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An Anthropology of Liberation

Understanding humankind in the face of extreme poverty, with Joseph Wresinski

As we approach the centenary of his birth (1917-2017), we would like, during the next Campus, to think about the human condition with Father Joseph Wresinski and those who have the direct experience of extreme poverty. Wresinski, who came from poverty himself, died in 1988 leaving a vast legacy of his experience and thinking in written and audio-visual forms.

For the five days of Campus, as we « live together in order to think together », we want to **share and merge our insight on the human being: a being of many relations, where the family dimension and that of a people have particular importance**, like communities of hope rather than of conditions; where the liberation of each person is a condition for the liberation of everybody.

Researchers and practitioners, new volunteers in training from ATD worldwide, students working on their theses, are all invited to think together about what it means to be a human person facing unbearable poverty today. Such poverty *tends* to deeply dehumanize us: not only the men, women and children who suffer it, but also those who tolerate it, and even contribute to it.

Facing this situation that some believed to be hopeless, Joseph Wresinski collected many *acts of resistance* to poverty, firmly convinced that deep down every human being rejects poverty for himself and for others. « Poverty does not have to exist », he had engraved at the Trocadero in Paris, on October 17, 1987. On the contrary, those who suffer such poverty provoke us to see that « the hour of mankind has returned ».

But the human being is one that must continually *cast off* what shackles it, what tends to dehumanize it, what excludes it from a part of humanity. It is a real *anthropology of liberation* that Father Joseph offers us, a notion of mankind in the act of finding freedom.

What kind of resistance are we called to, from the resistance of those who are living through poverty? How can we withstand the ignorance that we have about each other, which seems to be at the root of exclusion?

Father Joseph Wresinski shows us a way of living with the tensions and the contradictions that we all carry within us. The disfigured person, or the one who feels disfigured, is also a person who throughout it all still hopes; the person complicit with poverty is also one who deeply refuses it. But how can this refusal become active and effective?

In this communal effort against what tends to dehumanize us, all minds count, starting with the intelligence of those who are most excluded. How can this be taken into account so as to **build with the intelligence of everyone a society that welcomes everybody**? How can we end this incredible waste of intelligence and sensibility, so often ignored, when it conceals a treasure of inventiveness for resisting difficult situations? These are the fundamental questions which will guide our reflection.

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