

Abruzzo. Summer's Springtime

Sandro Cordeschi* (June 24, 2009)



In post-earthquake Abruzzi nature restores the faith of those who remained in the areas hit by tragedy. People's response is the desire to continue living.

Today is the longest day of the year in our illusory understanding of the seasons.

It's the start of summer, a time of harvest, and even more importantly, the night of St. John begins ("He must grow, I diminish," murmurs the hermit in the Gospel) with memories of bonfires from our childhood.



We would like this summer begin with springtime, with a wellspring of water, with rebirth. We look then, in the middle of the night, for signs of darkness's defeat. Real signs, not propaganda for the lame, part-time reopening of wounded historic centers, not the proclamations of weasels who claim that the horizon does not exist. Real signs, such as Gianni Letta's sincere embarrassment in front of his people who don't know what to say. We begin with two urban legends which highlight two humble heroes in everyday life. They are not supermen or powerful lords, but a child and a caretaker, living witnesses of what psychologists call resilience: accept pain, understand fate, don't blindly oppose, don't get caught up in the crush, and stay there. And move forward.

The child put a stop to the Minister of Defense's murky speech when he came to parade around in a small and disadvantaged country school that he wanted to revitalize. The ingenuous boy (let the children come to me, today we are evangelical), after having politely raised his hand said, more or less, to the great man on duty: "Excuse me, but why are you talking about things that we don't understand? If you don't mind, we would like to get back to our lessons." It was as if to say that we are interested in real life. We are all eye witnesses to the story about the caretaker; there is no filter of fable or falsehood. The caretaker never left his house despite the proclamations of many and the inaction of many more. So he simply stayed there with his cat from that night onward, the story of his life and his vigor carefully hidden behind his bittersweet smile.

He helped and comforted many people from Aquila on that day - he, the man who had lost so much. He had to start over for the umpteenth time will do so on his own land, and accompany those in fear to their devastated homes - he, the man who has somehow conquered fear.

That night he slept profoundly between the moving walls. To those of us who are worried about his fate, we offer him an alternative, he said only: "Someone has to be the keeper," not of houses, of course, but of the city. We feel as though he represents us, not the jokers on television. Flowers are beginning to bloom even on crumbling balconies; in the abandoned public green, there are leaves on the trees and grass is growing.

The children rediscover lost wonders in going through the remains of "their" city, playing in the shadows, waiting for the new sun. Children are born, others are expected. It's because of this that we still exist.



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(Translated by Giulia Prestia)

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