



FIAT – Newsletter nr. 74 – March 2021

Who do you say that I am?

after L.J. Cardinal Suenens



“Even today, Jesus is being born from Mary and the Holy Spirit.”

+ L.J. Cardinal Suenens

Pope John Paul II’s call for a ‘new evangelization’ is not an open-ended question intended for a chosen few who are gifted speakers. Instead, it’s a task that concerns every Christian as a logical consequence of the sacrament of baptism. Witnessing to our faith can be a challenge in the modern zeitgeist. Still, as Christians, we are all witnesses, whether we realize this or not. One of our primary duties is to pass on the torch of our evangelization, even though sometimes the flame of that torch may be lacking or burning out.

Fortunately, we can rekindle that flame in our encounter with the Lord. In this personal encounter we truly get to know Christ and carry his message to the world’s heart. Being connected to other people, we can endure even today and contribute to Christianisation. To complete this task, we will need to discover our Christian identity. The Lord sends us aid by asking the same question time and again: ‘Who do you say that I am?’

The Christian identity

‘Who do you say that I am?’ Jesus asks his disciples in Matthew 16:15. Cardinal Suenens emphasises the present-day relevance of this question in his book *The Christian at the Dawn of a New Era*. Even today, Jesus asks each generation the same crucial question. The response given by Christians will largely determine their identity and steer their course of action.

In the light of Pope John Paul II’s call for a ‘new evangelisation’, the question becomes even more interesting. The pope was referring to Christian witness in an increasingly unchristian world. In such a context, a clear understanding of the term ‘evangelisation’ is of prime importance.

After all, the Master’s question to his first disciples still concerns us today. The quality of our Christian religion depends on our faith in Him: who do we say Jesus is? It is the depth of our connection to Him that will safeguard the future of His Church. He doesn’t demand his disciples should be a majority in society, only that they act as leaven in the dough, as salt in the earth, as the lamp on the lamp-stand.

An encounter with the Lord

A personal encounter with the Lord is no longer a given in this day and age. Many Christians have received the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, but haven’t allowed the sacramental riches within to grow into a personal engagement in adult life. They have not (yet) discovered the face of the Lord. They do not or hardly know His words and remain therefore ignorant of His demands. As such, they aren’t connected to Him in an existential sense, for time and eternity.

Still, Jesus keeps asking the same direct and crucial question of each generation: 'Who do you say that I am?'

It's impossible for a follower of Christ to hide behind generalities like calling him an inspiring teacher, an example worth following or a great prophet – even the greatest prophet of all time.

Whatever the answer may be to this crucial question, it pierces the heart like a double-edged sword, with no room for escape. Our Christian authenticity depends on it. After all, Christianity is not first and foremost a doctrine, an *-ism*, a set of truths or a way of life. At the core, Christianity is a personal encounter with the risen Lord who unites us to Him in death and in life.

Christian for the world

Jesus is not only the spark of the Christian's personal life. He is also the one calling us to bring His name and his Gospel to the heart of the world. 'As the Father has sent Me, so I send you,' says the Lord. We must complete this task and face the world, dare to go in deep. In the end, we can only call ourselves fully 'Christianised' if we in turn accept the charge to Christianise, both nearby and far away. We can only be fully evangelised if we carry out the Gospel ourselves.

Christianity cannot be owned as private property. It can only be kept by shining its light around us. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all Christians who have accepted the faith as an heirloom could consider once more the enormous spiritual hunger in the world! Then they could encounter the world and have people discover the truth in word and deed: that Jesus carries within Himself the ultimate secret of human interconnectedness. That He Himself is the key to brotherhood, the community we find so difficult to establish on our own.

Source: L.J. Cardinal Suenens,
The Christian at the Dawn of a New Era
pp. 13-15.

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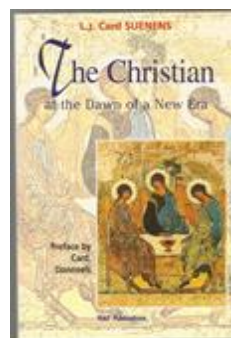
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"Whatever the gift that you're willing to present to God, do not forget to entrust it to Mary, because grace goes back to the donor through the same channel that brought it. "

(St Bernard, 12th century)

We are very often invited to offer reductions on costs for sending rosaries and various evangelization tools to economically weak countries. We are grateful for financial support.

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