

THE WOODWORM, THE CUCKOO AND OUR WOVES

Being in China is quite an experience for learning new things and have some taste of such rich culture, it goes without saying that Chinese people are usually associated with knowledge and wisdom. There are ways of saying things by using just few characters, usually four of them, a sort of “wisdom pills” to use while engaging in a serious conversation or simply talking with a friend while drinking some tea (well nowadays they might be using some beer or strong alcohol...).

An example about patience and perseverance is the saying “Mù yǐ chéng zhōu “ (The tree has been made into a boat); with all the respect for such outstanding culture which was introduced to the West by one of my ancestors, a certain Marco Polo, I do rather prefer a saying of my region in Italy: “One day the woodworm told the wood “give me time, and I will eventually pierce you through”.



This saying is coming back to me all the time in recent years, it tells me something very deep about religious life and our vows. You might know that all religious groups have the basic three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and that some Congregation have another one specific to their charisma. For the Oblates is the vow of perseverance, expressing the desire and commitment to hold on to our specific charisma and also attachment to the Congregation. Well I have to confess that while getting “less younger” I do really consider this fourth vow essential to my well being as human person and possibly religious one. Do I mean that for the other vows I did reach a sort of inner peace? Not really! A beautiful woman is still able to distract myself from celestial thoughts; the desire at times for a more comfortable life is always beside me; and the claim for being acknowledged for factual or fictional talents is a deceitful temptation.... But the real challenge remains the vow of perseverance!

Looking around we can see how easy is rather to be like the cuckoo, moving on from one host nest to another and never real attending his own nest. This bird does not build a nest for itself but will use the nest of other birds, once it finds a suitable nest, it will lay the egg directly into their nest or drop it into the same.



There are times and situations when patience mixed eventually with a good amount of stubbornness will take us to a perceived goal in life, like the woodworm indeed! Here in Mainland China we are blessed with plenty of opportunities to try out such a behavior: have a vision according to the specific charisma of ours and go for it, not trying to imitate the flying cuckoo's behavior but rather the more modest and shy woodworm: ““Give me time, and I will eventually pierce you through””.

Giovanni omi