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## Shocking videos of drowned baby and man died in hospital bathroom. Don Patriciello: "Helpful if they awaken our numb consciences"

Two dramatic videos are widely circulating online. One was posted by the NGO Open Arms, with the desperate cry of the mother whose child died in the shipwreck of November 11, in the Mediterranean sea - "I lost my son", "Where is my son?". -, and the one of a man who died in the bathroom of the emergency room of Cardarelli Hospital in Naples, congested with Covid-19 suspected patients. Barges sinking every day, erasing the life of people fleeing from Libya's nightmare, and the desperation of sick people struggling with an illness that every day sows death and sorrow in the families of those who didn't make it. SIR addressed the issue with Don **Maurizio Patriciello**, parish priest in Caivano.



Immagine non disponibile

People get used to everything. Just consider how we faced the first months of the pandemic and how we are living now, and yet the situation is much more serious. Nonetheless we have grown used to it: in March and April we were terrified and locked inside our homes, now it's hard to make people understand that they need to be more responsible. The same happens with the tragedies at sea:

**It's almost as if we were no longer affected by the number of deaths. Whether we read that 10 people or 110 drowned makes no difference.**

Unless we put ourselves in other people's shoes, our inner selfishness prevails. Imagine what it means for a mother to see her son swallowed by the waves, I can't even conceive of such pain. I would imagine that her first thought is to jump off the boat and drown with him. The desperation of that mother reminds me of when I was a young professional nurse during the earthquake in Irpinia, in 1980: I immediately ran there to help. I was shocked at the sight of people under the rubble asking for help but we didn't have the means to get them out of there, and slowly those voices died out. The relatives who were saved fell into a state of insanity from the pain and started digging with their hands with the risk of slipping under the rubble themselves. Those images are the most beautiful depiction of the greatness of human love to the extent of put one's life at risk to save another person. **Many still find it hard to see migrant people as brothers and sisters...** The Pope insists that we must open our hearts to migrants, yet even many Catholics fail to understand, but

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**if we close our hearts we might as well shut down our churches and put up a sign saying "Closed",**

referring not only to the door of the church but also to that of our heart. Political issues are one thing - migrants arriving in Italy expect to reach Europe because our shores are the closest, but for too long Europe turned a deaf ear -, but abiding to Christian tenets is another. The Church never leaves anyone alone. The Pope reminds us that Jesus clearly says in chapter 25 of Matthew's Gospel: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was ill and you cared for me." All this reminds us of the conditions of our migrant brothers and sisters. May the Lord grant to this poor mother who saw her child disappear in the waves the grace to meet people with a big heart, whatever her destination may she be welcomed by people who open the doors of their home and family to her, with the courage to say: "We have welcomed Jesus in our midst." **Do you think it was right to release the video with the mother's desperate cry?** This question could also be asked about the video of the dead man in the bathroom at the Cardarelli Hospital and the dreadful conditions of the other patients. I worked in a hospital for ten years, I am well aware of the difficulties, and blaming the doctors is out of the question. In fact we should be grateful to them for everything they are doing. Health facilities and the high numbers of patients are the problem: what can doctors and nurses do when sick people are constantly arriving? Furthermore, it should be said that we acted irresponsibly throughout the summer, we were just thinking about wheeled desks in schools and push scooters, while it would have sufficed to reflect on the fact that the second wave of the Spanish Flu killed over 50 million people... The person who filmed the man found dead at the Cardarelli hospital was exasperated. I did not publish it on my social network profiles because it would have been disrespectful for that person who died in the bathroom... *But we should be honest: we can't go to Covid-19 wards and we don't actually know what is happening. Through the video, that man took us into the Cardarelli Emergency Room to show us what it's really like, without wanting to inculcate anyone. The same can be said of the video of the mother who lost her baby at sea. It's helpful if it manages to awake our numb consciences. Whoever saves one life saves the whole world. So should we watch such videos or shouldn't we?* I have a dear confrere, Don Fortunato Di Noto, chairman of Meter. When I visited him in Avola I asked him to see the videos of the violence on newborns because I just couldn't understand how something like that could actually happen. Those videos are horrifying. But I think we should see them, even merciless ones, albeit not on television, for reading certain painful situations is quite different from seeing them with our own eyes. This helps us not to stop at numbers, but to see the faces of the suffering ones. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus recounts that unlike other people passing by, he sees the man attacked by bandits and has compassion for him. As Don Pino Puglisi said, if everyone did something, a lot could be done. *I ask the Lord to give me the grace to be cross-eyed: one eye to see my close surroundings, my neighbour, my relatives; and the other eye to gaze at the whole world and the whole of humanity, for every person is my brother.*

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