

Religions: "the right to hope, to beauty, to Heaven" (2)

Pope Francis was in Kazakhstan on 13-15 September to participate in the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. He gave the closing address. In continuity with the chronicle of 22 October, this is a synthesis of that speech.

There is "the weight of the senseless madness of war; there is too much hatred and divisions, too little dialogue and understanding of others; this, in a globalised world, is even more scandalous and dangerous. We cannot remain connected and separated, bound and divided by so much inequality." Evidently, "terrorism of pseudo-religious matrix, extremism, radicalism, nationalism fed on sacredness, still today foster fears and concerns in relation to religion", but "they have no relation to the authentic religious spirit and must be rejected and condemned without conditions or "buts". Moreover, because God created all people equal, regardless of their religious, ethnic or social belonging, and therefore we (leaders of religions) were in agreement that mutual respect and understanding should be considered essential and indispensable in religious education".

An essential theme is that of the relationship between religion and politics. A healthy link between politics and Transcendence, a healthy coexistence between the two fields implies "distinction, not confusion or separation". A "no" to confusion is necessary to safeguard the good of the human being, who "needs, like the eagle, a free sky in which to fly, a free space open to the infinite that is not limited by earthly power". On the other hand, Transcendence "must not yield to the temptation to become power", so that the divine "beyond" is not "caught up in the earthly present". Finally, a "no" to the cut-off between politics and transcendence, for "the highest human aspirations cannot be excluded from public life and relegated to the mere private sphere."

The whole question of religious freedom is present here: "whoever wishes to legitimately express his own creed let him be supported always and everywhere.... Above all, it is necessary to commit ourselves to ensure that religious freedom is not an abstract concept, but a concrete right. Let us defend for all the right to religion, to hope, to beauty, to heaven." Secularism, which requires that no State should have an official religion, is essential to guarantee the freedom of all; on the other hand, secularism cannot be confused with laicism, which wants religion to be excluded from the public space.

Thinking of all human beings, it is necessary to recognize that "the great wisdoms and religions are called to bear witness to the existence of a common spiritual and moral heritage, which is based on two pillars: transcendence and fraternity. Transcendence, the "beyond", adoration. It is beautiful that every day millions and millions of men and women of different ages, cultures and social conditions come together to pray in countless places of worship. That is the hidden force that makes the world move forward. And then fraternity, the other, closeness, for one cannot profess true adherence to the Creator who does not love his creatures". This is the spirit that pervades the Declaration of the Congress, and Francis wanted to conclude by highlighting three words.

The first is an anguished cry and expresses the goal of the journey: peace, peace! "Peace is urgent, because any military conflict or focus of tension and confrontation today can only have a harmful "domino effect" and seriously compromise the system of international relations. But peace is not the mere absence of war, nor is it reduced merely to the balancing of opposing forces, nor does it arise from a despotic hegemony; in all accuracy and propriety, it is called the work of justice". Peace "springs from fraternity, it grows through the struggle against injustice and inequality, it is built by extending a hand to others. For this reason, the Declaration urges world leaders to end conflict and bloodshed everywhere. We ask you, in the name of God and for the good of humanity: commit yourselves to peace, not to arms. Only by serving peace will your name be great in history".

The second word is in favour of women. "If peace is lacking, it is because care, tenderness, the capacity to generate life are lacking. Therefore, it is necessary to seek it by involving women more. Because women care for and give life to the world, they are the way to peace. We therefore support the need to protect their dignity and improve their social status as members of the family and society with equal rights. They should be entrusted with greater roles and responsibilities. How many choices leading to death could be avoided if women were at the centre of decision-making. Let us commit ourselves to make them more respected, recognised and included."

The third word: young people. "They are the messengers of peace and unity for today and tomorrow. They are the ones who, more than others, call for peace and respect for the common house of creation." In the framework of dreams and hopes of youth, Francis says: "So too, rigid and stifling religiosities do not belong to the future, but to the past." And: "In the hands of young people let us put opportunities for education, not weapons of destruction." The future is built by not forgetting "transcendence and fraternity". "Let us move forward, walking together on earth as children of Heaven!"

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He writes according to the old spelling