

### **The risk in saving someone's honour**

**Whoever is unjustly accused needs friends to stand up for him or her without fear. There is ultimate justice.**

**"Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner. "  
John 9,24**

"During the war the accused used leaflets to call for the sabotage of arms and the fall of the national socialistic lifestyle of our folk; they propagated defeatist thinking and deeply insulted the leader, thus aiding the enemies of the empire and corroding our military. Accordingly, they are to be punished with death." This judgement from the first senate of the German court against Sophie Magdalena Scholl from Munich, her brother Hans Fritz Scholl and Christoph Herrmann Probst from Aldrans bei Innsbruck was announced on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1943, at 11.30 p.m. in a propaganda trial. At approximately 5 p.m. the heads rolled of these people who had saved some of the last honour of Germany and Austria. Today the last leaflets which Sophie distributed in the courtyard of the University of Munich on the *Geschwister-Scholl-Platz* are preserved for posterity in the cobblestones in front of this same building. The members of the "White Rose" who allegedly "forfeited their civil rights forever...through the betrayal of our folk" have become national heroes, recently celebrated again in a film. The spiritual power to resist had been gleaned from their studies; great theologians like Augustus, Thomas from Aquinas or Søren Kierkegaard inspired them.

"How to give God the glory?" is the question of all theologians. The Pharisees are certain that Jesus is a sinner because he healed on the Sabbath. That is interference in the creation and can only occur on a weekday. Against it they demand of the healed man, "Give God the glory!" He can do nothing else than to confess to his healing. By doing so he stands up for Jesus and saves his honour: "Whether he is a sinner, I don't know. I only know that I was blind and now I can see" (John 9, 25). Biblically to give God the glory can mean singing his praise (Psalm 66,2), thanking him for healing (Lukas 17,18) but also admitting to one's own mistake (as in Joshua 7,19). To accept one's own inability and limitations in the face of the universal does not only give God the glory, but also human honour.

"There is a different justice!" Sophie's father called out in the courtroom. The honour of his daughter made this risk worth it to him. Four months later Thomas Mann honoured the dead of the White Rose in one of his BBC speeches from "German Listener!": "You should not have died in vain, should not be forgotten." Already in the first hour individuals stood up for the honour of the Scholls; today before the world's public, Germany and Austria stand with pride and grief behind them and thousands of others who went to death for resistance. Unjust accusations and defamations have not stopped. Presumably, they are not only in Peking or Guantanamo, but also happen in the circle of my friends.

When am I challenged to save the honour of a colleague or a friend? For whose honour are you prepared to face possible danger? Do you count on the other, the ultimate justice?