

Pope: isolationism and populism lead to war

Pope Francis, in an interview with the Italian daily La Stampa-Vatican Insider, has spoken of challenges facing Europe and the world more generally. Europe must be saved because it is a heritage that "cannot and must not be dissolved". Dialogue and listening, "starting from one's own identity" and from human and Christian values, are the antidote against "sovereignism" and populism, and are also the engine for "a process of relaunching" that never ends.

Europe and its founding fathers

The Pope hopes that Europe will continue to be the dream of its founding fathers. It is a vision that became a reality by implementing the historical, cultural and geographical unity that characterizes the continent.

Despite Europe's "problems of administration and internal disagreements", the Pope is optimistic about the appointment of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission. He is happy about her appointment "because a woman can be the right person to revive the strength of the founding fathers." "Women", he said, "know how to bring people together and unite."

Europe's human and Christian roots

According to the Pope, the main challenge for Europe in relaunching itself comes from dialogue. "In the European Union we must talk to each other, confront each other, know each other", says the Pope, explaining how the "mental mechanism" behind every reasoning must be "first Europe, then each of us".

To do this, he says, "we also need to listen", while very often we only see "compromise monologues". The starting and relaunching point, he explains, are the human values of the person. It is a fact of history that Europe has both human and Christian roots. "And when I say this," the Pope says, "I don't separate Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants. The Orthodox have a very precious role for Europe. We all have the same founding values."

Identity that is open to dialogue

The Pope explains that each of us is important, no one is secondary. Hence in every dialogue, "we must start from our own identity". He gives an example: "I can't do ecumenism if I don't start from my being Catholic, and the other who does ecumenism with me must do so as a Protestant, Orthodox etc... Our own identity is not negotiable; it integrates itself."

The Pope said that the problem with exaggerations is that we isolate ourselves without opening up. Identity, he says, is cultural, national, historical and artistic wealth, and each country has its own, but it must be integrated with dialogue. It is crucial that while starting from one's own identity, one needs to open up to dialogue in order to receive something greater from the identity of others.

Never forget, the Pope says, that "the whole is greater than the parts." Globalization and unity", he says, "should not be conceived as a sphere, but as a polyhedron: each people retains its identity in unity with others".

"Sovereignism" and populism

The Pope expresses concern about what he terms as "sovereignism" which he describes as an attitude of isolation. He says he is worried about speeches resembling those of Hitler in 1934 that speak of "Us first. We... we..."

While "sovereignism" involves closing in upon oneself, sovereignty is not, the Pope explains. Sovereignty must be defended and relations with other countries, with the European Community, must also be protected and promoted.

"Sovereignism" is an exaggeration that always ends badly: "it leads to wars", the Pope says. Populism, he explains, is a way of imposing an attitude that leads to "sovereignism" and should not be confused with "popularism", which is the culture of the people which needs to be expressed. Sufficing "-ism" to "sovereign", the Pope says, is bad.

Migrants: primacy of right to life

On the issue of immigration, Pope Francis stresses on the four principles of welcoming, accompanying, promoting and integrating.

The most important criteria in this, he says, is the right to life, which is linked to conditions of war and hunger that people flee from, especially from the Middle East and Africa. Governments and those authorities are required to think about how many migrants they can take.

The Holy Father also calls for creative solutions, such as filling up labour shortage in the agricultural sector. Some countries have semi-empty towns because of the demographic decline. Migrant communities could help revitalize the economy of these areas.

Speaking about war, Pope Francis says "we must commit ourselves and fight for peace." Hunger mainly concerns the African continent which, he says, is the victim of a cruel curse, that it should be exploited. Instead, he says, part of the solution is to invest there to help solve their problems and thus stop migratory flows.

Urgency of the Amazon Synod

On being asked about the Synod on the Amazon in October in the Vatican, the Pope says "it is the 'child' of 'Laudato si'". He clarifies that "Laudato si" "is not a green encyclical but a social encyclical based on the "green" reality of the custody of creation.

"It will be our synod of urgency", the Pope says, expressing shock that on Earth Overshoot Day, 29 July, man has already exhausted all the regenerative resources for the current year. This, together with the melting of the glaciers, the risk of rising ocean levels, the increase in plastic waste in the sea, deforestation and other critical situations, he says, makes the planet live in "a situation of world emergency".

Synod, work of the Holy Spirit for evangelization

The Synod, however, the Pope points out, is not a meeting of scientists, politicians or a parliament. "It was convened by the Church and will have an evangelizing mission and dimension. It will be a work of communion guided by the Holy Spirit."

The important themes of the event are those concerning "the ministries of evangelization and the different ways of evangelizing".

Amazonia key to the future of the planet

The Pope explains the choice of Amazonia for a synod is because the region involves as many as nine States. "It is a representative and decisive place. Together with the oceans, it contributes decisively to the survival of the planet. Much of the oxygen we breathe comes from there. That's why deforestation means killing humanity."

Politics

Asked about politics, the Pope says that "the threat to the lives of the populations and the territory derives from the economic and political interests of the dominant sectors of society". Thus politics must "eliminate its connivances and corruptions". "It must take concrete responsibility, for example on the subject of open-cast mines, which poison water and cause so many diseases".

Hope in young people

The Holy Father expresses confidence in young people and their movements for a new attitude towards the care of Creation, like the Swedish teenage activist, Greta Thunberg, who is leading a worldwide protest against climate change. The Pope says he was moved to see a placard of hers that read: "We are the future". It means promoting attention to the little everyday things that "affect" the culture "because they are concrete actions", the Pope says.

Full article

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