

We have recently received a lot of unedifying emails, I'm referring to letters with accusations, mainly from former team members. It has been so many that it is impossible to read it all, especially when we have a full schedule of activities and barely have the time to just keep up with our correspondence. Some of the letters have a critical and bitter spirit. I have waited to write this but I feel the need to declare my personal feelings, not to add wood to the fire but rather to try to make some justice to the issue.

Therefore let me share my side of the story starting from 34 years ago in Rome. A foreigner seeking for answers in life, quite disoriented, willing to be led by anyone who would have some evidence regarding knowing the truth, I was going through an identity crisis, little knowledge of Italian, no income, few short term friends, no family close by, wondering if this first trip to Europe was being worth the while, since the only thing I had discovered was that there was nothing new to discover. My conclusion was that life was the same everywhere.

While leaving El Salvador, I left a nice job, working on the plans for a big shopping centre; I was also studying at the National University to become an architect. I had a nice family, a motorbike (Suzuki 185 Scrambler) and several other toys to make my life enjoyable.

I was therefore not looking for a good job since I already had one. I was wondering -- Who am I? --Are there answers to life itself?

All I can say is that I am very thankful to the Lord for having sent a bunch of Jesus Freaks that were witnessing everywhere: the train station, the Vatican, the Coliseum, the University. Jesus had indeed visited the eternal city by force through these hippies who were reaching the natives and the foreigners like me.

The way they were dressed showed that they were not only poor, but also they were weird. The team had just come out of Passau, the border between Austria and Germany. They had been stuck for 15 days with hardly any food. The Red Cross came once a day to give them dinner. All this tribulations had come to them because they were willing to be fools for Christ, obeying Jesus' commandments to go into the entire world to preach His Word. They had no monthly support but they had anointing and conviction. You could understand that through the way they spoke and you could see the light that came from their eyes.

The Christians in Rome offered them first class hospitality in their homes. Not only were they recovering from almost one month of travelling and getting stuck at the borders, but they were also recovering from the shock of being threatened to death by the pimps in the red light district in Amsterdam. A few brothers had been thrown to the dirty canals and a couple of them didn't know how to swim. David Nowak was beaten with some metal hand knuckles and his nose was broken. Though all this turmoil they managed to get the attention of the Police the media and spoiled the prostitution and drug business for a few days.

Arriving to Rome, some of the disciples were re-evaluating their decision of being with the team since there was little stability, un-experienced leadership, a zeal that would consume our love for comfort and thus exposing them to risks of all sorts. They were going through culture shock, not understanding a word of Italian and when camp was put up, everyone had to leave the comfort of the Italian houses and live in camp with little food again. It was not what many had in mind for themselves as a ministry or a mission. I don't blame them, since Sweden, Finland and USA, the countries from where they were; do offer a sense of security.

What would have happened if there had not been a team in Rome in those days? It is impossible to say, but the fact is, that there was a team, as a living testimony that the Lord is faithful, giving equal opportunity to every one, and making a difference in many lives, mainly in mine.

1. I am thankful to Brother Mike Carroll, who was the first one who talked to me. We had a very long conversation close to the train station (Stazione Termini), a conversation that inspired me to become a disciple.

2. I am also thankful to red haired Gunilla (as we used to call her in order to identify her, since there was another blond Gunilla), Britt-Marie and Eija, who were also witnessing. Even if they didn't speak Italian, they had a light in their eyes and that light spoke even louder than any other language.

3. I am also thankful to those who were in leadership in those days. Brother Joe Grier was in charge of the team. His band, the Joyful Noise was anointed. Their songs were all challenging.

4. Brother Bill Lowery was preaching, full of fire and authority. He was a longhaired hippie with a long beard while his interpreter; John Tardibono was a well-dressed Italian. For sure it made a big contrast but it was intriguing and interesting.

5. I am thankful to Basil Hairgrove that together with his family spent several years of his life dedicated to the work, leading the team in Italy. His age and figure gave stability to the work.

6. It would be then unfair to just be thankful to the team members since much of the credit belongs to the church in Rome. In spite of the fact that the team came out of the hippie culture, the Christians in Italy gave the team a status, something that hadn't happened in any other European country (Even though the team was well received in Sweden and Finland, where they had big campaigns in the summer of 1974, but the message of forsaking all and going into all the world was too radical and CITA soon lost popularity. This is Laila's commentary as she is typing out the article.)

In those days we were all dreamers. We wouldn't settle for less...What was the result? Teams to India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, France and Spain. I remember Clark and Vittorio in 1992 wanting to go across the Sahara desert in order to start a team in Nigeria, even if the team never materialized, due to the civil war in Nigeria, but here

was a vision.

In 1993, Koen and Annemie were launched to the Ukraine. In those days another team was sent to Romania. In 1996, a big tent was given to us to take it to Russia. As far as I know, that tent is still up and not only that one but another big tent that we bought new in Italy for a church in south Russia and brought it too them in a big truck that Brother Grazio Genovese gave us.

Any mediocre person can accuse the leadership, individually or as a whole, as inexperienced. Of course, experience is something you acquire with time. It just doesn't happen automatically. What, however, is much worse is when you have experience but no zeal, no desire to reach out. Making prudence the first choice, we are certainly endangered with falling into the risk of self protection and prudence, due to the experiences of the past. Through spiritual warfare we learn how to fight better but if we haven't learnt how to fight it is because we were not really involved in the battle. Instead of attacking we were only looking for the spoil.

I have such good memories from those days when we used to go to downtown Rome in the cafeterias and stores until 3:00 p.m. I was moved with zeal when I heard about David Nowak's nose being broken when someone hit him with an iron hand knuckle in the red light district in Amsterdam.

It was people who put prudence first, those that counselled Laila not to join the team in 1974, when they were in Gothenburg. The team leaders asked her how long she planned to stay in the team and she answered – Well, as long as it lasts. Today I think: --Yes, it will last as long as we keep working.

Today in 2008 she told me that she would like to write a book entitled: Who is right 33 years later? Just to make the point of justifying her decision of paddling the boat against the tide.

Was it the foolishness of Peter who made him to have the courage to step out of the boat and challenge the laws of nature, challenge common sense and prudence, since it is impossible to walk on water and just trust in Jesus unconditionally? In 1974, the team seemed to be walking in the middle of a stormy dark lake. My question today is: -- Are we still willing to make such steps of faith? --Are we willing to end up like fool, perhaps swimming in the tempest? Is it worth to tell Jesus: --If it is you, let me go where you are? --Let me walk on the water.

It's time to get our act together, since we have only one life and only what is done for Christ will last.

Several years ago, I had a conversation with Simon Desjardines in Spain. He was telling me that most moves of God have a climax and within time there is a deterioration and things start corrupting and descending. This is what happens many times after true revivals where thousands get converted but after a few years only a few persevere with the same flame.

History shows that Turkey (Minor Asia), was the place where the first seven churches were established, one of the first areas to be Christianized, but today, instead of having Christians that endured trials we have a Muslim nation, instead of going forward, Christianity went backward. The same applies to countries like Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, countries that had nationwide moves of God, but what about today? These nations have been de-Christianized.

Simon told me: --If we as a ministry continue, we will be the exception. I thought to myself, why not, since we have taken a holy determination to go on? Jesus will be there with us.

Now I would like to bring to the attention that there are some who feel that in those days they were hurt by the elders in charge, that there were abuses and that they were mistreated or that their talents were not fully appreciated. Perhaps they thought that they could have done a better job, if they had been in charge. Now let me tell you something. It is the Lord who chooses and raises and who puts aside...you see...authority is not a toy. Perhaps you think: It is not necessary to say that and you say --I know, it is not a toy.

Observing certain lives, I do see that some think that authority was a very interesting toy that they would have liked to have in order to play with it.

If Clark and Paul Schafer have a team, I also want a team for myself. --Why shouldn't I have one? After all, I think I am more intelligent and capable than he is. I have to mention that the team is effective because of the pillars holding up the work and therefore I want to include the families of Paul Gray, Emmanuele Franzese and David Forni, Keith Boyes, Horst Bergman, Steve Hubbard and Angelo Pulvirenti.

Yes, Mister Absalom, you certainly deserve an opportunity to prove yourself and to show everybody what a good leader you are. You are certainly called to straighten things up, but unfortunately, those in charge are insensitive to your merits.

Perhaps the solution would be to clone thousands of followers, exactly the way you want them, obedient intelligent, sharp and strong and as a result, an unfulfilled desire of being a great leader could be fulfilled.

It certainly takes courage to see ourselves the way we really are. Since it is many times difficult to detect the self-centred reasons for our decisions: if we do what we are doing for the sake of our own identity or if we do it for God's glory. How easy it is to dress a vice as if it was a virtue.

If anyone feels that I'm trying to say something indirectly, he is wrong. I am saying it directly, straight to the point, as a point of a sword. As Watchman Nee said, if we haven't learnt to obey from the heart, we cannot exercise authority.

Many times I have wondered what hell would be like. It is very difficult to imagine, but

perhaps, the essence of hell consists
-in blaming others for our failures
-in becoming creatures that cannot see their own mistakes
-in accusing the brethren.

If our eyes are full of light, we should see clearly but when there is darkness in our eyes, we cannot have the right impression. Our darkness will be worse than the black holes in outer space. It depends on the attitude with which we observe, the disposition of our heart, the way we see things. When our sight has been darkened, how can we have a right understanding? How can we see things as God sees them? Part of the punishment is that we will believe a lie, we will be self-deceived and we have become frightful creatures. I got this idea from C.S. Lewis, reading the Chronicles of Narnia, when Edmond suffered a metamorphosis and without himself noticing it, he had become a creature with a different nature, because of his wrong attitudes.

I finish with following live example. In our last crusade, there was a brother who used to come every single evening to our services in the tent. He was there for the whole period of 8 weeks together with his wife and several children. His oldest son expressed the desire to come with them team, but the decision didn't mature. His daughters were very nice. They all looked oriental since their eyes were a little narrow and slanted.

Laila even made a joke, using one of the puppets, representing an immature disciple, who fell in love with one of these young little girls, Irma who the prettiest one. The puppet (Peppe) was having second thoughts about continuing to work in the team, as he couldn't bare the thought of leaving this place and not being able to see Irma anymore. It was very funny as he expressed his emotions, the girl was sitting in the front row and everybody was just laughing (she also thought it was funny).

Anyway, this older brother really liked us and invited me to his house. We also invited him and his whole family to eat supper with us a couple of times. He gave us the first fruit of his harvest. There was one thing though that he didn't have under the control of the Spirit as he continuously had something negative to say concerning the different Pastors in the area, especially against the President of the Pastors' committee. I tried several times to persuade him that he had a bad attitude and needed stop talking in that way.

At the night of the last service under the tent all the Pastors were invited to express their impressions of the crusade. I wanted to somehow include this friend of mine because of his faithfulness in coming every night. I asked the main Pastor if it was ok and he said yes, since the tent doesn't represent a church or a denomination. Therefore I invited him also at the end if he wanted to say something, but when his turn came, he didn't have the courage or the strength to do it. He raised his hand and said: It will be in another occasion.

I was extremely surprised and didn't understand why he didn't want to share. What was wrong? It was embarrassing for me, but I think, even more for him, since the tent was packed and everybody knew him.

My conclusion is that after he heard about seven different Pastors, he just didn't have anything to say. He was not aware of that he had suffered a metamorphosis and as a consequence, he couldn't say anything that would engrain in the context of the spirit of that moment, because his thoughts were not edifying. At least he remained silent, which was better than saying something negative to the public.

But now a day, we have so many who think they have a say and are not aware of the fact that what they say is not for edification but for destruction.

Therefore, if you feel you are being transformed into someone who lost his first love and you are focused mainly on the mistakes of your brothers. It is time for a change of tide, believing the Lord to up-root all bitterness and restore relationships.

When Jesus said if we believe in our hearts we can say to a tree to be uprooted. He meant the root of bitterness. It's the time to command it to be done.

Pedro Viãud