

Angelo Scola

CAPACI DI INFINITO

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Man's grasp of the infinite sustains a crucial proof for God's existence in Descartes' *Meditations* and the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Angelo Scola, recaptures this concept in his book *Capaci di infinito* making it the starting point of a spiritual journey towards God.

In his outlook, the journey goes through three stages. The first is becoming aware of our capacity to understand and influence the world around us without being confined to our own narrow reality. The second is appreciating the value of interpersonal communication: it is also through the relationship with people that God talks to us. The third and final stage is acknowledging our finitude, a realization that grows in us as we age.

These three stages are essential but not fully effective if not enlightened by the figure of Jesus Christ. «He helps us giving a proper and precise name to the human experience», writes Archbishop Scola, suggesting that an authentic life requires an ongoing conversion as it was for Peter, Paul and continues to be for all true Christians who, despite their limitations, allow themselves to be vivified by the gift of faith which comes from one's relation with Jesus and involves every aspect of human life, including rationality.

The idea that faith is incompatible with reason is a misconception since faith actually upholds and strengthens human reason. In this regard Archbishop Scola quotes the following passage from St John Paul II encyclical *Fides et ratio*: «Faith and reason are like the two wings enabling the human spirit to raise towards the contemplation of truth [...]. It can actually be said that faith reaches a higher dimension, the dimension that keeps reason in check».

A life wrapped in Jesus, writes the Archbishop of Milan, is an enthralling experience. Through Him, God reveals a love for humanity to the point of demeaning Himself dying on the cross: «The crucified Jesus is the personification of mercy. Ultimately it's not possible to understand anything of the human condition without understanding love». Jesus' crucifixion does not end with death

but with the unique event of resurrection which is an historical fact inseparable from faith. Jesus' disciples were frightened after his martyrdom and couldn't have the determination of coming out of hiding and proclaim Jesus' resurrection if he hadn't shown up to them. This – argues the Archbishop – is the sign that encompasses all other signs. There is no theory that can explain the innocent pain: a pain must be confronted and shared. Jesus does not run away from the cross and looks at any ailing man like one who knows pain. He thus brings forth a unique solidarity between God and the man who suffers.

The true answer to the bewilderment of the post-modern man, according to Archbishop Scola, lies in testifying and sharing with him the gift of faith, and trying, with humble manners, to kindle in him that yearning for God that is harboured in the heart of every man.

In just over fifty pages, Archbishop Scola provides a penetrating insight into the essence of being a Christian showing how to overcome the doubts that tend to undermine one's faith and suggesting the ways to receive and communicate the “Good News”.

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