



DICASTERO PER IL SERVIZIO
DELLO SVILUPPO UMANO INTEGRALE

CATECHESIS

How cool was Pelé! Yes? He was full of "talents"

Juan was nine and that day Rosa – a Roma like him, told him that Pelé had summoned them after lunch at the usual place to spend an afternoon together during which they would gather fennel, edible herbs etc. ... and also to listen to those captivating stories they loved so much. They were going to have a great time! The news ran fast among the Roma children of Barbastro.

At three they began to arrive. Non-Roma children also came; for Pelé this was no problem; Moreover, all parents trusted him equally. They saw Ceferino Giménez Malla appear, "Pelé", whom they simply called "uncle".

"*He's already very old,*" said one child while seeing him climb up the hill; at that time he was fifty-seven. "*He loves us so much!*" exclaimed another. And silently, they watched him approach, a man dressed in a jacket, with a white scarf tied at the neck, tall, lanky, stiff, very dark (almost black), with protruding ears and strong arms; he must have been a sturdy young man in the past.

"*Good afternoon, children,*" he greeted them. "*Good afternoon, uncle,*" they replied.

He asked them if they had had lunch and three of them revealed that there was nothing to eat in the pantry at home; three buns of bread came out of the right pocket of Pelé's jacket, to ensure the best energy to set off for the walk; they did not last long either in their hands or mouths, vanishing before the first step.

"*Today we are going to go up to San Ramón, do you agree?*" A cheery "yes" rang out loud. The group set off. "*Today I will tell you a very beautiful story about Jesus.*"

"*What story?*" asked Carmen.

Starting to climb the hill of San Ramón, Gabriel, the one heading the group, saw an anthill and with his patched shoes he stepped onto the first ants he could spot, until Uncle Pelé stopped him: "*You know what you're doing? Ants belong to God, like the flowers and the stars*". It must be a fact that the scared ants running frantically after Gabriel's stomp thanked Ceferino. Children knew that he always taught them to respect birds, flowers, ants ...

When they got to San Ramón, they sat in a circle, as usual. Pelé turned into a sensational teacher; his face, his gestures ... captured them. That afternoon they prayed the Our Father and the Hail Mary. He closed his eyes, put his hands together, wove the rosary between his fingers, and he prayed with a tender and affectionate voice. They understood that he was addressing Someone and that that Someone would surely listen to him. The children tried to do the same with their eyes, hands, hearts.

After a few seconds in silence, María, the youngest girl, a *gadji*, could not keep quiet and asked: "*What about the story?*"

Pelé told her that the story was "*The Parable of the Talents*", told by Jesus, that Mosen Jacinto had read that morning at Mass.

"*What are talents, uncle?*" asked Javi.

"*The riches we have*" answered Pelé.

"*Well, most of us don't have talents,*" said Maruja.

"*Look, children, the talents that God gives us are not just the money and the things we have at home; there are other very important things. God is very good and has given each of us many*

many good things that are also talents: faith, family, work, friends, kindness, forgiveness, sharing, responsibility, compassion for others, sharing peace ... "

Little Daniel interrupted Pele: " Well, you have many talents, uncle; you must have them all "

Daniel's phrase released the tongue of all the boys and girls who, showing that they had well understood what Ceferino had just explained, began, one after the other, to recount facts that demonstrated his talents:

+ Is it true that the other day he helped the one who was the mayor when he vomited blood? I wouldn't have done it.

+ Yesterday my father told me that thanks to you our neighbors stopped fighting: is it true?

+ And when there are problems with the gadj they also call him.

+ And they say that he loves his daughter very much, even if she is not his own, and also his granddaughters; and that he cried a lot when his wife died, right?

+ Well, my grandmother says that he is the most religious gypsy in Barbastro, that he always goes to Mass, that he prays a lot and that he doesn't let people say bad words about God.

+ I know that every day, since my little brother was born, he brings milk to my house, why does he come by when the sun hasn't risen yet?

+ At the horse fair I heard from my grandparents that he is very honorable, that he never lies.

+ He even wants us to treat the ants well, said Gabriel.

Everyone laughed.

+ Uncle ..., would you be able to die on a cross like Jesus Christ?

"Whatever God wants, my girl, whatever God wants. In that case, I would need a faith similar to that of Jesus Christ and have the talent of fortitude".

(Note: This girl never knew that, some years later, while an elderly Pelé was being taken to be executed – an innocent man- he remembered her and her question and the answer he had given her. Truly, he lacked neither the faith of Jesus Christ, nor his strength. When he died he said: "Long live Christ" and in his hands he held his rosary).

"But hey, okay now", concluded Pelé, "you too have many talents. Listen to the parable and you will see what to do with the talents received":

*There was once a man who before leaving for a faraway land called his three servants and left them in charge of his property: he left the first **five** talents, the second **two**, and the third, **one**, to each according to his capacity.*

The one who received five talents immediately put them to work and earned another five.

The one who received two did the same and earned another two.

Instead, the one who received one talent dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants returned and called them to see what they had done with their talents.

The one who had received five came up and presented him with five more, saying, "You left me five talents; Look, I've won another five. His lord said to him: Very well. You are a faithful and reliable employee; I will give you an important position; join me at the banquet I have prepared.

Then the one who had received two talents came up and said: You left me two talents; Look, I've won two more. His lord told him the same as the previous one.

Then the one who had received one talent approached and said: I knew you are demanding, I was afraid and I went to hide your talent underground. Here is yours.

The lord replied: You are a negligent and lazy employee. You have not done well. You should have put to work the one talent I gave you; I can't trust you: you may not enter my banquet.

They all understood the parable.

It was getting late, the sun was not very hot and it was time to go back.

Pelé pulled out some chocolate from the left pocket of his jacket and some bread from a bag he had with him. It was snack time.

Returning to San Ramón, they all picked some fennel and edible herbs ...

In addition, they were now aware that Pelé was very rich because, although he had little money, he had many virtues.

Even the boys and girls felt lucky; Jesus Christ and his faithful friend Pelé had told them that they too had many talents – though they didn't know which ones yet.

They entered Barbastro with a happier face; they were humming a song.

**How good was Pelé! Yes?
He was full of "talents"; he was a saint.
Today he is a model for Roma people and non-Roma people.
From heaven he intercedes for us.**

Before the community meeting, children and youths could be summoned to read together the story of the life of Pelé and reflect upon his talents, their personal talents and those of Roma people. They could work in small groups to fill in sheets including the following questions:

“Let's make a list of the talents that Pelé had.

What did he do with those talents that God gave him?

What talents has God given us Roma people?

What talents do each of us have?

Do we work them well?

How can we grow the talent of faith?"

Children and youths could then make a big painting of the scene of Pelé with the children in San Ramón. They could also choose some songs and prepare the story to tell during the meeting with the whole community.

After presenting the story about Pelé during the community meeting, each group could paste their personal and the gypsies' talents on the drawing, that they discovered during the activity, explaining them.

Other members of the community could also contribute with their personal answers, that they could write out and paste on the picture.

The meeting could finish by asking those wishing to participate to contribute a phrase or prayer to Jesus, thanking Him for Pelé, for the talents he offered us and asking for his help in putting them to work.

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