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Intervention of the Secretary for Relations with States at the 40th Meeting for Friendship among Peoples in Rimini

The following is the intervention given yesterday by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, at the 40th Meeting for Friendship among Peoples, taking place in Rimini from 18 to 24 August 2019, during the meeting on the theme *Europe. Rights and duties (1979-2019)*.

Intervention of Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher

Mr. Minister
Mr. Secretary of State, Hon. Nicola Renzi
President Letta
Professor Vittadini,
Dear friends,

These are my first moments at a *Meeting* in Rimini of Communion and Liberation, and I must say I am very moved by the great public who are participating in this meeting.

Certainly the theme proposed demands that we somehow refocus the debate on Europe, often biased in favour of the claim to rights, personal and social, over the very concept of duty, at times perceived as hostile by the modern mentality. This was highlighted by Pope Francis at the European Parliament: “the concept of right no longer seems to be associated with the equally essential and complementary concept of duty, so that one ends up affirming individual rights without taking into account that every human being is linked to a social context, in which his rights and duties are connected to those of others and to the common good of society itself”[1].

On closer inspection, if we look at the history of the European project, which arose at the end of the Second World War, we note that it was born primarily as a “community of duties”. Alcide De Gasperi, the 65th anniversary of whose death we remembered just two days ago, clearly made this understood in a speech delivered at a conference in Brussels in 1948[2]. De Gasperi noted that “to save freedom, peace must be saved”

and that “all democratic action must aim for the very reasons of its existence towards peace”. It was therefore necessary - he went on - to constitute a “solidarity of reason and sentiment, of freedom and justice, and to give united Europe the heroic spirit of freedom and sacrifice that always led to the decision in the great moments of history. This is the primary task of all”.

In this brief phrase, De Gasperi outlines the pillars on which the project of European unification is to be built: the defence of liberty, the promotion of justice and peace-building. At their centre is the duty of solidarity, an indispensable condition for delivering other goods, since without it the other will always remain somehow extraneous, a competitor and therefore someone to be beaten and dominated. Solidarity was the antidote to tyrannical abuse and the commitment, lived as a fundamental duty, that would have avoided the re-emergence of the premises that had led to world war.

It should be noted, however, that De Gasperi speaks of a solidarity of reason and sentiment. This is a particularly valuable annotation, especially in our highly sentimental time, where even the most delicate questions are dealt with in an evanescent way, more to arouse emotions than to develop reflections. In recent times there has been a decisive shift towards the “solidarity of sentiment”, which instead must remain closely linked to the “solidarity of reason”. For De Gasperi this was an indispensable premise for the European project to grow and develop. Solidarity is therefore not a “good intention: [it] is characterized by concrete facts and gestures, which bring us closer to our neighbour, regardless of the condition in which we find ourselves” [3]. It is not based on the compassion or repulsion that the other evokes, but on the objectivity of the common human nature. In Christian terms we would say that it is based on the awareness of being part of a single body, so that if one member suffers, everyone suffers (cf. *1 Cor* 12, 26).

And it is precisely this characteristic of objectivity and reasonableness that links duties and rights. This is because the objective duty of solidarity with others corresponds to that set of rights that are just as objective as any human person. Where objectivity is lacking, the system of rights itself loses its meaning. This is what has been happening in the last fifty years, during which “the interpretation of some rights has progressively changed, with the inclusion of a number of ‘new rights’, not infrequently in opposition to each other”[4], creating the premises for what the Pope calls *modern ideological colonization*.

This process of the relativization of rights is intimately linked to the progressive exclusion of the religious sphere from social life, in turn the fruit of an unhealthy secularism that sets Caesar against God instead of permitting a positive interaction between them, notwithstanding the obvious distinction between their domains. So, “it is no real surprise, then, that there are efforts to create a vision of Europe which ignore its religious heritage, and in particular, its profound Christian soul, asserting the rights of the peoples who make up Europe without grafting those rights on to the trunk which is enlivened by the sap of Christianity”[5].

One of the dramatic outcomes of this process is the *fragmentation of existence*[6]: the second troubling sign of our time, marked by solitude and individualism[7]. Unfortunately, John Paul II continues, Europe has known in these years “the grave phenomenon of family crises and the weakening of the very concept of the family, the re-emergence of racism, interreligious tensions, a selfishness that closes individuals and groups in upon themselves, a growing overall lack of concern for ethics and an obsessive concern for personal interests and privileges”[8]. They are words that, sixteen years on, still remain prophetic.

The withering of the sense of duty and the progressive subjectivization of rights has therefore weakened the very heart of the European project. In this imbalance, in what could be defined as its “theoretical premises”, the multiple crises that have afflicted the continent over the last decade have contributed: from the financial crisis, which has put the Euro’s performance to the test, to the outcome of the British referendum, which has in some way questioned the cohesion of the entire European project; from the migration issue, which highlighted the significant fractures that exist between the member states of the European Union, as well as the problem of religious and cultural identity in an increasingly de-Christianized continent, to the advance of populisms and anti-European sentiments that have demonstrated a detachment that has been in progress for some time between the ideal of a united Europe and the peoples that compose it. These crises are compounded by the growing emotionality and responsiveness of political choices, often lacking a basic vision and charting a rudderless

course, rather than in a far-sighted project that addresses problems by seeking lasting solutions.

Among the various crises that I have mentioned, I will briefly mention the migratory crisis, given its constant relevance and the capacity that the subject has to ignite debate, fuelling ideological conflicts that do not fully take into account the complexity of the problem. I believe it is clear to everyone that such a delicate issue cannot be dealt with effectively without a clear political vision at all levels. But how can we have such a vision, without a cultural perspective that allows us to face the wide spectrum of related problems? How can we avoid reacting to the media echo on this issue? How can we prevent a serious human and humanitarian problem from merely turning into a dry dispute over quotas and borders? How can we ensure that we do not simply limit ourselves to opposing the needs of migrants, on the one hand, to the rights of citizens on the other? How to prevent migrants from continuing to be victims of traffickers, and citizens, especially in countries like Italy who are on the front line, from perceiving a general sense of insecurity and powerlessness in the face of a problem that, despite their efforts, remains largely still not addressed?

If there is one aspect that strikes anyone who comes into contact with Pope Francis it is his profound humanity. He sees in the other essentially and primarily a person. All other features of that person somehow end up in the background. We can thus understand why he has often insisted, speaking of Europe, on the centrality of the person, as the main antidote to the attempt to objectify and categorize others. “The first and perhaps greatest contribution that Christians can bring to today’s Europe”, the Pope affirms, “is to remind them that it is not a collection of numbers or institutions, but rather it is made up of people”[9], endowed with *transcendent dignity*[10], or of an “innate ability to distinguish good from evil, that ‘compass’ inscribed [in the heart] and that God has impressed in the created universe”[11]. And people have names, they have faces, which describe their most intimate and profound identity, their relationship with the infinite mystery of God: “Your name was born from what you fixed your gaze upon”, as the suggestive title of this Meeting states, taken from a poem by Karol Wojtyła. The name and the face derive from the bond with God that makes a person. And precisely at the origin of the idea of Europe, states De Gasperi, is “the figure and responsibility of the human person with his leaven of evangelical fraternity, [...] with his will to truth and justice sharpened by a millennial experience”[12]. But, Pope Francis adds, “recognizing that the other is above all a person, means valuing what unites me to him. Being a person binds us to others, makes us into *communities*”[13]. And *community* is a pivotal word for Europe, as the European project arose with the idea of giving life to a community of peoples who agreed to be bound by reciprocal duties.

Therefore, returning to the delicate issue of migration, we need to rediscover the duties, rather than the rights, that are at stake. Above all, there is the most obvious duty: that of human solidarity with the person who is in need, suffering and often in danger. It is a duty that concerns all of us, prior to states and governments. It is the *ABC* of Christian charity: “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (*Mt* 25: 35-36).

The duty of helping our neighbour, as a person, is a fundamental duty, but certainly not the only one. It must be balanced by the equally important duty of States to offer opportunities for integration to migrants and security to their own citizens. In this sense, the Holy Father, who has people at heart, first and foremost, has been particularly clear: one cannot make one duty prevail at the expense of another. There is a need for the “virtue of prudence which is the virtue of governance: ... a people that can accept but does not have the possibility of integrating, [is] better not accepting”[14], as “one cannot think of the migratory phenomenon as an indiscriminate process, and without rules”[15], emphasizes Pope Francis.

There is then the duty of solidarity among States. And this – as I recalled previously – is a cardinal principle of the very existence of the European Union. Therefore one cannot think that the issue only affects “border states”. It is obviously not for me, nor the Holy See, to offer practical solutions from this point of view, as it is an internal matter. However, one cannot but highlight the imbalance currently present, which needs to be corrected, as the repercussions of such imbalance are evident to all.

Finally, it must be remembered that there is also a duty of the migrants themselves. It is the duty to become

familiar with the land where they have arrived, to learn its language, to know its cultural and religious traditions. Sometimes there is the feeling that the birth of ghettos is favoured so as to avoid “contaminations” from the outside. It is a comfortable solution, often sought after by migrants as well as by those who welcome them. The news has already shown how this solution is short-lived and accentuates problems, rather than solving them. The duty of migrants to integrate is instead a great opportunity. For them, first of all, because it inserts them into the new social context in which they have arrived and frees them from the dynamics from which they had fled, and which often reappear in the lands where they settle within their national communities. It is also an opportunity for those who welcome, to rediscover, enhance and effectively communicate their cultural tradition and their popular identity.

Thank you for your attention.

[1] Francis, *Ripensare il futuro dalle relazioni. Discorsi sull'Europa*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2018, 18.

[2] Cf. *De Gasperi e l'Europa, scritti e discorsi*, edited by M. R. De Gasperi, Brescia 1979, 68-71.

[3] Francis, *Ripensare il futuro dalle relazioni*, cit., 88.

[4] Francis, *Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of New Year greetings*, 8 January 2018.

[5] John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation «Ecclesia in Europa»*, 28 June 2018, 7.

[6] *Ibid.*, 8.

[7] Cf. Francis, *Ripensare il futuro dalle relazioni*, cit., 99-100.

[8] John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, 8.

[9] Francis, *Ripensare il futuro dalle relazioni*, cit., 98.

[10] Cf. *Ibid.*, 19.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] A. De Gasperi, *La nostra patria Europa. Discorso alla Conferenza Parlamentare Europea*, 21 April 1954, in: *Alcide De Gasperi e la politica internazionale*, Cinque Lune, Rome 1990, vol. III, 437-440.

[13] Francis, *Ripensare il futuro dalle relazioni*, cit., 99.

[14] Francis, *Press Conference during return flight from Ireland*, 26 August 2018.

[15] Francis, *Ripensare il futuro dalle relazioni*, cit., 105.
