Settimo Cielo

di Sandro Magister

24 mar

On Top of Coronavirus, This Is a Turning Point in History. That Is Dragging the Church Along With It

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(s.m.) The rousing contribution from Pietro De Marco in the previous post has received a prompt reply from Roberto Pertici, professor of contemporary history at the University of Bergamo and a specialist in relations between Church and state. With these enriching reflections.

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Dear Magister,

Pietro De Marco's writing, as always, has enlightened me. This time it is also clearer than usual. But - I have been asking myself about this for years - we still do not succeed in understanding: 1) how the Church came to the situation he describes; 2) if and how it is possible to reverse the course.

I do not think it useful to explain everything with the reason of "doctrinal surrender," as is done on the traditionalist side by blaming modernism, Vatican Council II, etc., and as it seems to me that De Marco too is swayed.

I am increasingly convinced that the Church, of course, is not of the world, but lives "in" the world; and therefore that its life is affected, more than is usually admitted, by the more general processes of contemporary society (as, in a particular case, I have written about the patriotism of Italian priests). In short, it is necessary to look at these more general processes within which ecclesiastical events are situated.

So: what happened in the world, in Western society "in primis" but not only, after 1945? What influenced this context undergoing very rapid change in the culture widespread in the hierarchies, in the social base of the parishes, in the emptying of the seminaries, in the change of sexual morality, in relationships between people, in the crisis of the principle of authority, in the end of transcendence?

On these aspects historical culture (but not only) has had something to say: just take an overarching book such as "The Age of Extremes" by Eric Hobsbawm and read its pages on "The Golden Age" and its social and cultural effects to become aware of this. It is no coincidence that the English historian underlines, without any complacency, indeed with some concern - he is a Marxist and a Communist! - that the first "victims" of this immense transformation were the family institution and the Churches, not only the Catholic.

The transition - at the level of widespread mentality and common feeling, as well as in high culture - from a prevailing holistic-hierarchical conception of the world to an individualistic-egalitarian conception - a passage that had a prologue in 1945-1960 and a full implementation later - inevitably posed enormous problems for the Catholic Church, which from the apostle Paul to "Mystici Corporis" based its ecclesiology on that previous vision. In short, as Seneca said, "ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt," fate leads those who want to be guided and drags along those who do not, even the Church!

For this reason, the reversal of the trend will not be able to take place only within the Church (and besides, with what resources, if priests now reason in the way De Marco describes so well?), but through a global paradigm shift, as occurred after 1945 and at other times in history.

The Church, if anything, can make its contribution to this paradigm shift. On closer inspection, this was the plan of Benedict XVI, in his invitation to nonbelievers to live "veluti si Deus daretur," as if God exists, to build a sort of common front against the forces of "fluid society" (just to use a clichéd image).

For this reason the theorists of the "individualistic revolution" perceived Pope Benedict's magisterium as a great danger and fought it strenuously, backed up, or in any case not strenuously impeded - it must be said - by the bulk of the Catholic hierarchy and intelligentsia.

Thanks and cordial greetings.

Roberto Pertici

(s.m.) To the commentary of Pietro De Marco ("le professeur") has come this other reaction, from a well-known priest of Lyon, Pierre Vignon, of whom Settimo Cielo has already had occasion to speak, with regard to the legal proceedings against Cardinal Philippe Barbarin.

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"AVEC MA RESPECTUOSE IMPERTINENCE…"

Cher Dottore Magister,

pouvez-vous faire suivre à votre professeur tragicomique à la noix, de la part d'un membre du clergé "vide et rhétorique", qu'il devrait savoir, avec son degré supposé de science, que la religion n'est pas le lieu de transfert de ses angoisses?

Puisqu'il désire conserver la mentalité d'un homme du Moyen-âge, je lui conseille vivement d'organiser dans sa région des processions de flagellants. Quand un laïc trouve que son Église est défaillante, il faut faire face à la pénurie en se prenant en main. Je lui conseille aussi de demander, outre votre soutien à défaut de votre participation – car je pense qu'il vous reste un peu de bon sens pratique à défaut de sens ecclésial – d'obtenir la participation des cardinaux Burke et Sarah, avec leurs grandes queues et tous leurs bijoux, afin de les offrir en victimes expiatoires au courroux de leur divinité.

Vous trouverez à raison que je vous manque de respect, mais peut-on agir autrement quand on lit la réponse du professeur que vous relayez dans le monde entier? C'est en fait un devoir de charité, car il faut bien à un moment que quelqu'un vous dise que vous devez retourner contre vous le fouet dont vous ne cessez pas de vous servir contre l'Eglise telle qu'elle est aujourd'hui. Certes nos évêques ne sont pas des lumières mais, à tout prendre, ils éclairent mieux que les propositions des obscurantistes angoissés et stressés.

Avec ma respectueuse impertinence – car vous valez mieux que cette dernière publication – sachez que bien que je fasse partie de ce clergé "nul, vide et rhétorique", je prie à votre intention, celle du professeur que je fustige et celle aussi de tous les vôtres.

Père Pierre Vignon

P. S. – On n'est pas obligé, si on ne se fait pas tuer par l'épidémie, de se faire tuer par le ridicule.

(In the photo, a deserted Saint Peter's Square, seen from the pope's window, at the Angelus of Sunday, March 22).

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