 Reading time: 2 min.

A touching testimony by Raoul Follereau. He was in a leper colony on a Pacific island. A nightmare of horror. Nothing but walking corpses, despair, rage, sores and horrific mutilation.
Yet in the midst of such devastation, one sick old man retained surprisingly bright and smiling eyes. He was suffering in body, like his unhappy companions, but showed attachment to life, not despair, and gentleness in his treatment of others.
Intrigued by that true miracle of life, in the hell of the leper colony, Follereau wanted to seek an explanation: what on earth could have given such strength of life to that old man so stricken by evil?
He followed him, discreetly. He discovered that, invariably, at the crack of dawn, the old man would drag himself to the fence surrounding the leper colony, and reach a specific place.
He would sit and wait.
It was not the rising of the sun that he waited for. Nor the spectacle of the Pacific dawn.
He would wait until, on the other side of the fence, a woman would appear, also elderly, her face covered in fine wrinkles, her eyes full of gentleness.
The woman did not speak. She only sent out a silent and discreet message: a smile.
But the man lit up at that smile and responded with another smile.
The silent conversation lasted a few moments, then the old man would get up and toddle back to the barracks. Every morning. A kind of daily communion. The leper, nourished and fortified by that smile, could endure a new day and hold out until the new appointment with the smile of that feminine face.
When Follereau asked him, the leper said, “she is my wife!”
And after a moment of silence: “Before I came here, she looked after me in secret, with everything she could find. A sorcerer had given her an ointment. Every day she smeared my face with it, except for a small part, enough to affix her lips to it for a kiss… But it was all in vain. So they picked me up, brought me here. But she followed me. And when I see her again every day, only from her do I know that I am still alive, only for her do I still enjoy living.”

Surely someone smiled at you this morning, even if you did not realise it. Certainly someone is waiting for your smile today. If you enter a church and open your soul to silence, you will realise that God, first of all, welcomes you with a smile.