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Press Conference to present the International Study Conference “Euntes in mundum universum”

This morning, at 11.30, a press conference was livestreamed from the Saint Pius X Hall, Via dell’Ospedale 1, to present the International Study Conference “Euntes in mundum universum”, taking place from 16 to 18 November 2022 at the Pontifical Urban University, on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the institution of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* (1622-2022).

The speakers were: Msgr. Camillus Johnpillai, office head of the Dicastery for Evangelization; Fr. Bernard Ardura, O. Praem., chair of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences; and Fr. Leonardo Sileo, Magnificent Rector of the Pontifical Urban University.

The following are their interventions:

Intervention of Msgr. Camillus Johnpillai

The historical, political and ecclesiastical context

From the point of view of the history of the Church, and in particular the missions, the institution of the sacred congregation for the propagation of the faith, better known as “*de Propaganda Fide*”, or simply as “*Propaganda*”, was an historical event of great importance. A central office of the Roman Curia since 1622, the Congregation was entrusted with the responsibility for directing missionary activities throughout the world.

After the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the need emerged for a new institution in Rome as an instrument in the hands of the Pope to promote the internal reform of the church in European countries, some of which had switched to Protestantism, and to regain lost territories wherever possible. It was also to help foster close relations with the Orthodox Church. In addition to all this, it was to be responsible for spreading the Catholic faith in America, Africa and Asia.

However, there were still other factors that made a missionary congregation necessary in the Roman Curia. The same ecclesiastical and political situation at the beginning of the seventeenth century also contributed to the establishment of the central office. In particular, the administration of missions on the basis of the patronage system required urgent attention. This practice had to be abolished and replaced with another system that would better ensure the promotion of evangelizing activities and that would enable missionaries to win the hearts and minds of local populations.

Reform was also urgently needed to create more united and concerted action. The growing number of missionaries from different religious institutes and secular clergy engaged in spreading the faith demanded such a unified approach.

The founding of Propaganda Fide in 1622

The short pontificate of Gregory XV (1621-1623) was very important for the Catholic revival. The first Jesuit-trained pope, he sought not only to continue the internal renewal of the church, but also to recover the ground it had lost. In 1622, he established the sacred congregation for the propagation of the faith in order to provide the church with a supreme central authority covering the entire missionary field. The concept behind the office was that the Pope, as the universal shepherd of souls, had absolute responsibility for spreading the faith. The congregation was therefore to coordinate and guide the missionary activity of the church, which until then had been controlled by the Catholic rulers of Spain and Portugal. Pope Gregory created the new congregation on 6 January 1622. The choice of the solemnity of Epiphany, the ancient memorial of the call of the pagans into the kingdom of Christ and to his teachings, is indicative of what was considered the main task of the congregation. At the same time, it refers to the missionary mandate of Christ (Mt 28:18-20) and the pastoral responsibility of the Pope towards all peoples. The Apostolic Constitution "*Inscrutabili Divinis*" of 22 June 1622 emphasized the Pope's duty and right to spread the faith as the main task of the papal role as pastor of souls.

Therefore, the entire missionary system had to be subordinated to the Roman central authority. All missionaries were to depend on it in the most direct manner possible, to be sent on mission. The methods had to be regulated, and the office had to assign the mission fields.

The Pope established the congregation, made up of thirteen cardinals, two prelates and a secretary, to whom he entrusted and recommended the affairs of the propagation of the faith. Under the dicastery, missionary work received new impetus. The competences were very extensive, embracing all matters linked to missionary activity. The centralization of this latter under a single dicastery had many advantages, especially since it ensured better coordination of work. Spiritual and material assistance could be provided in a harmonious manner, taking into due account the overall situation of the needs of the mission territories.

Gregory's successor, Urban VIII (1623-1644), gave strong support to the progress of the missions through the establishment of the Polyglot Press (1626). He also founded the Urban College in Rome on 1 August 1627 to train missionaries and send them to the Far East in particular. The college was also the beginning of the what eventually became the Pontifical Urbanian University.

Msgr. Francesco Ingoli (1578-1644) was appointed as the first secretary, and was entrusted with the immense task of creating the foundation for its effective functioning. With great zeal, for 27 years he guided the work of this young congregation through various initiatives. His contribution to the gradual and patient development of the various aspects of the competence and praxis of the dicastery and his attention to building a truly missionary archive merit appreciation. The centralization of missionary activity under the guidance of Propaganda is the most relevant contribution of Msgr. Ingoli.

The competence of the congregation can be presented in three categories: territories, people and subjects. The missionary Congregation was granted the authority to carry out this work in the world on behalf of the Supreme Pontiff. Its jurisdiction is universal and it is responsible for guaranteeing everything that contributes to the

formation and growth of the local Churches.

Another field relating to the dicastery is the issue of finance, which received special attention right from the beginning, especially from the founder Pope Gregory XV, taking into account the extensive worldwide commitment to missionary activity.

Further developments of the competence of Propaganda Fide

- In the reform implemented by the apostolic constitution 'Sapienti consilio' of 1908, the territorial dimension of the competence of the Dicastery is made even more precise in this reform, which contributes to greater clarity in the competences of the Congregation, as well as in the role of the religious in mission territories. The Cardinal Prefect also has full responsibility in the financial field, which is managed by a Pro-Secretary.

- The Pius-Benedictine codification in 1917 presents the powers of the Congregation even more explicitly in canon 252. Serious and extraordinary matters required prior approval by the Supreme Pontiff.

- Some further developments, after the Pius-Benedictine code in the competencies of the congregation, can be seen in two fields: 1) the promotion of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the field of missionary co-operation; 2) the foundation of various religious institutes of diocesan right and those of pontifical right that have a missionary purpose.

- The Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) are the main means of missionary animation and cooperation on a universal level under the direction of the Missionary Congregation. The works are: the Pontifical Works of the Propagation of the Faith, that of Saint Peter Apostle, that of Holy Childhood and that of Missionary Union. These works originated from the initiatives of the lay faithful, of a charismatic nature and with due autonomy, they contribute to promoting the missionary spirit among the faithful and materially help the new particular churches.

- Vatican Council II's ecclesiology on the mystery of the Church, its sacramentality and its missionary nature are among the most important contributions to the promotion of the Church's missionary action. The missionary dimension of the Church is a specific contribution to promoting the work of evangelization, which is a duty of the people of God.

- The reform of the Roman Curia carried out by Saint Paul VI with the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae universae* in 1967 echoes the teachings of the Council in the competence of the dicastery. Moreover, the reform confirms the general competence of the missionary dicastery as the central organ of the Church, responsible for organizing and coordinating missionary activity in the world. The specific competence of the dicastery, on the other hand, refers to the government of the missions or to the ecclesiastical circumscriptions that come under its jurisdiction. Furthermore, the same Apostolic Constitution presents a new name for the dicastery - the evangelization of peoples - which is very significant, emphasizing that evangelization is the purpose of the Church's missionary activity. Also notable, for the first time, is the reference to the participation of the laity in missionary cooperation.

- As a novelty, the approach of the new 1983 Code of Canon Law to the missionary activity of the Church refers back the conciliar teachings in a theological-juridical treatment, in canons 781-792 in Book III. The canonical norms on the Church's missionary activity are applications of the principles contained in the documents *Lumen Gentium*, *Christus Dominus* and *ad Gentes*.

- A relevant aspect of the reform carried out by Saint John Paul II with the 1988 Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, with reference to the competence of the CEP, is the promotion of research in missionary theology, spirituality and pastoral work as the first instruction in the task of the dicastery for missionary cooperation. Its role in training secular clergy and catechists and animating the people of God is further emphasized.

The current Dicastery for Evangelization - Section for First Evangelization and the New Particular Churches

His Holiness Francis, with the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* of 19 March 2022, established the Dicastery for Evangelization, which is headed directly by the Pope and consists of the Section for Fundamental Questions of Evangelization in the World and the Section for First Evangelization and New Particular Churches.

The Section for First Evangelization and Particular Churches takes over the legacy of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (*Propaganda Fide*).

Some ecclesiastical circumscriptions in the Americas, and those in almost all of Africa, Asia (with the exception of the Philippines) and Oceania (with the exception of Australia) depend on the Section for First Evangelization and New Churches. There are currently 1,117 ecclesiastical circumscriptions (archdioceses, dioceses, apostolic vicariates, apostolic prefectures, etc.) under the jurisdiction of the missionary dicastery.

Conclusion

In this historical moment, the Dicastery for Evangelization remembers with profound gratitude the work of evangelization carried out to date by numerous men and women religious, secular and lay priests, and in particular the catechists in the mission territories.

The evangelizing mission of the Church is still far from fulfilment. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, invites all baptized persons to be “missionary disciples” and “agents of evangelization” (120). The Church continues her evangelizing mission, recalling the words of the Risen Lord: “*Euntes docete omnes gentes – Ecce ego vobiscum sum*” (Mt 28:19-20).

Intervention of Fr. Bernard Ardura, O. Praem.

During a Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences held in 2019, one of the members brought to the attention of the participants the imminent fourth centenary of the founding of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, which took place on 22 June 1622.

Thus, three years ago, I wrote to the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, His Eminence Cardinal Filoni, proposing that he organize an International Study Conference aimed at taking stock of historiographic research on the four centuries of activity of the Missionary Dicastery.

The preparation of this scientific event was an opportunity for us to collaborate fruitfully with the Dicastery for Evangelization, the Pontifical Urban University, and the Pontifical Mission Societies.

The establishment of the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, back in 1622, was the fulfilment or result of a slow process that began during the pontificate of Gregory XIII (1572-1585) concerned with the union of the Eastern Christians with Rome, especially the Slavs, the Greeks, the Syrians, the Egyptians and Ethiopians, a process resumed by Clement VIII (1592-1605), in a Roman Curia profoundly reorganized by Sixtus V, in which the competences previously reserved for the consistory had passed to a system of specialized congregations.

Thus, the defence and propagation of Catholicism suggested to Gregory XV (1621-1623) the establishment of a Congregation exclusively dedicated to the propagation of the Faith both in the lands where Eastern Christians

separated from Rome were present, and in the regions still being explored, especially since Holland and England, while aspiring to trade and colonial expansion, were also ready to spread the doctrines of Protestantism everywhere.

Thus, on 22 June 1622, the Bull *Inscrutabili Divinae* was promulgated and the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* was established. It is precisely in the University especially dedicated to the academic formation of students coming from the so-called "Mission Countries", that we are about to reread the history of this Dicastery, rich in valuable lessons for the life and mission of the Church today, and certainly very useful for outlining the future of the proclamation of the Gospel not only in the so-called "Mission territories", but also in societies of ancient Christian tradition, which are in need of a new evangelization capable of meeting the challenges of today's world.

Shortly after the establishment of the Congregation, Gregory XV died, but the consolidation and success of the newly established Congregation was taken over and ensured by his successor, Cardinal Barberini, one of the thirteen first members of the Congregation, who was elected pontiff in 1623 with the name Urban VIII.

The name of this Congregation was changed in 1967, to "Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples", due to the risk of negative connotation that the term "propaganda" has assumed today. The decision for the change was made by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae universae* of 15 August 1967.

With the coming into effect of Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate evangelium* on 5 June 2022, the Congregation as such disappears and forms the new Dicastery for Evangelization with the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

This International Study Conference is not only aimed at the study of a now distant past. Bearing in mind the role of history and the importance of its lessons, the various speakers will offer insights into new issues that have arisen in the contemporary age.

For example, the call of Pope Benedict XV in his Apostolic Letter *Maximum illud* of 30 November 1919, to overcome every nationalist and ethnocentric closure, every compromise in the proclamation of the Gospel with the colonial powers, with their economic and military interests, is always topical. On the other hand, the pontiff recalled then that the opening of culture and community to the salvific newness of Jesus Christ demands that every undue ethnic and ecclesial intrusion be overcome. Even today, the Church continues to need men and women who, by virtue of their Baptism, respond generously to the call to leave their homes, their families, their homeland, their local Church, to be sent out to the peoples, in a world that is not yet transfigured by the Gospel, the Good News for all. Now, with the new structure of the Dicastery for Evangelization, it is also intended to emphasize that the proclamation of the Gospel concerns not only the territories that have not yet been evangelized, but also those that have received the proclamation over the centuries, and in which the need is felt for a new evangelization of the men and women living today in the new cultures often formed outside Christian values. Thus, the Church intends to fulfil Jesus' mandate to bring the message of Salvation to all.

Intervention of Fr. Leonardo Sileo

The origins of the PUU are closely connected with the apostolic motives that inspired the institution of Propaganda Fide desired by Pope Gregory XV. After all, the project for the creation in Rome of a "pontifical college of higher studies" for the specific training of missionaries with a view to rooting of the Gospel in new geographical and cultural contexts constituted the breeding ground and the impetus for Gregory XV's determination to establish the new congregation.

Already around the early 1600s, the Prelate of the Roman Curia, Juan Bautista Vives (1545-1632), shared the idea of founding a centre for the formation of missionaries *ad gentes* with the Jesuit Martin de Funes and Saint

John Leonardi. At the beginning of 1622, he negotiated the purchase of the family palace of the late Cardinal Ferratini, located in the square of S. Trinità dei Monti, so that a “*colegio de apostólicos sacerdotes seculares, provenientes de cualquier nación y gente, a fin de que el Sumo Pontífice existente pro tempore los enviase por toda la redondez de la tierra a defender y propagar la fe católica*” could be established there.

Since the completion of the purchase of the palace took place in 1626 on the death of Pope Gregory XV, Urban VIII with the Bull *Immortalis dei Filius*, dated 1 August 1627, established the Pontifical College *de Propaganda Fide*: He gave it its own name, “Urbanum” and provided for it to be granted exemptions and privileges (i.e. “faculties”) enjoyed by other colleges in the Urbe and by the *Studium Urbis*, today’s La Sapienza University, then called the *Archiginnasio Romano*, whose foundation as a lay institution was desired by Pope Boniface VIII in 1303.

Within a few decades, the College took on the definitive features of a general *Studium*; the oldest preserved degree diploma dates back to 1642. Immediately the organization of a library was initiated and with it the *Stamperia poliglotta de Propaganda Fide*, which became the historical laboratory of interculturality, of publishing technical innovation and of the unprecedented intercultural processes of evangelization. The first catalogue dates back to 1639, the second, enriched with more Oriental language characters, to 1667.

I come to today's Urban University. I will start by quoting Article 3 of the Statutes approved last year and already in tune with the missionary transformation of the Church desired by Pope Francis and confided in a special way to the current Dicastery for Evangelization.

“In accordance with its original inspiration, the PUU considers and pursues as specific purposes:

(a) to understand and scientifically study the cultures and religions of peoples so that the faith of the Church may give reason for the Christian proclamation in human contexts marked by its absence;

b) to develop academic research so that the Christian faith can recognize and welcome the *semina Verbi*, the dynamics of evangelical *praeparatio* and openness to the truth in the history of cultures and religions not yet fecundated by the Church’s evangelizing mission;

c) to offer criteria and guidelines for proposing and exposing to men, in accordance with their cultures and languages, the proclamation of divine salvation;

d) to promote fruitful dialogue between students from various nations and, by fostering a climate of intercultural growth, to develop “intellectual tools that can serve as paradigms for action and thought, useful for preaching in a world marked by ethical and religious pluralism”

(*Veritatis gaudium* = VG, Foreword, 5)

e) to deepen and acquaint the students with the main and current problems of the Church’s evangelizing mission, so that the PUU stands out among other ecclesiastical universities for its specifically missionary character”.

Indicative of the University's multifaceted training activity aimed at fostering the development of the world’s local Churches, is its inter-university network. The Urbaniana, in fact, is the mother house of as many as 108 university institutes present and operating in the five continents, particularly in Africa and Asia. In addition, the University’s current educational offerings have as a particular objective the acquisition of the skills and competences that students from the five continents will need in order to pursue and implement, in the variety of functions and operational contexts, the effective renewal of evangelization evoked by all. To this end, the University in recent years has increased teaching and interdisciplinary modules and, through the four Faculties (Philosophy, Theology, Canon Law and Missiology), has organized new specialised in-depth courses leading to a corresponding university diploma, or master’s degree; an opportunity aimed at specific practical applications of

the knowledge, skills and competences, proper to the academic degrees. Among these diplomas, I would like to highlight the last three approved: interdenominational diploma in Bible Translation, diploma in Management and Pastoral Leadership for Evangelization, diploma in Religions and Interreligious Dialogue.

Finally, I add the contribution offered by the University to raising awareness of the integral missionary activity carried out through the centuries by Propaganda Fide, also through the dynamic history of the Urban College until today's Urban University. I refer to the most recent publishing work, of great rigour and competence, that the University has pursued and continues to pursue, in order to keep its historical awareness alive and to foster its ongoing relevance.

Some works of the Urbaniana University Press (heir to the *Stamperia Poliglotta*, the Polyglot Printing House):

Ad Dudink (ed.), Catalogue of Chinese Documents in the Propaganda Fide

Historical Archives (1622-1830)

('Grandi Opere' 2022)

Rui Zhang, La missione del primo Legato pontificio

Maillard de Tournon. All'origine delle relazioni tra Santa Sede e Cina

('Ricerche' 2022)

M. L. Grignani, Propaganda Fide, le missioni e le inchieste

sulla schiavitù *de facto* degli indigeni in America Latina (1918-1922)

('Saperi testi Contesti' 2022)

G. Caramazza – G. Moerschbacher – L. Sileo, Mission in Africa

Evangelizing the Future

('Mission&Formation' 2021)

S. Mazzolini, Nuove Chiese e adattamento

nel cantiere conciliare (1959-1962)

('Saperi testi Contesti' 2021)

G. Rizzi – E. Raini – Zhao Hongtao, Repertorio dei catechismi cinesi

nella Biblioteca della Pontificia Università Urbaniana

('Grandi Opere' 2019)

G. Colzani, Church's Mission

History, Theology and the Way Forward

(‘Mission&Formation’ 2019)

A. Ndreca (ed.), L’Albania nell’Archivio di Propaganda Fide

(‘Geographia Evangelica’ 2017)

G. Rizzi, Il corpus dei catechismi nel Fondo della Biblioteca Urbaniana

di Propaganda Fide

(‘Grandi Opere’ 2015)

L. Sabbarese (eds.), Un momento di inculturazione del Cattolicesimo in Cina

Le Facoltà speciali del 1978

(‘Quaderni Ius Missionale’ 2015)

G. Rizzi, Edizioni della Bibbia nel contesto di Propaganda Fide

Uno studio sulle edizioni della Bibbia presso la Biblioteca della PUU

(‘Grandi Opere’ 2015)

C. Orlandi – J.A. Barreda, Rudesindo Salvado. Un missionario

fra gli aborigeni australiani. Le Relazioni del 1865, 1882, 1900

(‘Saperi testi Contesti’ 2014)

F. Ingoli, Relazione delle Quattro Parti del Mondo

(‘Grandi Opere’ 1999)
