue and discernment such as it is.

In order to make dialogue easier God made his Word incarnate, and that is our starting point. To discern is, therefore, to incarnate in our daily life the Word that God directs to us so that the world may live.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. M. Serretti, *Il discernimento di Dio*, Città Nuova, roma 2003, 30-32.