

2. December 2024

‘Dominus Iesus’ and the true faith of the Church

Part 2

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:18-20).

At the beginning of the new liturgical year, I wanted to emphasise once again the uniqueness and salvific universality of Jesus Christ, so that all my meditations and conferences during this year may shine forth that star which guides and impels the Church to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples. If she were to cease to do so, she would neglect the missionary mandate entrusted to her by the Lord and would become irrelevant. But the mandate which our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed before He ascended into heaven will remain in force until the end of time, even if only a small remnant remains faithful to it.

As a continuation of yesterday's meditation, today I will also quote passages from the declaration 'Dominus Iesus' by Cardinal Ratzinger - who later became Pope Benedict XVI - in order to recall the unchangeable command of the Lord to the Church and not to allow it to be relativised or even eliminated for the sake of a misunderstood interreligious dialogue.

Indeed, how could we make the most of Advent if we did not look forward to the celebration of the birth of the One Who came to redeem all humanity? How could we face the New Year with confidence if we were not certain that God offers the grace of salvation to all people through His Son Jesus Christ?

For this reason, it is important that the proclamation of the Gospel be freed from all the “false fires” that have been introduced into it, that the faithful be nourished in the green pastures and be warned and protected from the wolves that wish to harm them. The Holy Catholic Church must shine in all the beauty that God has given her. This can only happen if the faithful walk the path of holiness in the light of the truth, without being coupled to the spirit of the world.

The declaration of Cardinal Ratzinger in the year 2000, which corresponds to the authentic and perennial doctrine of the Church, is capable of counteracting those tendencies that seek to relativize the missionary mandate of Jesus to the Church to announce the Gospel to all peoples.

Faith in the Redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, has been revealed by God. It is not the product of the religious wisdom of men, so that it cannot be compared with other religious experiences. Nor is it the merit of man, as if someone had discovered the Christian faith through his own research and philosophical knowledge. Jesus Himself is, in His own Person, the truth, and authentic faith is the truth.

At God's behest, the Church proclaims this truth that has been entrusted to her. This truth is intended for all people, without exception. But if we were to place the Christian faith on the same level with another religion, considering, for example, dialogue as an open process between religions that are “on an equal footing,” we would already have carried out an inadmissible process of relativization, and we would have darkened the light of revealed truth. As a consequence, we would be depriving the other person of the possibility of examining his own religious experience in the light of revealed truth, apart from the fact that we ourselves become incapable of authentic discernment.

Spiritual things are to be judged by God, and not by man (cf. 1Cor 2:11)!

We see, then, that in the declaration “*Dominus Iesus*”, starting from the truth of the Christian faith, a false openness in interreligious dialogue is confronted. The missionary mandate of Jesus is so clear and unequivocal that dialogue with other religions can only be practiced to the extent that it is at the service of the mission and has the intention of helping people -whatever their religion or worldview- to come into contact with the Gospel. Undoubtedly, evangelization can take the most diverse forms and be very delicate. For example, a practicing Jew has a different predisposition than a person whose religious practices are pagan. But in any case, the missionary mandate to proclaim the gospel “to every creature” applies.

A decisive difference that the '*Dominus Iesus*' declaration points out between the Christian faith and other religions is the so-called “theological difference”: Christianity is not the result of an inner religious experience or of human reflections, but is the faith

revealed by God and therefore has an objective and binding character. God Himself traced out for us the path of salvation and sanctification by sending His Son into the world.

If we were to stop proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Savior of humanity, we would not only be unfaithful to Him, but we would also deceive people, depriving them of the messengers who bring them the Good News: *“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.””* (Is 52:7)

If we were to stop proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Savior of humanity, people would no longer hear these words of profound consolation and hope that only He alone can say fully of Himself: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed”* (Lk 4:18).

We cannot allow the proclamation of the Lord's message to stray more and more from its essence! If this were to happen, then instead of people being led from the valley of sin to the clear light of God, an ever thicker shadow would hang over the world and we, as the Church, would leave people at the mercy of their poor condition.

Let us conclude with a final quotation from the declaration “Dominus Iesus”, in which the clear voice of the Church's Magisterium on this topic resounds:

“The mission ad gentes, also in interreligious dialogue, “retains intact, today as always, its strength and its necessity”. Indeed, *“God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim 2:4). God wants the salvation of all through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the movement of the Spirit of truth are already on the way to salvation; but the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go to meet those who seek it in order to offer it to them. Because she believes in the universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary”. For this reason, dialogue, although part of the evangelizing mission, constitutes only one of the actions of the Church in her mission ad gentes. Parity, which is a presupposition of dialogue, refers to the equality of the personal dignity of the parties, not to doctrinal content, much less to Jesus Christ - Who is God made man - compared to the founders of other religions.”

With this quote, we close this theme that we have dealt with yesterday and today with the intention of strengthening our listeners to cling to the truth of the Gospel and thus become guides so that those who seek may find the only One Who can say of Himself, *“I am the way, the truth and the life”* (Jn 14:6).