SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 231130a

Thursday 30.11.2023

Audience with members of the International Theological Commission

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the International Theological Commission.

The following is the text of the address the Pope handed out to those present at the audience, and the Holy Father's impromptu greeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I greet Cardinal Fernández and I welcome you all, expressing gratitude for your valuable work.

Today we are called to devote ourselves with all energy of heart and mind to a "missionary conversion of the Church" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 30). It responds to Jesus' call to evangelize, made our own by Vatican Council II, which still guides our ecclesial journey: there the Holy Spirit made his voice heard for our times. The Council enunciated its purpose precisely by stating that it "eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature,(1) to bring the light of Christ to all men" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1). And, as your Commission observed, "making a synodal Church a reality is an indispensable precondition for a new missionary energy that will involve the entire People of God" (*Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, 9): a missionary energy that is able to communicate the beauty of the faith.

Turning then to your more specific task, in my Letter addressed to the new Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, I emphasized that today "we need a way of thinking that knows how to convincingly present a God who loves, who forgives, who saves, who liberates, who promotes people and summons them to fraternal service" (1 July 2023). You are required to address this need in a qualified manner, through the proposal of an evangelizing theology, which promotes dialogue with the world of culture. And it is essential that you theologians do this in tune with the People of God, I would say "from below", that is, with a privileged gaze

for the poor and the simple, and at the same time “on your knees”, because theology is born kneeling, in adoration of God.

I know that you are exploring two current challenges: the anthropological question and the theme of ecology. But your work also involves you in proposing an updated and incisive reflection on the permanent relevance of the Trinitarian and Christological faith confessed by the Council of Nicaea, which we are preparing to commemorate 1700 years after its celebration, coinciding with the Jubilee called for the year 2025. I would therefore like to share with you three reasons that make the rediscovery of Nicaea so promising.

The first is a *spiritual* reason. In Nicaea, faith was professed in Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father: He who was made man for us and for our salvation is “God from God, light from light”. This is not only the light of an unthinkable knowledge, but the light that illuminates existence with the love of the Father. Yes, it is a light that guides us on the path and dispels the darkness, and this light, which inhabits our lives, is life-giving and eternal: how can we bear witness to it, if not with a luminous life, with a joy that radiates? Also valid for your ministry as theologians is Jesus’ invitation not to “light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand”, so that “it gives light to all in the house” (cf. *Mt* 5:15). It is up to theologians to spread new and surprising glimmers of Christ's eternal light in the house of the Church and in the darkness of the world.

A second reason is *synodal*. In Nicaea the first ecumenical Council was held, in which the Church was able to express her nature, her faith, her mission to be, as the last Council affirms, the “sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*Lumen Gentium*, 1). Synodality is the way, the way to translate into attitudes of communion and processes of participation the trinitarian dynamic with which God, through Christ and the breath of the Holy Spirit, comes towards humanity. Theologians are entrusted with the great responsibility of unleashing the richness of this wonderful “humanizing energy”. You yourselves participate in the work of the Commission, coming from various parts of the world, bringing with you the gifts and riches, the questions and sufferings of your Churches and peoples. Be witnesses, in your collegial work and in the sharing of your ecclesial and cultural peculiarities, of a Church that walks according to the harmony of the Spirit, rooted in the Word of God and in the living Tradition, and that accompanies with love and discernment the cultural and social processes of humanity in the complex transition we are experiencing. Do not be satisfied with what you have already acquired: keep your heart and mind open to the *semper magis* of God.

And finally, a third reason, *ecumenical*. How can we not recall the extraordinary relevance of this anniversary for the journey towards the full unity of Christians? Indeed, not only does the Symbol of Nicaea unite Jesus’ disciples, but precisely in 2025, providentially, the date of the celebration of Easter will coincide for all Christian denominations. How beautiful if would be if this marked the concrete start of an always common celebration of Easter!

Brothers and sisters, let us carry this dream in our heart and let us invoke the creativity of the Spirit, so that the light of the Gospel and of communion may shine more brightly. I reiterate my thanks for your service and I bless you, asking you to pray for me.

Impromptu words of the Holy Father

Thank you for this visit. And thank you for your work. There is a good address here with theological matters, but because of my health it is better not to read it. I will hand it out to you.

Thank you for what you do. Theology, theological reflection, is very important. But there is something about you that I do not like; pardon my sincerity. One, two, three, four women: poor women! They are alone! Ah, excuse me, five. We must advance in this. Women have a capacity for theological reflection that is different to that of us men. It will be because I have studied the theology of a woman a great deal. I was helped by a good German woman, Hanna-Barbara Gerl, on Guardini. She had studied that history and the theology of that woman was not so deep, but it is beautiful, it is creative. And now, in the upcoming meeting of the nine Cardinals, we will reflect

on the feminine dimension of the Church.

The Church is woman. And if we do not know what a woman is, what the theology of a woman is, we will never understand what the Church is. One of the great sins we have had is to “masculinize” the Church. And this is not solved by the ministerial path; that is something else. It is resolved in the mystical way, the real way. Balthasar’s thought has brought me so much light: Petrine principle and Marian principle. This can be debated, but the two principles are there. The Marian is more important than the Petrine, because there is the bride Church, the woman Church, without being masculine.

And you will ask me: where does this discussion lead? Not only to tell you that you should have more women here – that is one thing – but to help reflect. The Church as woman, the Church as a bride. And this is a task that I ask of you, please. To make the Church less masculine.

And thank you for what you do. I am sorry, I have spoken to much and it hurt, but now sitting as we are, we can pray the Lord’s Prayer together, each in his own language, and then I will give the blessing.

Recitation of the Lord’s Prayer

Blessing

And pray for me. Pray for, not against, because this work is not easy. Thank you.