

Congress – “Being a Person”

Mons. Zuppi: Participation and innovation for disability

Among the various realities, the existence of persons with disabilities helps us to find ability, to seek safeguards for all, to improve the quality of human relations and to look for job security. The wasteful consumer society and the bureaucratic logic look down on the lives that do not match with the standards of strength, livelihood, self-sufficiency and attractiveness, thereby depreciating and humiliating the individual, until the person becomes a scrap.

There are many issues related to this: the rights denied and the ones to defend, mental health issues, the difficulties of coming of age, access to the labor market, security and protection demands. Often these situations are dealt with a paternalistic logic, preventing innovation to thrive.

We need to consider the person as the focus of the action and understand their value, to put in place proposals able to open up new prospects. The commitment does not end with assistive actions and programmes. Attentiveness to the other is essential. People with disabilities ask for this: identifying with the other; they ask and teach “the art of accompanying”; they ask not to be a passive presence, barely tolerated.

They teach us how to get rid of convenience and roles; they show us the value of simplicity and directness; they look for a friendship that, beyond the limits, shouts: “You are worth to me”.

This way, simplicity and frailty become alternatives to individualism and weakness becomes strength.

Persons with disabilities have to be accompanied, not just accepted; they have to be protected and to be put up on stage, so that their conditions do not become a sentence: “Imagine having a whole world in your heart and not being able to put it into words”.

Treating disabled people not like objects but like subjects, it is the lesson we learn from those realities that look into the heart of the weakest, so that everyone could find it.