

Our
vulnerability is a
space for grace

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What is vulnerability?

The word “vulnerability” has its origins in Latin (vulnerabilis ; vulnus, vulenris).

Its etymological meaning refers to what can be hurt or hit.



Vulnerable is that which is susceptible to being hurt, influenced or attacked physically, emotionally or mentally. In fact, every human being is susceptible to being hurt in any of these dimensions.



Some definitions and examples of vulnerability:



- Vulnerability is an emotion we experience in times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure.

(Brene Brown)

Some definitions and examples of vulnerability:

- Vulnerability is the inability to resist when a threatening phenomenon occurs, or the inability to recover after a disaster has occurred.

(United Nations Office
for Risk Reduction
of Catastrophes)



Some definitions and examples of vulnerability:

- Gandhi's commitment to non-violence and civil disobedience, in a world dominated by authoritarianism, was considered a vulnerability. However, this apparent weakness was, in reality, a manifestation of inner strength and unwavering values.





Questions to reflect on:

- What does the word “vulnerability” mean to you?
- How do you relate to your own vulnerability and the vulnerability of others?



What God do we believe in?



God revealed Godself in a special way in Jesus Christ's incarnation. Jesus reveals who God is, not who God is not. God is not one thing inside and another thing outside. Jesus Christ in his humanity shows us divinity: God's way of being.

In what God do we believe in?

In what God do you believe in?

What is your concept of God?





Jn 1:18 No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Mc 10, 43-45: Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'



Jn 13, 12-15: When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand', he said, 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.



God in Jesus Christ teaches us, shows us that vulnerability is part of God himself, against everything we often believe about God.

Our God is vulnerable, allowing to be affected by our lives, to be hurt. God is love and love is vulnerable.

God is love



These words from Khalil Gibran in his poem about love and marriage express the vulnerability of love:

When love beckons to you follow him, Though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you yield to him, Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you. And when he speaks to you believe in him, Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden. For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you.

Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.

And for this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names; so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.(Phil 2, 5-11)

Questions to reflect on:

- In what God do you believe in?
- Is the vulnerability of God and love part of your faith?
- Choose and ponder a biblical quote that helps you understand God's vulnerability.





The challenges in today's world

Looking at the world we can observe many of the challenges that surround us that make us vulnerable because they affect us without us being able to avoid it:



Volatility

A key aspect of your work is subject to major, unpredictable peaks and troughs.



Uncertainty

The future is unknown, but external events are likely to be impactful.



Complexity

Many interconnected factors influence one another, in ways that are challenging to model confidently.



Ambiguity

Conflicting, noisy or insufficient data makes it difficult to assess what's really going on.

VUCA



VOLATILIDAD



INCERTIDUMBRE



COMPLEJIDAD



AMBIGÜEDAD

Vulnerability within consecrated life:

- All the above realities have an impact on religious life



- Globalization
- Acceleration of change
- Technological revolution, disruptions
- Emergence of ideologies: nationalism, populism
- The impact of social networks
- The rise of fake news
- The attack on science
- Identity politics
- The decline of trust in traditional institutions and authorities
- Wars and terrorism

Vulnerability within consecrated life:



- Many generations living together
- Many cultures in the same community



- The impact of abuse in the Church and religious life
- New way of understanding votes
- New way of understanding community life
- Crisis of many understandings of the experience of consecrated life
- Synodality
- The change in the role and status of women in many societies



- Decrease in new vocations
- Challenges for initial training
- The meaning and possibility of the mission has changed
- The aging of the average age of religious women
- The smallest number of sisters
- Economic problems



- In many places the Church is far from the reality of the societies where it is inserted
- The demand for professionalism in many ministries
- Etc.



Questions to reflect on:

- What other challenges and crises do you encounter in religious life, especially in your congregation?
- How do these realities affect you and make you vulnerable?

Vulnerability condition of the life of Jesus and ours



God has created us fragile and has seemed “very good” and “very beautiful” according to what we are told in Gen 1:31. However, that is often not our experience or our perspective. We would prefer not to be so vulnerable but to be immune and powerful.



We wish not to be humans but superhumans, angels. It is difficult for us to embrace the human condition as it is, thinking that it should be different, that we should be different.

However, God has seen fit to make us deeply human and in the fullness of history to become man in our vulnerable flesh.



We need to go through the pages of the Gospel, looking at the person of Jesus in his vulnerability and in his relationship with the vulnerability of others. Jesus did not flee from his vulnerable human condition but embraced it with all his realism from his birth, at every step, until death and resurrection.



It is urgent to be able to look at Jesus more and more, not only from the dogmatic and intellectual perspective, but from the most human and natural aspects of trivial life. The theology to which we are accustomed is essentially rational, systematic, made of doctrine and dogmas. A theology that links our existential, emotional and affective contents is imperative.



We need to know Jesus in a more credible way because we try to discover him as more human and, therefore, more divine.



Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must hold firm to our profession of faith.

For the high priest we have is not incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us, but has been put to the test in exactly the same way as ourselves, apart from sin.

Let us, then, have no fear in approaching the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace when we are in need of help.(Heb 4, 14-16)

"My grace is enough for you: strength is realized in weakness."

Wherefore, so that I should not get above myself, I was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to batter me and prevent me from getting above myself. About this, I have three times pleaded with the Lord that it might leave me; but he has answered me, 'My grace is enough for you: for power is at full stretch in weakness.' It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong. (2 Cor 12, 7-10)

Paul realizes that, although he can boast of very sublime realities in his life, there is, however, another reality that slaps him in the face: a thorn in the flesh.

What are those weaknesses that slap us in the face? And of which Paul says he glories, even after having asked God to take them away.



What do we call weakness?

Asthenia in Greek. Something that makes us small, not capable, not strong, vulnerable.

We can identify personal vulnerabilities (something that makes us exposed to being hurt) and also communitarian vulnerabilities.



Paul asks God to take them away from him:
Therefore, three times I have asked the Lord
to take him away from me.

He, like us, often finds it difficult to live with
our weaknesses or vulnerabilities. The first
thing we want is to get them out of the way.

And our prayer like that of Paul is, Lord, take
this weakness away from me, from us. And
yet, it seems that God is not as interested as
Paul in removing that weakness.

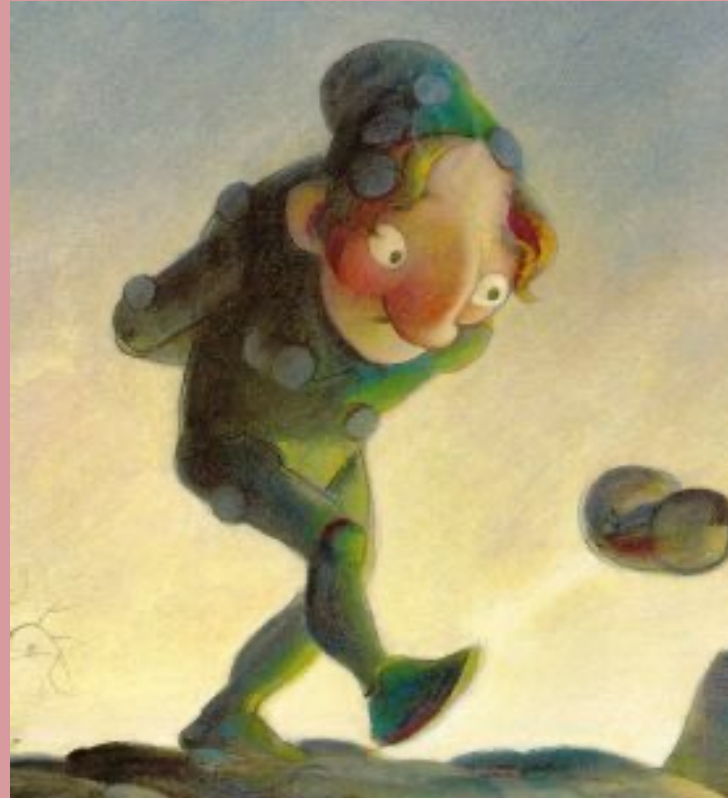
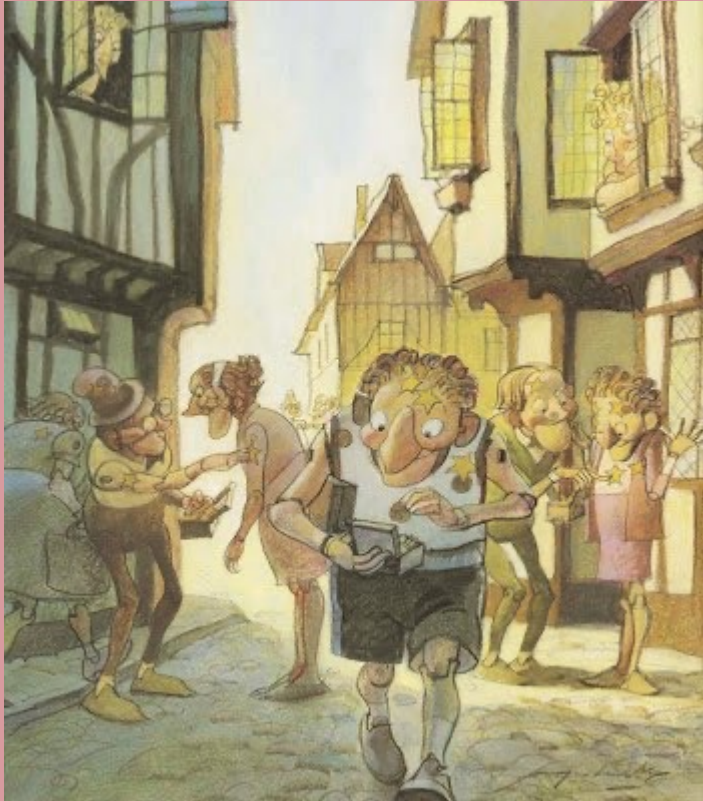


Questions for reflection

- When you look at Jesus in prayer, how do you stop to contemplate his vulnerable humanity?
- How could your prayerful gaze change so that his vulnerability illuminates yours?
- What do you do with those personal vulnerabilities that you find in yourself?
- What do you do with the communitarian or congregational vulnerabilities that are present?



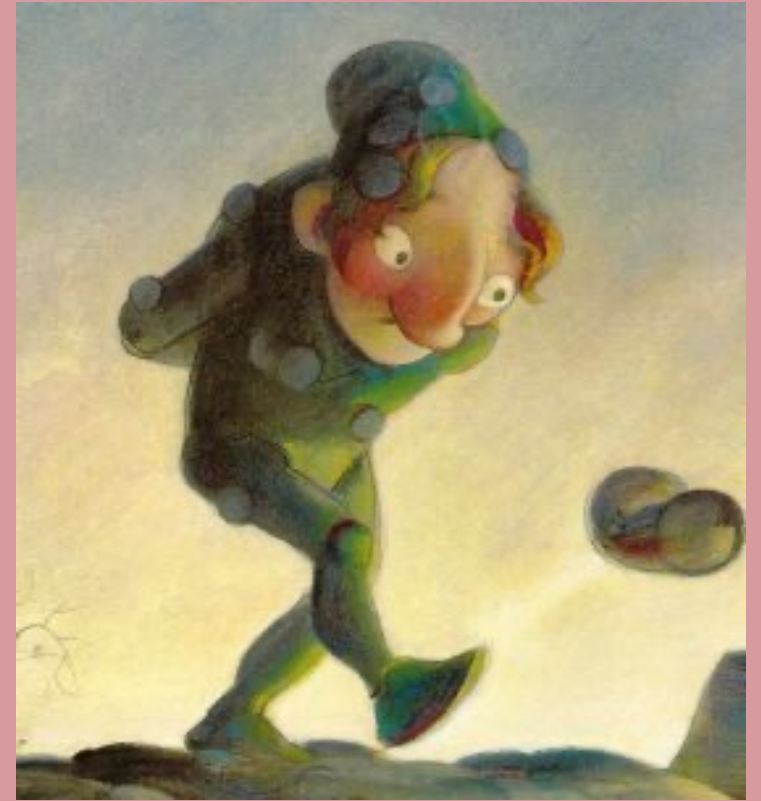
You are special



Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15QuHygLwFU>

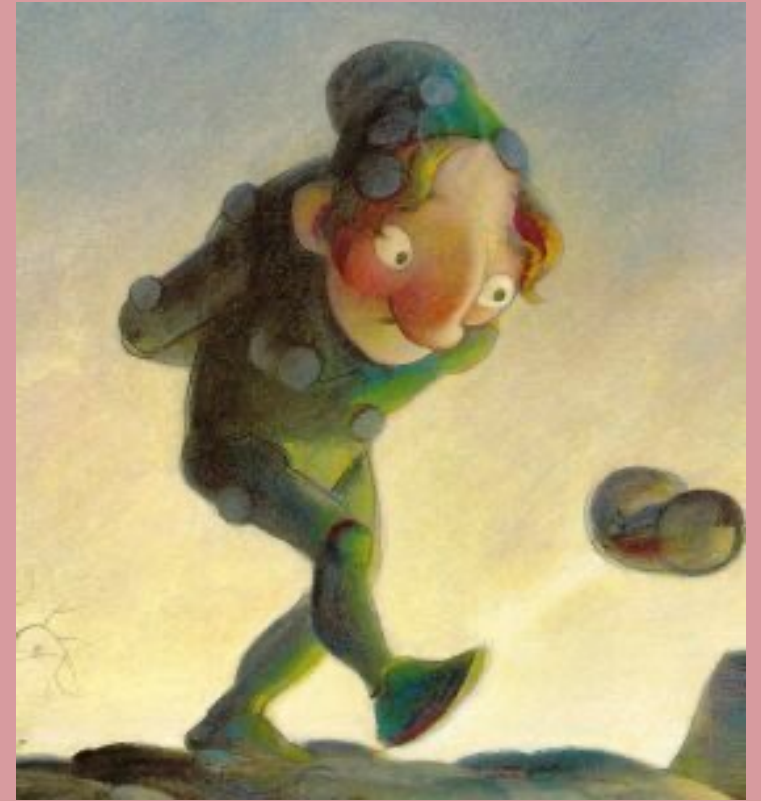
Punchinello

Much of the vulnerability we feel and experience comes from the fact that we seek identity, our value as people in what we do, in what people say about us, in doing good or bad, in having responsibilities or not, in mission that we do, in the assignments that we have.



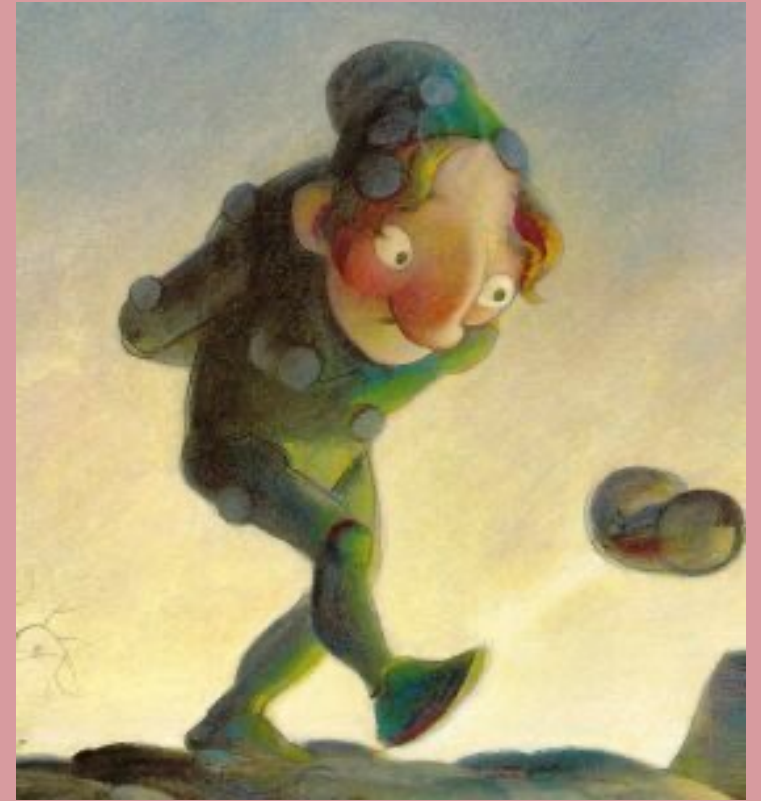
Punchinello

That is why we are so vulnerable, because all these things leave us exposed to being hurt in the most central part of our being. However, our true identity is not there. I do believe that I am important because of the things I do, say, achieve, what others say about me, my life ends up being a roller coaster full of ups and downs with a lot of vertigo.



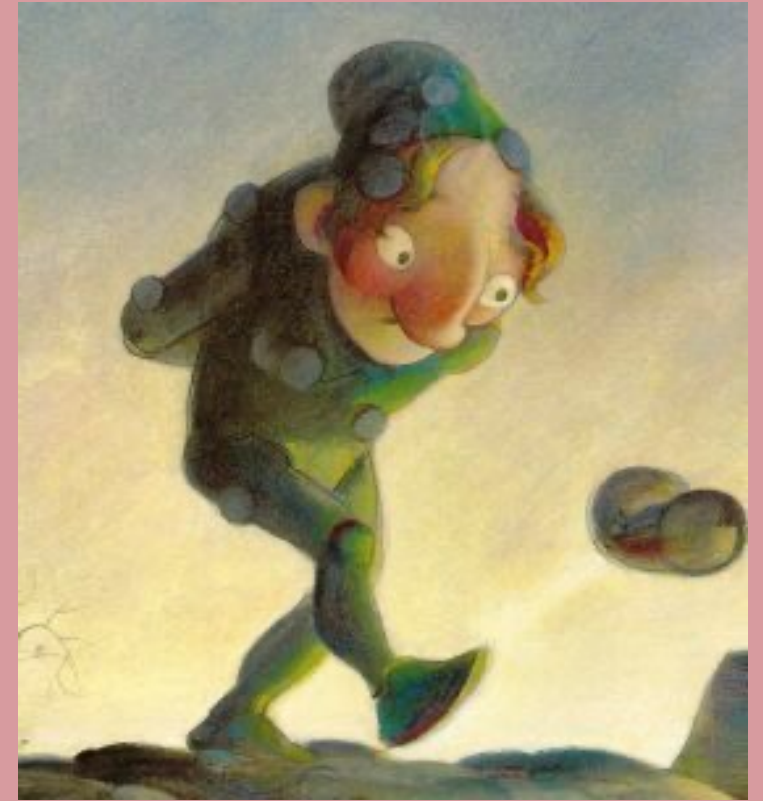
Punchinello

Like Punchinello and all the Wemmicks, we try to fit in, to get our identity from what others think, say, and behave toward us. But very often we realize that we fail to impress, to be in front of others what we want to be. We have to realize the power that the opinions and beliefs of others have over us.



Punchinello

And we end up not being what we really are but what we believe others want us to be. We feel guilt, shame, inadequacy, etc. We say that there is something wrong with me, that I am useless, stupid, etc. We all carry this reality within us that makes us believe that we are not good enough, that we are not worthy, that we are not beautiful and that we have no dignity.



She was just made of

wood
Who is this person? Lucia comes from light in Italian: "luce."

This person is Jesus and all who truly believed and lived, fueled by the love of God, believing in who they truly were: beloved sons and daughters of God, nothing more and nothing less.

This is what we are called to be. We are called to live with each other, but not to be judges of each other or to give grades to each other.



You are special

How can we learn to live like this?

Return to who made us and believe that we are who God says we are.

Often, the marks we receive condition and determine our way of relating to God: Will God look at me with love, will God judge me, will God want to see me?



You are special

We have to dare to walk the narrow path. And realize that God is not what we think he is. God's ways are not our ways.

Often, we think that God sees us as we think and feel about ourselves. Or that God looks at us how others look at us.



You are special

God wants to meet us face to face. God knows your name. God created you.

God tells us that the marks we receive – good or bad – are not important. The only thing that matters is what God thinks.



You are special

And what God thinks and says is:

- I made you for love and beauty.
- You're beautiful.
- You belong to God.
- You're mine.



You are special

Personal work time:

- What do you think God is saying about you?





Video:

<https://i.gifer.com/QTkm.gif>

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