

8. Dezember 2018 Flüchtlingsadventkalender

As if it was a game

Caschi Bianchi* -Francesca Benenati and Ornella Xhemaj- visit to Lesvos and Chios

The children I have met in the refugee camps of the islands continue to inhabit my dreams. Those dreams you make in the early morning and that remain in an unconscious and remote level with you, so when you wake up you cannot remember them clearly. But they are part of you as well. So those children are part of me, in some hidden corner of my mind.

In my dreams they do not live in the dirty tents I have saw. In my dreams, I meet them in some other place, a safer place, I don't know where, but my feeling is a sort of relief, because in my dreams those children are out of the nightmare of the camps.

Nevertheless, these are dreams. The truth is that many, many children live in a concrete nightmare. What I found really surprising in the refugee camps, was the strident contrast between the beauty of the children and the poverty in which they live. It seemed that the dirt of the place could not infect the light of their eyes full of life and their irrepressible willingness to make friendship with anybody.

They continue to live their childhood despite the misery of the place. They play without toys. The camp becomes every day a forest to discover.

Two of them followed us for two entire days, running around us like two local guides with a special mission. They checked every corner of the camp, they hid themselves behind the tents, they climbed the rocks, they showed us the right way, like two Indiana Jones of a modern tragicomedy.

Everything for them was a game. The dangers and the bad living conditions of the camps were part of their adventure: avoiding the snakes in the wood, jumping the smelly puddles of stagnated water, finding new stones or branches for their parents to repair their tents, passing through the meshes separating the different sectors of the camp like monkeys, pushing the strollers of their younger brothers while their parents were queueing for the meal.

They reminded me somehow the kid protagonist of the Italian movie of Roberto Benigni "La vita è bella", who survived to the horrors of the Nazi camp living like in a game; and the adults reminded me Benigni, who held on just for his child.

The same happens in the refugee camps: the children are the hope for the future, the sense of the journey, the resilience for tolerating the sufferings. They are the most precious good for whoever lives in the camp. Those who don't have children to take care of are hopeless.

(www.caritas.gr)