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36th EDITION

MEETING FOR THE FRIENDSHIP AMONGST THE PEOPLES

#meeting15

20th-26th August Rimini Fiera

Religions are part of the solution, not the problem

An interreligious date of high level introduces the 36th Meeting of Rimini

Rimini, 20th August 2015 – 3 p.m., the 36th edition of the Meeting of Rimini starts. Theme: “Religions are part of the solution, not the problem”. They attend Haïm Korsia, Chief Rabbi of France, Azzedine Gaci, dean of the Othmane Mosque of Villeurbanne in France and cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for the interreligious dialogue. It introduces Emilia Guarneri, president of the Foundation Meeting for the friendship amongst the peoples. It is Guarneri herself, on the opening, who underlines how religions “are a bastion against the nihilism of our contemporary society and represent a benefit for us all”.

Korsia launches the deliberation about the dialogue with the other monotheist religions by stating that Hebraism doesn't hold the truth: “Each religion has its truth”. The Chief Rabbi narrates of the Exode in the Bible, when Jewish people leave Egypt. Moses succeeds to manage the people by talking to everyone. He has to be everyone's leader, and judge what the important issues are. Korsia affirms that God prefers united men, even if against Him (like on the episode of the Tower of Babel), than divided ones like on the tale of the Deluge. “Uniformity is dangerous for men, while unity is dialogue, progression of dialogue which makes them progress”. “The perfection of men is their ability to perfect themselves”, add the Chief Rabbi – so it corresponds with others' need, because my self is held by others. “The self is what it's missing”: for this reason it is essential to give to others and love them in order to discover them and accept them in their diversity.

By stating their joy of being at the Meeting, Gaci wanted to display that it is possible to live together between different peoples, culture and – most of all – religions. “We live in an age of deep misunderstandings. A globalization of religions is taking place and we have to ask ourselves about it” – that is his preamble. “Will the great monotheist religions” he continued “manage to survive in Europe? Will they manage to contrive an enduring peace, or will they fuel terrorism? Are they ultimately the solution, or the problem?”

There are many essential prerequisites, adds the lecturer, to which we have to face if we want to answer to these questions: we want to consider our personal, individual needs; to the other side, we have to consider civil and institutional requirements as well. To satisfy the formers, we should remind three conditions. The first is “know the others”: others are always other than me, so he brings diversity. This awareness is the first pass to cohabitation, to enrichment through the range of differences. There is no but one humanity declined in thousands of possibilities. The essential is to build bridges and establish friendships. The second condition is that a true believer is inhabited by a presence, so he's never alone. “Thus” Gaci observes, “the presence of the others will always be God's presence by way of the others”. A last, essential condition is the attention to respect – which is not equivalent to tolerance. “Each time we met” sais by referring to Cardinal Tauran (but also to the Chief Rabbi nonetheless), “I found myself enriched”. Tolerance beckons an idea of sufferance face to others. Otherwise, “I am here and say to you: it is God who wants this difference. We live together, we have become the same destiny”.

To all this we have to add another condition: a positive look to others is needed, it is needed also a mind to others for a better comprehension of ourselves. It is not about losing our ways in others' – it's the building of ourselves, together with the others: “We're not alike, but I'm prone to listen to you and know your certainties so I could build myself better”.

By ending his speech, Gaci underlined how these personal needs are vital also for the institutional needs (to which, for lack of time, he has only mentioned) and the collective ones, but the idea of diversity is necessary more than ever, because a misunderstanding could bring to reject others. One cannot take the liberty to think about oneself without the others any more.

Cardinal Tauran has eventually stressed that there is no such thing as religious conflicts; religions are not violent, their disciples are. “Religions are often looked at as a danger: fundamentalism, zealotry, sectarian drifts, sectarian drifts, are often grouped with religion”, he affirmed. In particular, this happens on account to terrorist acts, inspired by religious reason, perpetrated by a minority of misdirected initiated to a religion: Islam. “Obviously” he clarified, “this is not about the real Islam exercised by the majority of that religion’s followers”.

Actually – adds Tauran – it is necessary to discern what belongs to politics from what belongs to religion. All religions agree in the defense of some virtues: life, dignity of human individuals, family, fraternity, mutual help. Therefore, the followers of all religions “exist, belong to this world, are sympathetic with current history and citizens with full rights – non citizens or believers, but citizens and believers. They offer to everyone that additional of spirit that every society needs”. That is why “one cannot live and meditate on our society’s future without considering the religious dimension of human nature”. “We are part of this world, the world God loves” is the conclusion. “We must take the chance to meet it”.

(D.P., A.Cap.)

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