

Pentecost Foglietto 2020

During this vigil of Pentecost, Francesca Cocchini has published a text of Sofia Cavalletti's in "settimananews" (weekly news), a blog of the Dehoniani of Bologna, 5/27/20, that can help us in "reading the signs of the times" of our world. In the situation we are living, preparing for and awaiting the beginning of a "new" situation, what happened in the history of Israel invites us to understand that it is not a matter of substituting one thing for another thing: the Synagogue for the Temple or Lectio Divina or some other communal activity for the Eucharist. It is not a journey of choosing an alternative; "either this or that;" rather, it is a matter of "this and that." It is necessary to proceed in the direction of enriching what has already been noted with the discoveries and deeper understanding that our new situation offers us. In this way the Holy Spirit carries the history forward toward the fullness of truth.

The Temple and the Synagogue (in "SettimanaNews")

Francesca Cocchini, 5/27/20

A page in the book, *Ebraismo e Spiritualita Cristiana (Judaism and Christian Spirituality, Rome, 1966)* by Sofia Cavalletti (1917-2011) seems to me to be important in reflecting on what the Church is doing in the journey "between the health lockdown and the liturgical countdown." The history of Israel is fundamentally the history of the Church; it is exemplified in each of its stages, because in each stage God's will to live a covenant relationship with his people is revealed through what God does. A stage that is particularly noteworthy is that which is marked by the exile.

Accordingly, Sofia wrote:

It is well known that the Synagogue is an institution which dates back to the (Babylonian) exile. Being deprived of the Temple, and therefore of the possibility of offering God blood sacrifice, the Hebrew people try to make up for such a great loss through the means they had at their disposal. The Lord had linked his presence to the Temple in a special way, so that, after the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians, the Lord himself was somewhat in exile. Yet he spoke through his Law, and the only way left for the exiled Hebrew people to remain in communication with their God was to return to meditating on the Word, which is a means of his presence among them.

But the Synagogue does not owe its origins merely to contingent historical causes. In fact, even after the return to the land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple, not only does the Synagogue not die, but it spreads, proving to be more alive than ever. In truth, it is rooted in a religious need which we see deepening and spreading more and more as time goes by: a deeper penetration of religion into daily life and a more active and lively participation in it also by the non-priestly classes. Whereas in the Temple the priestly privileges are reserved for a hereditary aristocracy, the pious "commoners" — which we would call "the laity" — affirm that all of Israel "is a priestly kingdom and a holy people."

The “laity” storm the Temple, occupying Mount Zion itself, where contending the land at the Sanctuary, already a synagogue arises in the pre-Christian epoch—documented by the oldest inscription of any synagogue—that is, a place where worship of the Word of God is open to all and is not reserved for the priestly class alone, a place where every Israelite can be called on to read and explain the Scripture. Thus, the “laity” is inserted into the same liturgical life of the Temple. “Stations” are created, which are groups of Israelites who, in turn, represent the people during the offering of the sacrifice, and they are given such importance that it is stated: it is due to their merit that the heavens and earth exist. (pp. 91-92)