

New Flags

I tell them I work in the field of paper.

I never say toilet paper because I'm a bit embarrassed to. But I've decided that's wrong.

If we consider that two-thirds of the world's population does not have access to sanitation and, consequently, 1.8 million people (90% of whom are children under 5 years of age) die each year due to diarrhea and cholera, then I guess I can rightly think that where there is toilet paper there is a wc. And where there is a wc, there is an outpost of hygiene and civilization.

I am well aware that the topic of human waste is not a very attractive one. But if we reflect on the distance that there is between Indian cesspools emptied out manually by the over 800,000 scavengers and the wc with heated seats and personalized music of Japanese toilets, I feel there is still a lot we can say to those who think we are all the same.

And even if in our opulent western society the presence of toilet facilities is considered normal, we must not forget that in the first half of the 1800s, in London, epidemics due to water pollution from human excrements caused 15,000 deaths! And only after the construction of the sewage system were the risks of cholera, typhoid and dysentery dispelled.

It is also thanks to the patient and deserving work of people like "Mr. Toiletman", Jack Sim (see PJI 32) and Dr. Pathak of the Sulabh Sanitation Movement who are committed to diffusing toilet facilities in developing countries, that the hygienic conditions of millions of people can effectively improve.

How can a problem be transformed into a point of strength? Well, in China, for example, over 15 million peasant families use the gas produced by their latrines for domestic cooking.

These are just some of the signs that make me retain we could well be proud of a toilet roll flag.

Walter Tamarri