

THE KINGDOM OF GOD FOR ALL!
Dr. Martin Jäggle / Sr. Teresa Schlackl SDS
12 July 2015

“Yes, let us zealously pray and work that the will of Jesus,
‘Your Kingdom come’, be fulfilled.”¹

A reading of the Spiritual Diary shows: Father Jordan understood that all men and women are in the Kingdom of God. Jordan wanted all men and women to be attracted by the Kingdom of God. For him “the domain of God” was extensive/global/universal, one “home” that could not be lost.

1. Kingdom of God and his righteousness for the Earth: The other vision of life

Father Jordan’s deep intention was “the commitment to God and his Kingdom”, which he understood as “a Kingdom of Love”. The Kingdom of God and its righteousness is “something like an inner fire and light, which shows the way into the discipleship of Jesus, and which encourages me to practice a vision of a true, safe and achieved life for all people, here on this earth and before death.” “Your kingdom come” we pray – as taught in Jewish tradition – day by day. In that, the desire is obvious. The cry – like we know from Bartimaeus – is for a safe life. It is the desire for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The core of Jesus’ pronouncements - the proclamation, that the Kingdom of God has begun already and is present (Mk 1, 15) – is connected with justice/righteousness. The conversion of hearts is likewise as necessary as the overcoming of structures, which consequently cause discrimination and separation as.

The kingdom and its challenge

“Reading the Scriptures also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of “charity à la carte”, or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our consciences. The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity.” (EG 180)

The “Space” of the Kingdom of God is mainly concrete human relations and societies; those are in a special sense “the land” of God, where he is settling. Thus the Jewish and Christian communities (qahal/ekklesia) can be seen as ‘spaces of experience’ and ‘real utopias’ of the Kingdom of God, as a rising of the Kingdom of God.

Kingdom of God as a feast of an open “meal-communion”

The areas of economy, of politics and of culture, and of religion are part of one feast:

- abundance is part of a feast even when at other times life is sparse
- in celebrating a feast it is important, that all have space and nobody is excluded

**“Yes, let us zealously pray
and work that the
will of Jesus,
‘Your Kingdom come’,
be fulfilled.”**

**Blessed Mary of the
Apostles: Letter, May 20,
1901**

**Charter Chapter 3
Preface**

¹ Charter III, Mary of the Apostles: Letter, May 20, 1901.

- during a feast the vision for a good life for all people appears

The “circle table” of the festive meal (Mt, Lk) is a social nightmare: open for everybody. A feast offers to all the fullness of life – food, community and meaning.

For Jesus the Kingdom of God is a society without poor; a society ready to be in solidarity and just, and which is oriented towards the needs of people.

The Kingdom of God is described by Jesus as a meal for those who count for nothing in society. Adults orient themselves to children. Women have dignity, are respected and their work was made visible (Mt 13, 33). It is a Kingdom of brother-/sisterhood free of commands.

The access to the Kingdom of God is given by a certain praxis (Mt 7, 21). For Jesus the Kingdom of God means that demons which are against God and life don't have power any more.

Pope Francis has said publicly that he is in need, in need of the faithful and their prayers. The Kingdom of God is an egalitarian, open collection of needy people, who are in solidarity with one another and who mutually recognize one another as equal and poor subjects.

As a Kingdom of the poor, the Kingdom of God is the vision of a society in which nobody starves and in which each one-receives “what is necessary for an economically secure and full Life of dignity.” It is a vision of one world, where there is “enough for all”.

As a Kingdom of “societal nobodies” the Kingdom of God is the Vision of a society in which nobody is disdained, discriminated against or excluded.

As a Kingdom, “in which the will of the Father is going to be fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is the vision of a society, in which nobody is harassed by demons, a Kingdom in which the basic rule of God's love and charity is real.”

2. Presence as place of experience of the Kingdom of God

For Israel, “religious salvation is impossible without justice in the earthly city. An earthly Jerusalem needs to be realized (...) so that the heavenly Jerusalem will be filled with divine presence. There is no other way to salvation, than the one where people are living.” The Kingdom of God is an offer and a task. The sovereignty of God is a promise for the future, which in view of the Old Testament occurs through migration.

Jesus of Nazareth lives in this tradition. At the center of his life is the announcement of this Kingdom of God: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”(Mk 1, 15) No other topic bothers Jesus so much as the ‘basileia tou theou’², the talk of the sovereignty or the Kingdom of God.” The fact that Jesus, Himself, experiences this “being unsettled” so much, as an itinerant preacher, shows us how important migration is also for Christian identity.

The fact that God from the beginning as the creator is the king of the world, is already known by the Old Testament people – as well as by Jesus. Even with Jesus God doesn't come any closer than before: During the liberation from Egypt “God's finger” (Ex 8, 15) is as active as it was during the expulsion of the demons by Jesus (Lk 11, 20). Jesus always related his work to God's work. Jesus understands the Kingdom of God in the tradition of his Jewish faith. What is new is the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to act like God. What is also new is the irrevocable certitude and promise of the presence of God. In addition what is new is the norm of a certain Jewish tradition: the gradual change of the meaning of power and authority in service of life including the impotence on the cross as redeeming power.

² Meaning: “Kingdom of God” refers to a spiritual realm and the kingship of God; Royal power and dignity.

Through Jesus of Nazareth the sovereignty of God becomes a hermeneutical key and the essence of his teaching. That he formulates this into the daily life of simple and poor people is new. The undivided presence of God is the center of the announcement and praxis of Jesus of Nazareth: Now the Kingdom of God is fully present; now the prophetic promises are accomplished. This presence can be converted into the place of experience of God's kingdom. This presence becomes the kairos where God's salvation is realized. The Kingdom of God is achievable for people (Lk 17, 20). It is tangible in the world: "in the midst of you". The consequent de-sacralisation of the "basileia" is noticeable; the sovereignty of God takes place in daily life. It becomes a reality in profane actions such as in the management of money, salary, debts etc.

Since Jesus of Nazareth, now the Kingdom of God is fully present. The sovereignty of God takes place in daily life and profane actions.

Living together

The Kingdom of God is a mindset of living together. The demand for justice nowadays is significant and related to the question of how we deal with Migration. The locals could recall this vision because they saw migrants as persons who proclaim God's Kingdom.

In living together a place would arise where the Kingdom of God becomes a reality. Spiritual rootedness is needed as a possibility for the life that is promised by God himself. Here the model of Theo Sundermeier is helpful: living together, learning from each other, and celebrating together.

"Just Community"

The common way of life of faithful is a "just community", which lives from the experience of the Kingdom of God and its justice. Therefore justice does not need to be accomplished, but only needs to be shown. A just praxis "is born in a contemplative experience of God, which expects from the faithful a different, higher justice, which stands on the horizon as 'freely given'".

Elements of a Kingdom of God spirituality and mystic

Meaning of reality "Spirituality means the spirit 'with which someone faces reality'".

"Realities are greater than ideas. This principle has to do with incarnation of the word and its being put into practice (...) to perform works of justice and charity which make that word fruitful." (EG 233)

According to Jon Sobrino³ spirituality is based on: "1. a basic honesty in order to see the reality as it is; 2. deep fidelity to this reality; 3. the readiness to correlate to the "more" which contains this reality and to be carried by it."

A concrete spirituality relating to real life is personal, not private, and that means discipleship. As a spirituality of life this serves as the vision of a life with fullness and dignity for all people.

- "God's gift as a compulsory task"
- "present, but not yet accomplished"
- "in the world and for the world but not of the world"
- personal-existential and political-structural
- symbolic presence and practical witness

³ Jon Sobrino: Der Geist, der befreit. Anstöße zu einer neuen Spiritualität, Freiburg i. Br. 1989, 27. (It is the spirit which liberates. Ideas for a new spirituality.)

3. Commitment - How to keep it alive? (Charter)

Allow me to quote, again, Pope Francis who is inspired by scripture: “God constantly renews his faithful ones, whatever their age: ‘They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint’”. (*Is* 40:31) (EG 11)

Therefore we can approach the question of how to keep commitment alive with a certain calmness. I am impressed with the “Charter of the Salvatorian Family”. It is a document which speaks of a strong commitment for the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which comes from a deep experience of God. In many ways the Charter is “up to date / contemporary”. It is a document which speaks with enthusiasm like Father Jordan and Mary of the Apostles. The Charter is inviting to others to join the Salvatorian Family.

If I look at the Charter with the focus of the “spirituality of the Kingdom of God”, we can find a lot of corresponding messages there. You yourself will **know** this. What caught my eye was the emphasis on “the collaboration with all people of good will”.

Our question here is⁴ “commitment” - how to keep it alive? In response to this question I was invited to give helpful hints. What qualifies me to do this except the fact that I was invited to speak here, which means – to think aloud? Please do not expect a final answer, a solution. Decide for yourself if my thoughts for you are worthy of consideration.

It seems to be important to remember three points:

1. The degree to which the fundamental ideas of the Charter can be lived, depends on the degree of participation when the document was written. How can those persons who should live these basic ideals make them their own?
2. Motivation is a personal but not a private matter. Whoever has responsibility in an organization or community is not responsible for the motivation of each single member, but for conditions that help the members to keep their motivation. What conditions help the members to keep their motivation?
3. You can see the significance of basic ideals in a community or organization in their ‘materialization’. This means structures, forms, rituals, methods which are institutionalized in an organization, where ideas take on “shape”. We speak of the incarnation of the spirit. Which structures, forms, etc. exist or are possible, in which the spirit of the community takes “shape” as described in the basic ideals?

Do the language and ideals of the charter help to find this “more” of reality, “the structure of grace in reality”?

The Consequences of Security

For a life of dignity and free of fear, a certain amount of economic security is necessary to assure the means of existence. Security promotes the development of personal potential. But I experienced the consequences of unlimited contracts for clerks, who reduced their personal commitment and worked with a lifelong lack of enthusiasm. Only someone who has the experience of being recognized is able to realize unbelievable possibilities.

To secure the source

To be “fire and flame”, to “burn” for something or somebody are images which express someone who is “stoked”, someone who is alive “full of enthusiasm”. Each symbol is ambivalent. Fire can also burn, consume or even devastate. So the expression “burn out” is

⁴ Martin Jäggle was the speaker at the International Joint Charism Commission (IJCC) Meeting in 2014

an accurate description of a temporary illness. So I hesitate to claim to be “fire and flame”, except in some situations where a “calm fire” or a “little fire” is necessary. And could it not be that, as soon as the fire decreases, the strength of being able to bear something – in spite of all – could be more visible? In any case, enthusiasm cannot be secured or ordered.

But what can be secured is access to the source from which a community and its members live. Maybe here the image of groundwater is helpful. If the access to the source is lost - for whatever reasons – vitality and life are lost. Those persons are dried up, solidified, like dead.

You yourself know best where and what the sources are and how you can obtain and keep access to them. As persons we depend on sources, on water, but at the same time we cannot “make” water/founts. Our only task is to drink. Whoever drinks from the well is refreshed, is strengthened and becomes alive. This strengthens the important experience of knowing oneself and one’s possibilities are given as a gift. This experience strengthens gratitude. The dynamic of being full of gratitude gives rise to the desire to give access to this experience to others.

I would like to recall here one dimension of the “spirituality of the Kingdom of God”, which I described previously: As a precious gift, the Kingdom of God is a source of gratitude. With this Kingdom the vision witnessed by Jesus of true, healed and full life is promised to all and gives meaning to everybody’s life. This liberates persons to trust in this life in spite of all and prevents them from resigning from life or from living with the illusion of being able to “do everything”. Should not the focus go more from enthusiasm to the direction of gratitude?

The Significance of Reality

In view of “commitment – how to keep it alive?” I noticed possible barriers:

- a) The Charter speaks of **all** people. Of course this can mean nobody is excluded. But is not the more dominant outcome to reach all: do we want to reach all or must we reach all? And how do we measure “success”? Like concrete people are called from God into concrete situations, likewise these same people are sent to concrete persons in concrete situations. The mission mandate “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” applies to the church as a whole, and not to single persons or communities that share this mission mandate.

The question arises: Who are **all**? The Charter says **all**, but do we really mean **all**?

- b) The Charter draws an ideal to which persons could be attracted and challenged. But there is no possibility for attempts, for risks, no backwardness, no weakness, no fall, no failure, no “being dependent”, no “being in need”, no acting in a fragment. As a consequence there is, then, also no standing up, no being straightened up, no being healed for all members of the community. The limits, or dark sides, of being human and Christian are not recorded. But, when in the praxis all of this is covered over, reality cannot come through.
- c) The Charter is attentive to the signs of the times and to searching for collaboration with all persons of good will. Perhaps the presence of the Kingdom of God here and now is included in the signs of the times but is not expressed. Leonardo Boff described it this way: God comes before the missionaries come. The attention to God’s action appearance in the present enables people – through their cry for redemption - to discover that “more” of reality, the hope and promise it contains.

Previously, I pointed out that the essential question of spirituality is “the question of the relationship of spirituality and reality”. “Spirituality means the spirit with which a person can face reality”. That leads to Pope Francis:

“Realities are more important than ideas (...) Realities are greater than ideas. This calls for rejecting the various means of masking reality: angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of a historical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom. (EG 231)

Reality is full of tension and antagonisms/oppositions; reality is not oriented in laws and regulations. The questions that arise are: How far do the language and ideals of the Charter have the effect of hindering or blocking the approach to reality? Do language and ideals help to find this “more” of reality, “the structure of grace in reality”? Whoever experiences this structure of grace will answer in the spirit of gratitude and in the awareness of having received a gift. So the “readiness grows in relationship to the reality contained in the ‘more’ and being carried by it”.

Maybe this approach to reality determines the possibility for communities and persons “to keep commitment alive”.

In conclusion, I again stress the aspect of the spirituality of the Kingdom of God, which says that this Kingdom is present but not fully accomplished.

A Spirituality that is oriented to the Kingdom of God trusts that all is meaningful and will endure before God, that all will be done in the name of the Kingdom of God, even when it is preliminary and fragmentary. This spirituality encourages us to trust in the meaningfulness that what is already now – in the sense of the Kingdom of God – can be experienced and witnessed as ‘eternal life’.

Reflection Questions

1. Re-read the Salvatorian Family Charter in light of this article.
 - a. Note words or phrases that speak to you and ask: “What is this saying to me and how will I respond?”
 - b. What could be some implications for the Salvatorian Family in your area of the world, and/or globally?
2. In light of this article, if you were to revise the Salvatorian Family Charter, what would you add or change?
3. The Charter of the Salvatorian Family speaks of “all people.” Who are “all”? The Charter says all, but do we really mean all?
4. “Spirituality means the spirit with which a person can face reality.” Pope Francis says, “Realities are more than ideas” (Evangelium Gaudium 231). This leads to the question of the relationship between spirituality and reality. In which way does the Salvatorian spirituality remerge in my reality?