

Retraite de la Fraternité de Jésus 2025
Interview Jan De Cock

Hello everyone!
As part of this retreat of the
Fraternity of Jesus 2025,
we are exploring the central mystery of our
faith,
that of the Incarnation, the fact that God
the Creator God, becomes Emmanuel,
"God-with-us", God in our midst.
And he even made himself one of us.
Of course, this mystery has many
facets and many consequences for our
Christian life,
-we who seek to become a disciple of this
God-Emmanuel.
To explore one of its dimensions, or
rather
some of these dimensions, especially
those of closeness,
compassion, healing, forgiveness,
I have the
great joy of being able to dialogue this
morning with Jan De Cock.
Hello Jan !

Hello, Fr. Sébastien.

Thank you so much for accepting this
invitation and making yourself available
for this conversation that we are going
to have together.
We are going to address some big
questions together:
What does it mean
to put oneself in another's place ?
To become the other?
Can a person change, become another ?
Improve himself?
How can we move beyond the judgments
we so easily make about each other,
when we put people in boxes?
What are the great forces of life
in human beings?
-those forces, which give life
from the depths, such as resilience,
forgiveness, solidarity?
And then, when we go to the depths of the

human condition, what do we find?
Is there only mud?
Or is there a light that springs up?
So here we are. Thank you for being
here with us.
In a nutshell, you are Belgian, married,
you live in Westmalle,
north of Antwerp, in Flanders, and today
you work as
a lay pastoral worker in a hospital,
especially
accompanying people in palliative care.
And also, or above all, you have set up a
non-profit organization
an association called
"Without Walls"
("sans murs"), which works in the world
of prisons for a
more humane management of prisoners, to
respect their dignity
and also to allow dialogue
between prisoners, victims
and civil society.
Obviously, all this is the result of a
long history.
Now we can start there...
How did it all start?
How did you, the young schoolteacher that
you were, start
to become a companion for people at the
end of life?
Why a free man,
-and I believe that you have not done
great things wrong in your life-
spent so much time in prison and even
within prisons with prisoners?
What happened to you from the years
1987?

Well, this year, I went to Chile,
I had to do my military service,
but I was an objector, a conscientious
objector and
so here we were, we were going to take
this opportunity
to work for three years with street
children.

First conversion: these children who turned my life upside down. It was in the middle of Pinochet's dictatorship. So, this is where I also encountered persecution, anguish but also hope and a people that were rising, and especially these children who taught me a lot about life. At one point, a majority of these young people, of these children were in prison because they were snorting glue. And... sometimes they would go out stealing just to get their drugs and were arrested and thrown in jail. At that moment, I was asked to take the workshops to the poor neighborhoods where I worked in the prison. At first, I didn't really want to. I wanted to work on the streets, but not spend a whole day behind bars. I didn't know this world. And at first, I thought I still had to give a word of encouragement to these inmates. And very quickly, I had to recognize that it was the inmates who inspired me who showed me values that I didn't expect. Second conversion.

For example, what values did you encounter there in the prisons?

Welcome and hospitality. When I entered the prison they always invited me to have tea with them, they shared the bread. Patience. I saw people who had been in these places for five or ten years. Would I be able to have this patience? Afterwards, I was going to discover creativity.

They did great things with small things. The big challenge so far in this work with prisoners is when you get out, you find yourself in front of a virtual wall the prejudices of others. And maybe at the time before I went to prison I had them too. We often believe that evil is behind the walls but we... carry it within us too. So every prisoner for me even now is a mirror. They taught me a lot about my own freedom and my own chains.

*And what...
What did you want to do about this wall of prejudice?
To cross it, to make it collapse?*

Yes, there were two things. I wanted... I wanted to gain a little credibility to talk about it or write about it. And I also asked myself the question can I get a little closer to the inmates? -Because I was working until 5 p.m. and I had to leave the prison. I was wondering what would it be like to sleep on the floor or eat the rotten beans? So, I wanted to identify a little more with the prisoners and thus gain more experience to talk about them. That's the idea to live for a time voluntarily among the inmates. In Chile it was not possible because the director "Hermano Juan, said so, I have to testify that every person here in prison has committed a crime, and maybe you could facilitate that idea, committing a crime?!"

And so, I asked the question: "Do you have a proposal?"

And he would say: "Yes, you could steal a chicken, right?" "Yes.

And what would be the punishment for stealing a chicken?"

"The minimum, the minimum", he said.

"What's that?"

"You will not be sentenced to more than five years!"

Oohh

It was a little, a little too much.

And it was only when I returned to Belgium,

when I was asked to visit foreigners in the prison of Leuven, -prisoners

who never received visitors- that the idea arose again.

And I was in the process of taking the steps to live a year

in this prison with the inmates and to write a book from within.

But since I was visiting Latinos, an Ecuadorian told me: "Jan it's still different,

a Belgian prison from what we could offer at home, in Guayaquil".

And his neighbor was a Chinese man who said to me:

"Ah, but you haven't seen the inside of a Chinese cell yet?"

That's it.

I changed my mind a little and for three years, I prepared trips, I wrote to embassies, consulates, organizations that work in prisons.

So more than 20 years ago, I left for a year going from prison to prison wanting to stay there

for a few nights... The longest of which was in a prison in Congo.

I stayed for a month.

That's where I saw

I saw hell.

And so, if I understand well, your approach

was based on the Chilean children who were in prison, whom you visited until 5 p.m.

and you were coming home...

to be with them.

the other person's shoes?

Yes, because sometimes it's an idea.

We talk about it easily, huh?

I take care of others, I appreciate them, but for me it comes through experience.

Maybe that would be for another interview.

The last experience I had, precisely because

I have been working part-time in a hospital for 20 years...

Is there a way to understand to better understand

this sick person, this patient who was entrusted to me?

So there was.

A few months I went to bed

and put myself in the care of others.

I tried to live with this dependence... this embarrassment

of being washed, of being handled. -That's right.

I did it for a while

and I assure you that

on the first day I came back to the hospital as a pastoral worker,

I cried next to my first patient.

I tried to find out what this

secret, this mystery, is.

I've been working in hospitals for 20 years, and all of a sudden,

I felt much closer to each one.

So for me it's necessary to live the experience, whether it's

a street child, a prisoner, a sick person.

And it's clear, I'll never

know what it means to be a prisoner.

(Unless I really do something stupid).

But I deeply believe that we can always make this effort

to get a little closer to the other person.

*And you think that
it sheds light on the
Christian faith
where it is said that God becomes man?
For you, Jesus is the one who has
experienced
the fragile, sick, poor human condition?*

Yes, well I admit that I didn't do it consciously.
It's not to imitate Christ.
The discovery is in the experience itself.
And if you allow me to make the link here with the text of Matthew 25, I had heard it so many times: when Jesus' friends asked him: "But when were you seen hungry, in prison, naked?"
His answer is pretty simple: "Every time you give someone something to eat, it is to me that you give it to. There you go.
Every time you visit a prisoner... it is me that you are visiting.
I have met thousands of prisoners and I can tell you that the majority are there because they have done something very wrong.
And here's the thing: Christ tells us every prisoner that you visit...
Phew!
It is not an offence to avoid the criminal because of his crimes, but it is an invitation to see the man behind the criminal.
And each person, each prisoner is much more than the worse thing he has done.
And this experience brought me much closer to Christ.
So, I work in a hospital
-I believe we have 250 beds-
if on that same day, I have the opportunity to go to the prison in Antwerp where we have 750 prisoners...
in one day, I have the opportunity to meet

Christ 1000 times.
I'd be crazy if I didn't go to prison or hospital.
Yes, yes.
So I'm not saying that I'm consciously 100% aware that it's Christ I am meeting, but I feel so privileged.

*You mentioned earlier about the hell of prisons...
So that we understand what you have experienced during this year
What was the hardest, the most humiliating?*

Yes I could give thousands of examples when we talk about overpopulation, for example. In fact, the first prison where I lived and stayed for a while was the prison of Kigali in Rwanda, built for 2000 people. We were almost 7000.

7000?

Yes.

*And so, what does this mean in concrete terms?
How?*

40 cm per person.
I spent the week of Christmas, New Year in a prison in Benin in a dormitory with capacity 50, but there were 250 of us, so we had to sleep in turns.
We could sleep until midnight, or 00:30 a.m., and then we were woken up, we had to stand up, so the others could get on the ground.
There were two barrels
-I apologize-
to pee or poop. 250...it produces
And on New Year's eve one of our colleagues died of malaria.
The guards refused to open the door, to

remove the body.
 It's hard to describe what you see, what
 you feel.
 250 people in a dormitory of 50,
 those two open barrels and a temperature
 that exceeded 40 degrees.
 This corpse among us.
 For Japan, it was forbidden to speak in a
 Japanese prison.
 If you speak, they send you to
 a confinement cell for four weeks.
 I was in a children's prison in Uganda.
 300 children
 from 3 to 17 years old.
 And uh, yes,
 it's an image that haunts me.
 There were pots and pans for cooking,
 but at the same time they were used
 as a toilet...
 Because we ask ourselves the question,
 what does a three-, four-, five-year-old
 child do in prison?
 But at the time, Ugandan police arrested
 street children,
 especially at night, in a large truck.
 They would go through the streets of
 Kampala, they would
 arrest these children and take them to
 Kampiringisa.
 The very first time I entered this
 prison, they were completely naked.
 (So "Without Walls" did a
 clothing campaign and a few years later, a
 pot
 campaign).
 But what also struck me was that there
 were quite a few children,
 quite a few young people who had scars on
 their foreheads, on their arms.
 It was the child soldiers.
 So, for every person whom
 they managed to kill
 -they...
 they received the orders from the
 military-
 so for every victim whom they managed to
 do,
 they received a point and it was put with
 a knife in their forehead and arm.
 I knew about John who was 17 years old

at the time.
 He had 81 scars on his arm and
 the first three were from his own
 siblings.
 So yes, when you ask the question
 where is hell?..

*And there, in this hell
 what is revealed about the human being?
 Is it barbarism increased?
 Is it fatality?
 Or are there still drops of light?*

Yes, yes, I must add
 somehow a way
 to survive, a technique
 that I apply so far.
 And for that, I have to
 go back to Chile, in 1987.
 I arrived there in the middle of a
 dictatorship.
 Before leaving, I had followed a training
 course in Leuven.
 And I still hear a teacher telling us -to all
 these people
 who were getting ready to go on a
 mission-
 he said... -about idealism:
 "four months of honeymoon and then it's
 over".
 And I believed:
 "Everyone, accept me.
 We were going to change the world.
 We were going to bring an end to
 Pinochet's dictatorship".
 Five months

(the honeymoon lasted five months)

Yes, for me
 and I admit too there were
 several circumstances.
 First, this project with young drug
 addicts.
 There were a lot of things that
 didn't work anymore, even
 death threats too
 against us.
 There was something...
 I was really making a click in my life,

because I didn't
 recognize a few friends anymore
 because of
 the torture, they had been tortured.
 For several months, I had trouble
 sleeping because
 I lived in a poor neighborhood and every
 morning,
 we took stock of who had been stopped,
 who had disappeared,
 And what's more,
 I received a telex from my family in
 Belgium:
 two of my sisters had suffered a car
 accident
 and they were between life and death.
 Well, that day, that night,
 in my bed, I was crying
 and I screamed:
 "God, where are you?
 You don't exist.
 Here I am,
 for you, I have come and you do not
 exist".
 And a little later, I thought:
 "Look at my good will.
 If I find, in this,
 in this day that I have just lived...
 If there is something positive,
 if there is a little light, I stay".
 And I tried to remember
 every detail of that day.
 And it was terrible because I couldn't
 find anything.
 Most of that day, I had spent
 in a Favela, an even
 poorer neighborhood than ours,
 and several hours in the house
 -but it didn't deserve to be called
 a house-
 it was made of plastic
 (the house of) Señora Maria.
 She had eight children and didn't know
 what to feed
 her children the next day because
 her husband was arrested and disappeared.
 And I thought I had
 listened to her for 3 hours
 the stories, the drama, the
 suffering of this Señora.

But precisely, when I was doing this
 exercise,
 trying to find something positive,
 all of a sudden, it was really like love
 at first sight
 -because during the day, I hadn't recorded
 it-
 this woman didn't have
 a table, but a wooden box -or a cardboard
 box
 perhaps-
 which was normally used at the market
 to carry fruit or vegetables,
 so she had put it in her "house"
 as a table. And she had put
 a tin can, because
 she did not have a vase,
 and there, she had put flowers.
 I said to myself this woman, she
 doesn't know what to give to eat
 to her
 children but she has the courage,
 the inspiration, to decorate her hut
 with flowers, I got up,
 I took a leaf and I wrote:
 "Flores de Señora Maria"

(Mrs Mary's flowers).

Yeah...
 There we go!
 So far, I have made this commitment,
 I never go to bed without writing
 down three positive things of
 the day. And it still helps me today.
 Since '87, I still have a lot of
 notebooks, and I still have difficult
 days in the hospital, in prison.
 And then I know that I must have the
 discipline or the courage
 to go to my cupboard where I have these
 notebooks,
 I take one of them and I start reading.
 I don't have to get to the end of the
 page to remember
 that I'm a privileged person.
 I believe that the greatness,
 the richness of our life is in the
 details.
 This morning, on the train, a super

nice driver who wished
a good day for every passenger.
Tonight, I will put it down...
The cake you offered me
the Polish cake...

*And you would say that this is what
allows you to survive?*

It helped me survive in this
world of prisoners which often goes to
hell.
If you will allow me to go back to this
prison in Congo.
The first thing I learned when I got
there was
that it had been two weeks
that the prisoners
hadn't eaten anything... Because the family
had to carry the food,
but in this prison, the guards, for
twelve months, had not received
their salary. They continued to work
but it was the only way for them
to get things to eat and bring it to their
families.
So, it became an exchange.
The families had to bring something to
eat for
the guards first, and then they could
enter.
And many of these poor families can't
afford to bring two portions.
Well, they couldn't get in.
So, fifteen days without eating.
In our dormitory,
there was room for normally
24 people,
there were 24 beds, but we were 72
so we had to share one bed for two,
three other people.
The oldest in our dormitory,
87 years old, Kambale Kitakya
-the longest time I had gone without
eating, 5 days-
because his wife arrived who had bought
twelve bananas at the market,
for her husband. No, she had bought a lot
more

-I don't know how many she had left for
the
guards- but at our place, that is
to say at her husband's, she arrived
with her twelve bananas.
Kambale Kitakya shared his twelve
bananas with the
72 others.

And there, I discovered, oh..., not only
on bananas or bread, does man live
but by solidarity.
So you see, even in the
darkness of this prison
world, there is always a light.
And that day, it was a banana, but above
all the solidarity of the other.

*As you say, we want to quote the Bible:
"Man does not live on bread alone but
by words" -here by solidarity.
These stories are a bit like parables
that you have lived?*

Yes...
Because I see they have been with me for
years
and for the rest of my life.
Maybe
is every meeting a parable?

*We were talking about Matthew 25:
"In so far as you did
to one of the least, you did it to me.
I was in prison, you visited me".
There you had
a figure, a kind of a figure of Christ:
this very old man who
shares... Would you have another figure
that still comes to your mind
a situation where, even more
than others,
you said to yourself:
"Here, truly
Jesus shows himself to me"?*

Oh, yes! And
I try to do it with each prisoner because
I have examples, people who have
converted and who are experiencing
great things, but the invitation is

there, with each prisoner, also with
the one with whom I have trouble,
who is more aggressive or...
I really
want to meet the
treasure that is there in him.
But
if you allow, I will share
maybe Diego's story.
I'm in a small prison in Brazil
and... we were twelve of us in the cell.
Diego was doing I think his 7th
or his 8th year in jail.
He had killed a taxi driver.
For the past two years, every week,
he was visited by the widow,
the driver's wife.
And now, he tells me the story.
He had learned that the woman
had fallen ill.
She was suffering, from a
disease, a kidney disease.

The widow?

Yes, the driver's wife.
And the only solution was a transplant.
But in the entire province, there was
no one who was compatible.
Diego, who learned it,
he did a medical test and came out
compatible.
And so he proposed to the family, if they
agreed, to give one of his kidneys
to the woman.
There you go.
So I see that it's Diego's choice,
but it's also thanks to the
support of others.
It's a rather peculiar prison where the
people in charge
really give prisoners a second chance.
So they give them a certain
responsibility.
You can go through training, you can
become a carpenter, a baker.
There is an exchange between the
prisoners
themselves, they learn to take care
of each other.

And now all this has led Diego to reflect
and take back his responsibility for
what he has done and to offer something
new to his victim or to the families
victim.

*He experienced it as a way to redeem
oneself or?...*

Yes. In such a story, you discover
that the rehabilitation of a prisoner
or the healing is always an adventure
of many, many people.
It is the prisoner himself,
it's the victim, it's the family.
But we too. As soon as
you share the story, it
raises questions
about your own life.
How do I do it?
Where are my traps?
What are my mistakes?
Then how do I remedy the situation?
So Diego's story,
like Kambale Kitakya's,
inspires me to live
my reality
with my colleagues, at work, at church.
Because we are human beings, we have
conflicts.
And it is
these people, prisoners, victims,
who help me a lot to live day after day.

*Would you be able to say: what is the
strongest
personal transformation you have
received?*

That I
have lived?
I believe that the mystery of Easter
is offered to me
in these meetings with the prisoners.
When I visit
a prisoner for the first time and when he
shares with me the details of what he
did
-sometimes there are atrocities- and
sometimes it keeps me from falling asleep

and that requires
a lot of courage to go back to it the
next
day and I try to repeat:
"Jan, it's not up to you to convict this
person
for a second time and you hope that
justice will
be done, that the lawyers, the judges
will do what they have to do.
But it is not for me to judge
them once again".
I continue to forge these
links, to visit this person
and I discover his
talents, his values.
We stay in touch even after several
years.
He goes out.
I see that he is relaunching himself in
life.
Easter again!
For my friends who don't believe,
it's hard to talk about this Easter
mystery.
They always tell me: "It's crazy.
How can you believe in
someone who dies, who rises up again?
But if I believe it deeply with
all my heart, that Christ is
risen, how can I not believe
that a murderer can start over,
take another life?
And that's it, that's what I see, what I
live day
after day, and it nourishes my faith
in the great mystery of Easter.

Yes.

But

*I imagine that it doesn't happen with
all?*

No, and maybe also thanks to God,
yes, because I don't want to speak
easily
about this world of prisoners and evil.
I hope that until the last day or until
the
last night of my life, that

prevents me from falling asleep.
Because
I don't want to become indifferent
to evil. No.
But I don't want to leave the last word
to it.

*And for example, sometimes
have you suffered,
been humiliated, had vexations?*

Here again, I can say:
"Thanks to God".
If you want to identify yourself with
the prisoners, you have to do it.
You have to live it.
Maybe that was my big concern when I
was
going to stay a few days or a few nights,
how can I get close to the prisoners?
And I always asked the authorities:
"Please, treat me as you treat others".
Yes, I'm quiet now,
often,
we saw...
we couldn't see the guards.
For example, at this first prison in
Rwanda where there were
7000 of us, there were only eleven
guards, but they stayed outside.
So they didn't care what was going on
inside.
So if there was nothing
to eat: nothing to eat! And
if there was no water
you have nothing to eat either.
Yes, I was...
I fell ill, several times,
like the others.
You've been given up to
the solidarity of others.
I also experienced racism.
Sometimes I was the only white person.
Among
among the black people and difficult to
hide
And so... uh...
yes, I've lived it and
I don't hide it in books, in my
testimony, but again, I don't leave the

last word
 to illness, to hunger, there is always,
 always,
 something that lifts me up.
 I remember, I was in Cotonou prison.
 And so it's 250 people,
 and my neighbor was a 72-year-old man.
 He had been in prison for twelve
 years.
 He was not yet convicted.
 He was accused of fratricide and in his
 culture, it's considered as a
 curse.
 So there was no lawyer, no judge who had
 the courage to take his case for fear
 that the curse might spread to
 their family.
 And for the same reason, no member of his
 family had visited him.
 So twelve years in prison
 without having anyone.
 He wrote me a letter after my stay in
 this prison.
 He said: "Jan, I don't understand
 anything.
 Our only desire is to be able to leave
 this hell
 and you move heaven and earth to
 get in.
 Maybe you can't write the book, and
 maybe
 there
 won't be anyone who will listen to your
 story.
 But -he said-
 you have achieved a goal for me: for the
 first time in twelve...
 for the first time in twelve years,
 someone has
 visited me.
 It is not my doing, it's by chance
 that I was his neighbor,
 but he helps me,
 he helps me a lot to know what is most
 important.
 It's the presence and it's about
 exchanging.
 It is to love the other.

The gift of this presence,

*what effect does it finally have
on people?*

Well, what surprises me is that
 you have come to be with them, in their
 midst
 and it is as if very deep bonds have been
 forged.

Do you understand something about it?

Yes, because among these prisoners,
 among the ex-convicts
 some have become my best friends.
 That's why I've always refused
 to work for the system, to be an
 employee
 of the prison world,
 of the legal world.
 In that case, you
 have to respect a few rules.
 For example, you can never give your
 phone
 number, nor your address,
 and patati and patata.
 And if you really want to build a
 relationship on trust, how can I
 refuse to tell them where I live?
 How can I welcome these prisoners in my
 house?
 And, there you go.
 "Without Walls" organizes a lot of
 meetings
 with
 prisoners, ex-prisoners, with victims.
 These people share their meal,
 our meal and that's it.
 So uh, the bond with the prisoners,
 for me, has to be a bond of friendship.

*And in everyday life, it changes your
relationship with people?*

To pay attention to the links?

I see that in life, we can have really
 missed each other and therefore not
 create bonds.

*Sitting in a prison...
and a bond is created.*

But how do you reproduce it in life ordinary?

I believe that life hides a lot of opportunities from us, and even where we are, in this same building, there are other families, other regimes. Uh, and often, we don't forge connections because what seems different, uh, does not invite us to an encounter. I'm talking about fear, until you go for it and invite the other person, that you have a meal with him. And there, you discover a richness... So sometimes when I take the bus, in Antwerp, the bus is full of cultures, full of colors, full of scents and... I start a conversation with the neighbor and you discover a world. Therefore let us embrace the opportunities: On the train, at work.

Earlier, you were talking about the mystery of Easter.

Yeah

*That you live differently.
The fact that deep within every human being, there is a light, that also life may change.
For us, Easter is also a mystery of mercy, of forgiveness.
Diego, he gave his kidney for the widow of the one whom he had murdered
She had to welcomed him,
she had to accept this offer.
Is forgiveness possible?
Have you seen prisoners who were forgiven and forgave themselves?*

Yes, yes.

I feel very privileged.
Ten years after my trip into prisons and the first book I was able to publish "Hotel-Prison" in Flemish, I took my backpack again and stayed with the victims or the victims' families. I met prophets, people who have been able to go much further, who have managed to forgive... the murderer of their daughter. I visit, I stay at Abagael's house (to give an example) Abagael, an 80-year-old lady in the United States. Her daughter and her son-in-law were murdered "For eight years -she told me- I have been consumed by suffering, by despair, by hatred" and one night -she tells- she dreams of her daughter and in the dream, Catherine (it was her name) asked her mother to forgive the murderer. Abagael wakes up, she remembers what she was dreaming, she said: "Oh no, no, I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to forgive the guy who took the most precious of my life". A few nights later, she dreams of the same thing. And again. And at the end, she said: "I think I was going to lose my senses. But I went to prison because the man was sentenced to death, so he was waiting to be executed". She asked the authorities to visit him. And then she describes that moment to me. She could go into death row and sit in front of the window, and she had to wait for the man who was there to come,

and to be placed
on the other side of the window.
And Abagael said to me: "I was so nervous
that I could only look at my shaking feet
and I felt that they were
putting the guy on the other side.
And I said to myself,
'If only I
had the courage to look at him in his eyes'.
It was like someone was grabbing me by
the hair.
I looked at him into his eyes
and it came out of my mouth:
'I forgive you'."
And she said, "I felt overwhelmed
by the emotion of
peace that never left me".
And the most incredible thing:
she was the only person who
visited him once a month until the
last day of her life.
Because, the poor,
she just died a few months ago.
And she said to me:
"Forgiveness
is the greatest gift I've given to
myself".
From that moment on, no more
nightmares,
uh,
no more migraines,
no more
stomach ulcer.
So sometimes I say: "If it
wouldn't be
because of our spiritual conviction
or for
ethical reasons, let's do it
for our health".

*And today
you accompany people close to death,
you see this issue of
forgiveness in their lives?*

Yes.
I say it not as a pastoral worker in
palliative
care, but very objectively.
I have been the privileged witness of

the death of quite a few people.
These people who leave with
an unresolved conflict -and there are
many-
apparently,
they die with much more
difficulty, while those who...
uh, -what's that? -
who have the courage, who touch the
problem of conflict and who invite
the other
to talk about it
and to forgive,
they die much more peacefully.
Yes.
We should not wait for this last day...
For me,
it's really an invitation to be alert,
to always work
on the differences, on the conflicts
and to learn from them.
Because I believe that conflict
also helps us to become
a richer man.
Yes, it helps us grow. Yes, and perhaps
there too
once again, this Easter mystery.
You do not manage to live on Easter
Sunday
if you don't go through Good Friday,
through
suffering, through the Cross.
Yes, yes.
Unfortunately,
but it's part of our human condition.
And oh! But, after... the Resurrection that
translates into these friendships
into this forgiveness, what a gift!

*Does it mean that in life, we are in the
two, or what?*

Yes, yes.

*There is always this part in suffering,
darkness, evil,*

(It would be naive...)

and a part which is already on the other side, resurrected.

We cannot neglect it, it is there.
But never let the stone have the last word
or the cross, but rather this light.
And the sick, the prisoners,
the street children, the wives of those
disappeared
prisoners
help us a lot, a lot, not only to
see
this mystery, but also to live this mystery.
So, I'm very grateful to this favourites of
God.

*Thank you very much for all these exchanges.
We are coming close to the end of this meeting.
At the end of
all we have meditated on your
life journey:
closeness, the hell of prisons, the
virtue of prisoners,
the encounter with Christ, forgiveness,
is there a gospel that springs up a
little and that
perhaps we could end up by
reading it
and meditating it for a second?*

Yes well, we've already talked
about Matthew 25, but I also like
a few verses from Luke, chapter 4
when Jesus enters the synagogue
and he reads the text of Isaiah.

*Wait, I think we can find it.
You want me to read it, maybe?*

Huh, it is.

*So when Jesus arrives at the synagogue in
Nazareth where he grew up, he
is given the book of the prophet Isaiah,
the scroll.
He opens it at random and reads the
passage that is
written: "the Spirit of the Lord is upon*

me, because
he has anointed me to bring the Good
News
to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim deliverance to
the captives, to the blind the
restoration of sight
to set free the oppressed, to
proclaim a year of favor from the Lord.
Jesus closes the book and says: "Today is
fulfilled
to your ears this passage of
Scripture". *What touches you in?..*

Oh!
Quite many things
Now the: "Today"
We must not waste time.
My friend Jesus!
Yes, yes.

*It can be a beautiful text
that speaks to us
of this great mystery of God who has been
made in our midst
and who by his presence brings
deliverance, good news, liberation.*

Yes, because it is the text of Isaiah
that is
as old as Methuselah
and Jesus reads it,
is inspired by it,
and you're reading it now, 2000 years
later.
Today...
Today it continues to touch us.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Thank you very much!

You're welcome.

*And now, may these words we have
exchanged bear fruit in each of us.*

Thank you.