

## *The Texts of the Convivium*

### HEAVEN CAN WAIT

Whilst I was walking with my wife along a road halfway up the hill of the hilly village where we spend our summers, I said hello to two very old village women who were sitting on a bench outside their house.

Naturally our brief conversation had to include the topics of age and health. The more decrepit of the two friends said: “Eh, as long as we’re in this world...”

She looked like she was doing very well in this world: something rather inexplicable in my opinion. I found the whole thing inexplicable, seeing as the appearance and evident infirmities which the good lady was inflicted with, hardly justified such an attachment to earthy life. So much so that I found myself saying: “Then you’ll go to heaven, where you’ll be even better”.

The prompt reply of the old lady who was virtually on death’s doorstep was: “But I’m doing fine on this earth”.

I didn’t feel like insisting on my apologia of eternal life.

When we were alone again, my wife told me: “Though these people go to church every day, you shouldn’t speak to them of the afterlife, and not even of heaven. They don’t care. Such matters and even a hint of them are like bad omens to them and they are frightened”.

I’ll never do it again. But I can’t prevent myself from making certain reflections. If on one side we have the old lady who is insensitive to any thought of non earthly life, on the other side we have, at the very worst, the kamikaze, who blows himself up in order to go to heaven.

It’s true that that heaven is full of beautiful women and so many joys and pleasures, incomparably more enticing than those of the kingdom of heavens that the good old lady is offered by the preachings of her parish priest.

On the other hand it leads one to thinking of Peter’s reply to Jesus: “To whom shall we go Lord? You have the word of eternal life”.

What was so special about that eternal life that it moved the believers to sacrifice what the earth had to offer that was most desirable for it?

Was the personal charm of the Divine Master only at issue? Or was the Christian one promised to be like an incomparable experience, like that intimate experience of which only a small glimpse irresistibly charms those who are called to saintliness?

Perhaps the problem lies in savouring that extremely particular experience and – so to speak – truly magical, in comparison to which all other prospective and aspiration fades away.