

14. May 2020

**“Veritas liberabit vos' in the Antichristian context”
(Part 3)**

The last part of this letter is about the freedom of the church. The signatories clearly state the right of the Church to regulate the sacramental life without interference from state authorities. The letter says:

“Finally, as Pastors responsible for the flock of Christ, let us remember that the Church firmly asserts her autonomy to govern, worship, and teach. This autonomy and freedom are an innate right that Our Lord Jesus Christ has given her for the pursuit of her proper ends. For this reason, as Pastors we firmly assert the right to decide autonomously on the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments, just as we claim absolute autonomy in matters falling within our immediate jurisdiction, such as liturgical norms and ways of administering Communion and the Sacraments. The State has no right to interfere, for any reason whatsoever, in the sovereignty of the Church. Ecclesiastical authorities have never refused to collaborate with the State, but such collaboration does not authorize civil authorities to impose any sort of ban or restriction on public worship or the exercise of priestly ministry. The rights of God and of the faithful are the supreme law of the Church, which she neither intends to, nor can, abdicate. We ask that restrictions on the celebration of public ceremonies be removed.”

This part of the text is also justified.

It must not be that governments generally interfere in the Church's affair. If this will happen, then we would very quickly have the situation that the practice of faith would come under the control of governments, which has happened too often in history, was tried and is still happening today. There is a clear word of the Lord, which sets the direction here: *“Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar - and God what belongs to God.” (Mt 22,21)*

So it is very easy to distinguish whether the church keeps its freedom in times of crisis, such as this pandemic, to act according to its divine mandate, or whether it is guided in its actions by political forces or even strong fears.

I do not know how, in individual cases, the influence of governments to ban public worship was concrete. In Poland, for example, this has never been the case, as well as in Latvia, where the bishops have convinced the government that the service is

necessary for the mental health of the people and therefore the public celebration of Holy Mass has never been omitted. We hear similar things from few other countries.

For me, the question is rather whether ecclesiastical authorities have not been too quick and too willing to accept such enormous restrictions which violate the rights of the faithful. The statements that the Church, with such an attitude, has been particularly exemplary in protecting the faithful, the poor and the weak, are not very convincing. The examples given by Poland and Latvia point to another way which also took into account the weak, but which allowed them to access the high value of the celebration of Holy Mass. Therefore, it is good that the letter addresses the rights of the Church and the limits of state authority.

With this I would like to conclude this theme, which has somewhat exceeded the otherwise more spiritual framework.

One of the questions coming to me relates to today.

On Thursday 14 May, the "High Committee of Human Fraternity", which includes the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Cardinal Miguel Ayuso Guixot, will hold a worldwide day of prayer for religions in the face of the Corona pandemic. The appeal is addressed not only to all people who believe in God, but to all people in general. Pope Francis also calls for participation.

We were asked what we think about it.

Within this framework only so much:

The prayer for the end of the corona crisis, which we carry out daily, is for us fundamentally connected with conversion to God, because we believe that through this pandemic, the Lord calls people to the conversion of their lives, to a turning to Jesus Christ. Therefore we pray that people in their religious search (e.g. in other religions) will find the true faith through the Holy Spirit. This is our direction which we will continue.

Here is a prayer for this day:

"Let people in this grave crisis of the pandemic convert to You and live their lives according to Your commandments, so that You may dwell in them."

Grant to all those people who seek You in other religions, through Your Holy Spirit, the knowledge of Your Son Jesus Christ, so that on this way they may live with us in that unity that You have prepared for us human beings in Your goodness!"