Session 3 **THE KILLING OF THE BROTHER**

**The killing of the brother (Genesis 4, 1-8)**

1. *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.”*

2. *Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

3. *And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.*

4. *Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering,*

5. *but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.*

* Cain was wounded in his expectation regarding God’s appreciation. Now he experiences:
	+ sadness and despair,
	+ rebellion towards the injustice that was done to him (or that he thinks it was done to him),
	+ anger, resentment and a desire to take revenge.

6. *So the Lord said to Cain* (**at that particular moment**)*: “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?*

7. *If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”*

* At this moment, God interferes in order to help Cain grow and enter into a new spiritual stage by asking him to realize that:
	+ An offering is “a response to the love of God” (liturgy) and not a mean for acquiring it (magic);
	+ The gift of freedom is not annihilated by the fall of the parents and that one has a free choice to remain faithful to the love and to the righteousness of God;
	+ The gift of man to be master of his own self and over the world has not been lost and that it has only deteriorated through the fall. As such, the power of the feelings and of the resentments, which have become blind and wild in the fallen nature, can be overcome by following the commandments of the Lord;
	+ The weakness of the human nature after the fall is not “the substance of the sin” (the assumption that the freedom of the individual would have been annihilated), but the deliberate choice “to choose the sin that lies at the door” as a result of the freedom to choose “not to do good”;
	+ Powerlessness can be turned into power when it opens to the power of the Lord and doesn’t let itself affected by the influence of the dark spirits that suggest autonomous reactions.
* Now and in the subsequent moments, God shows Cain that His love hasn’t been altered either by the quality of his offering, or by the negative feelings Cain had been sheltering, but that it shapes on the form of Cain’s powerlessness, including also on the form of a possible deceit in the choice of the offering he brought (see the interpretations of the Holy Fathers).
* It is here that God suggests to man that he can return to faith at every point of his fall.

8. *Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him*.

* Cain didn’t choose to overcome “the sin” that “was lying” at his door; instead he chose to let himself overpowered by jealousy, envy and revolt, and revenged by killing his brother. By killing his brother, he actually took revenge on God.
* Cain, the first born, “the man acquired from the Lord” becomes the first killer in the history of manhood. His crime became the first link in an endless chain of crimes, the logical beginning of the murdering violence that has ruled and continues to rule this world.
* Cain’s crime has become the prototype of all aggressions done by man against man.

**The feeling of injustice generates violence**

* Just like Cain, a person overcome by the feeling of injustice becomes sad, suffers and rebels.
* Rebellion is expressed through resentments: revival of and rumination over the painful feelings produced by the event.
* Resentments, if allowed and entertained, lead to the desire to take revenge.
* The energy burnt in the desire to revenge will eventually be used by the spirit of revenge which spoils the inner peace and feeds the hatred against the brother until it eventually leads to the desire to kill him.
* Hatred and the spirit of revenge give then birth to a devastating spiral that may manifest itself not only in the form of physical murders, but also in that of equally annihilating crimes such as calumny, backbiting, mockery and so on.
* The engine of this violent dynamism is the human rejection to grow up, the persistence in maintaining the mentality of the child, who thinks that he is entitled to everything.
* From here emerges the spirit of laying claims, chronic discontent, continuous fight for one’s rights and privileges.
* In order to acquire the desired privileges, we may end up using “forms of seduction that go from self-suggestion to beliefs and magical practices or even wild rituals, in which we sacrifice innocent victims or our own selves”. (ref. Bertrand Vergely)
* The story of Cain shows us that it is the egocentric attitude that leads to violence and makes the individual blind to the gifts he has received.
* But the ways of God are not the way of man. Cain, like every other individual, is invited to lift his head and to listen to the teachings of God for cleaning and transforming his heart, which is “the source of all evil”. “The adversity of the world we are fearing is none other than the one hidden in our own selves. Our own shadow.” (ref. Bertrand Vergely)
* Any form of violence against one’s brother is nothing but a refusal to follow the path of spiritual growth offered by God to every man, at the various stages of his development.
* When the violence of man is not targeted at conquering the Kingdom of God (“The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force” = Force – Matthew 11,12), it turns against God and his fellow men.
* Every kind of violence against one’s brother – who is turned into a “scapegoat” – is nothing but eventually a form of violence against God.

**Justification, self-righteousness**

* People always find a justification for their violence, always feel entitled to make themselves their own justice.
* However, by making your own justice, you try to replace the Right One, which is God alone.
* Making one’s own justice implies placing the load of responsibility on the other: “it wasn’t me – it was she, he, they…”
* Making one’s own justice also precludes us from becoming aware of our own responsibility.
* The tendency to self-justification prevents us from becoming aware of the action of unconscious protection mechanisms that spoil our life.
* It also prevents us from becoming aware of the harm we have done to another person, and, as a consequence, that person may assume full responsibility and feel guilty (especially if he is a child).
* In an abusive situation, the aggressor does not acknowledge, not even to himself, the responsibility for the harm done to the victim. Even more, he will claim that the guilt and the responsibility belong to the victim alone. Consequently, the victim could end up believing that the harm was justified and deserved, and may develop a sense of false guilt, which is something that many of us have had to deal with. False guilt is the reason why we assume that it was right to be abused every time we feel guilty.
* A person blinded by false guilt will always feel guilty for everything that happens and interprets the offenses of an abuser as legitimate or pardonable.
* The feeling of false guilt causes the victim of an abuse to enter into a mimesis of the harm he has experienced, which he will unwillingly further replicate onto others.
* As such, the raped could became a rapist, the abused an abuser, the humiliated an offender, the tortured a torturer…
* Or he will choose to abuse himself, visibly (through physical self-mutilation) or subtly (through self-undermining, choice of inappropriate/insufficient nourishment, choice of high-risk situations, etc.)

**Freeing oneself from determinations and conditionings**

* God made Himself man and Christ freely accepted to be the victim of man’s revenge on God in order to show His love for man and to reconcile the humankind with their Heavenly Father through His sacrifice.
* By resisting the temptations of the devil on the Mount of Quarantania, the Savior refused to save the world by feeding the spoiled child that resides in every man and that keeps asking for more, no matter how much he receives. This resistance was the actual act through which He freed man from this tyranny…
* The tyrant child throws tantrums in order to test the power he has over the adults. By giving in to the tyrant child, the adult feeds his desire for power and unconsciously flatters the tyrant in him. At the same time he feeds his own masochist pleasure to “sacrifice” himself for the good of the child. However, this isn’t a sacrifice, but a cajolement of the subconscious slave from his inner self. (ref. Bertrand Vergely)
* God’s words to Cain “sin lies at the door, but you should rule over it” show that we have the power to be free and that we can respond to a painful occurrence other than through violence.
* Even if this freedom is altered by fall, by passions and the conditionings they bring along, it remains nevertheless a power that man can use at his free will. Under every circumstance, no matter how “pressured” we might have been to take an evil course, we realize that we had the opportunity to choose between life and death (Deuteronomy 30, 19).
* Now, in the Church, the divine grace brings to perfection this freedom by pouring the power of the Lord into our powerlessness.
* With the grace of God, a person can become aware of the unconscious schemas of mimesis and may free himself from their control. Love is more powerful than death.
* The freedom of the human being is never fully annihilated.

**Homework**

1. Continue to pray each day to the Holy Spirit, keeping forgiveness in mind.
2. Remember and describe a situation in which you felt wronged.
3. Describe the feelings you experienced then.
4. Recognize and write down the sins you have committed as a result of feeling wronged.
5. Describe the resentments you might have now.
6. Recognize the sufferance you are experiencing as a result of these resentments and identify the sins you are repeating each time you feel wronged.
7. Confess to a priest what you still lies on your consciousness and what you have not yet confessed, and pray for repentance, which will bring you the joy of receiving God’s loving grace and forgiveness.
8. Identify and describe aspects of your behavior that could be forms of mimesis of a harm experienced as a child.
9. Make a list of the benefits you have drawn from these experiences and pray for those who have hurt you.
10. Express your thankfulness every evening for the gift of living that day, including for the troubles that came along. You will discover that everything is a gift and that this gift will get bigger with each day.