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Ad lectores

Our journal is honoured to publish in this issue three studies that belong within the life of the Church today. This particular time in the life of the Church is characterised by the Year of Mercy now underway, by the Encyclical on the care of the environment, *Laudato si'*, and not least by the incipient reception of the Apostolic Exhortation on the Family, *Amoris lætitia*, which follows upon the conclusion of the Synodal deliberations that began with the October 2014 Extraordinary Assembly and continued at the October 2015 Ordinary Assembly. On these subjects it gives us great pleasure to offer our readers the contributions of three professors of our University: Marcello Buscemi, Pál Ottó Harsányi and Martín Cabajo Núñez. They treat, respectively, of mercy in St. Paul, of spousal love in Trinitarian perspective, and of the family as nurturing mercy and as safeguarding the "cosmic family" itself.

The Pauline scholar, Prof. Buscemi, of our Jerusalem-based Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology, promptly clarifies that a statistical study of the Pauline vocabulary would not do justice to the role of mercy in Pauline teaching. The word itself is little used in comparison with such terms as "grace" and "God's justice." In reality, however, for the Apostle to the Gentiles, it all begins with the infinite mercy of God, without which the term "grace" and the expressions "God's justice" and "God's faithfulness" make little sense. Moreover, grace is itself the gift of mercy, related to the Hebrew concept of *hesed*, which is God's love for his people, love that keeps faith even when the people have fallen into sin. According to this scholar, St. Paul uses most of all three semantic families of terms to indicate "mercy", whether divine or human: 1) compassion, a feeling that arises in the one who watches another person's misery; 2) commiseration, God's benevolent attitude towards persons in need of his merciful love; 3) feelings of compassion, pity, affection, tenderness, deep emotion. On this basis, "mercy" in the Pauline writings regards first of all God acting in our favour, and in consequence of that, the attitude of mercy that the believer must make his own within his own community of believers. In the Pauline writings, the text of Romans 11, 32: "God has locked up all human beings in disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all!", is for Buscemi the one that better than any

other expresses God's mercy and lets us see the developing understanding of it in the course of the history of salvation. In fact, Rom 11,32a and Gal 3,22 show that all human beings, "Jews and Greeks" alike, have been "locked up", i.e. "thrown into prison" (Gal 3,23), hence "subjected to the law or to sin" (Rom 3,9). Miserable is the lot of the pagans, because of their decadence, which is sapiential-religious (Rom 1,21-23), moral (Rom 1,24-25), sexual (Rom 1,26-27) and social (Rom 1,28-32), to the point of hardening a merciless heart. Miserable are those among the Jews who pass judgement upon others while they themselves are the first to offend against God (Rom 2,1). Such persons believe themselves to be superior to any others, while in fact all they know how to do is to judge, to despise others, without themselves fulfilling the law that God has inscribed into the heart of every human being. Yet God, through Christ, accomplishes a plan of immense mercy towards us who are unrighteous and enemies of God (Rom 5,6-10). Only God's infinite mercy can save the human being, whether Jew or pagan. Indeed, there is no place either for self-righteousness or for deriving righteousness from the law (Rom 3,27), there is only righteousness based on faith in Christ. Mercy's "universal perspective" (Rom 11,30-32) is not only the highest point of Pauline reasoning in Rom 9-11, but is the culmination Paul's entire long discourse in Rom 1,16-11,36. The salvation God promises to whomever believes comes about through a kind of reciprocity between Jews and pagans, aids for salvation to each other. The believers, in turn, as recipients of God's mercy then become bearers of the same mercy of God to each other, putting that mercy into practice as they relate one to another. Thus the life of the believers becomes a response to God who has had mercy upon each of them. Thus, Buscemi concludes, Paul, in the manner of baptismal discourse, exhorts: "Put on then, as God's chosen, holy and beloved, mercy, kindness, humility, meekness and patience" (Col 3,12).

For his part, Prof. Harsányi proposes a deeper understanding of the relational resources proper to the spousal covenant, in accordance with Trinitarian theology. This is certainly admissible, in that the human being has been created in the image and likeness of God the Holy Trinity. It is the very spousal dynamics of the spouses' self-transcendence in becoming "one flesh" that, according to the Author, clearly gives witness

to the Trinitarian dynamics as between the oneness of the divine nature and the individuality of the divine Persons. To be sure, St. Francis of Assisi, in his own writings, shows a marked tendency to Trinitarian discourse, even though his biographers focus rather on the Christological dimension.

As if to bring together and sum up his colleagues' expositions, Prof. Carbajo presents the family as the natural place for developing and promoting merciful relationships, an indispensable requirement for the future of the cosmic family. In particular, he offers a critical analysis of the technocratic system, with the aim of outlining a didactics of re-appropriation of the values of "gratuitousness", fraternity, the common good, and, above all, forgiveness and of mercy. Carbajo exhorts us to consider every member of the family of humankind as a sister or brother within a brotherhood that, in the Franciscan manner, does not exclude even God's other creatures.

Professor Ezio Albrile's study of the Iranian origin of the symbol of the serpent, found in Romanesque art, is a sort of bridge leading to the following articles in this issue, on Franciscan evangelisation in China. These are contributed by Professors Michela Catto, Matteo Nicolini-Zani, Paolo Aranha and Claudia von Collani, respectively. It so happened that, in the thirteenth century, contacts were not rare between the Franciscans and central Asia, which was then populated by Mongol ethnic groups, soon enough to come under Tamerlane's Muslim rule. In his study, Albrile exegetes symbols of Romanesque architecture, represented in some capitals in the crypt of the Basilica of San Michele Maggiore in Pavia, in the portal of the Novarese church of Santa Maria Assunta, and in the decorated front of the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, in Ventimiglia. Exceptional artifacts that speak of mythologies and fascinating subjects from far away times and places. This study meticulously retraces the stages of the metamorphosis of the three-headed Dragon Aži Dahāka, once a Sassanid symbol, as it transmigrated into successive Christian images. In the Sassanid context, and even more so in the Umayyad one, the Christian communities were important points of contact with the culture and scholarship of the Roman world. The junction was provided by the mediation of the Armenian church buildings, which derive no little inspiration from Zoroastrian Iran. The Magi, too, nowadays known through mediaeval legend, have their deeper roots in

Zoroastrian Iranian stories. In the late thirteenth century, the Zoroastrian serpents were transformed into antagonists of the vanity of the human intellect, which is subject to the Promethean temptation of setting itself up in opposition to the greater wisdom that is the simplicity of God and of God's creatures.

As said above, the closing articles in this issue concern Franciscan evangelisation in China. They treat, in particular, of the role of Carlo Oratii da Castorano in the Chinese Rites controversy, which saw the Jesuits' policy of accommodation opposed by the other religious orders, to the extent of bringing about the papal condemnation of 1742. These articles have their origin in papers presented at the conference on the Franciscan Sinologist: "Carlo Oratii da Castorano betweem Peking and Rome," which took place in his native town of Castorano on 26-27 October 2012. Among the principal backers of the conference was the *Commissio Sinica*, under the scholarly direction of Professor Francesco D'Arelli, coordinated by our own Higher School of Mediaeval and Franciscan Studies.

In the first of these studies, Michela Catto, presenting briefly the Jesuit formation method, based on the Spiritual Exercises, identifies at their base the principle of distinguishing *adiaphora*, i.e. doctrines that make no difference to attaining salvation, and the *fundamenta fidei*, namely doctrines that are, instead, necessary for the salvation of the soul. For Catto, it is this distinction that makes possible an *accommodatio* in relation to beliefs and cultures that are distant from those of the West. Carlo da Castorano's intervention, Catto goes on, enters into the debate on the "permissions" of Ambrogio Mezzabarba, among which is found permission for the veneration of ancestors by means of genuflections and prostrations, as well as by offerings of incense and food, though on the condition that these take place before a table purged of any superstitious references, and after having made public profession of the Catholic faith. The Riccian line interpretes these ritual gestures in the perspective of mere filial piety, in conformity with the Ten Commandments' precept of honouring one's father and one's mother. Carlo da Castorano, however, opposes this interpretation by Matteo Ricci and the Society of Jesus, by highlighting the *intentionality* of those gestures of veneration, and of the use of the objects

involved in it, as prevailing over the mere "materiality" of the gestures and objects in themselves. He insists, especially in the Diary, on the meaning that the intentions and the beliefs of the Chinese attribute to the tablets dedicated to the dead. Castorano, arguing against their classification by the Jesuits *as adiaphora*, refuses to apply to those ceremonies the concept of religiously neutral rituals. Rather, he is convinced that those rituals are indeed superstitious, by reason of their form, their matter and the intentionality (*intentio*) of those who practise them. For Catto, Castorano's lambasting of the practice of the tablets is definitely present especially in the second part of the memorandum that the Franciscan addresses to the Congregation of the Holy Office on 10 July 1741. There he expresses his own views on the subject, and does so as a Sinologist, and no longer in the capacity of Vicar of the Archbishop of Peking, his confrère Bernardino dalla Chiesa. In Castorano's opinion, the use of the tablets must remain forbidden because it is a superstition not capable of remediation, and because even if amended, any use of the tablets could not avoid giving public scandal to any who believe that the souls of the dead are actually present. Castorano states likewise his opposition to the Jesuit interpretation that favours the liceity of the use of the tablets, an interpretation based on the purity of the ancient Confucian tradition. In fact, Castorano affirms, on the strength of his acquaintance with the Confucians, even though the lettered profess themselves to be atheists, they do not disdeign to exhibit publicly "every manner of idolatry".

Nicolini-Zani, too, refers to the confrontation between the Jesuits and the Franciscans. It is his view that the Nestorian Xi'an Stele, with its unequivocal testimony to the presence of East Syrian Christian communities in China at the time of the Tang dynasty, had vast repercussions among the Jesuits, both in China and in Europe. In China, it was sustained the effort to prove to the Chinese the venerable antiquity, and therefore the truth and the respectability of the presence of the Christian religion in China. In Europe, it was argued to be abundant proof of the legitimacy of the missionary "strategy" promoted by the Society of Jesus. The Franciscans were aware of this "Jesuit appropriation" of the Christian Stele of Xi'an. In particular, Nicolini-Zani goes on, the *Versio Monumenti seu Lapidis Sinici*, produced in Rome, in 1741, by Friar Carlo da Castorano, holds very great interest, in that it comes from other than a Jesuit milieu, indeed in strong opposition to the Jesuit line on this. Castora-

no, for example, deliberately backdates the discovery of the Stele to the year before the arrival in China (1570) of the "competitors", the Jesuit missionaries, with whom the discovery and knowledge of the Xi'an Stele are historically associated. In alignment with the opinions previously expressed by the scholars Havret and Pelliot, Nicolini-Zani holds that Carlo da Castorano categorially rejects the practice of the tablets, reading it as impossible for Christians to accept. The Jesuits Boym and Kircher, on the other hand, prefer not to indicate explicitly the error that they perceive in the text, but instead adapt the latter by means of a translation that is at one and the same time both faithful and inaccurate, almost imperceptibly making it conform to their own ideas. Most interesting here is Castorano's recognition of a possible Buddhist term behind *fenshen*, a "division" or a "separation" that is said to come about within the Trinity at the moment of the Incarnation. This Franciscan was the first European translator of the Stele to make any reference to this. In conclusion, for Nicolini-Zani, the Jesuits' approach to these matters, at the time, made some use of the ambiguity, of the linguistic and cultural "polysemy" of the text of the Stele, nudging it along, imperceptibly, from within that ambiguity, so as to adapt it to the message that it was needed for the text to convey. The Franciscan appoach, on the other hand, perceived the ambiguity of the language as dangerous and, therefore, refused to "massage" it. Not finding therein the required exact formulation of the contents, the Franciscan approach avoided any "astute" manipulation of the text from within. Instead, leaving the text formally intact, the Franciscan approach accompanied it with a more correct formulation of the original, designed to pass on the presumed true intention of the author.

In the third article in this ambit, Paolo Aranha proposes a parallelism between Castorano, principal supporter of the papal Bull, "*Ex quo singulari*", published on 9 July 1742, condemning the "Chinese Rites", and the Capuchin Norbert Bar-le-Duc, promoter of the papal Bull, "*Omnium Sollicitudinum*", published on 12 September 1744, condemning the "Malabar Rites". The careers of the two men had different outcomes but were similar in relation to the "rites" controversies. Both the Friar Minor and the Capuchin were to be excluded from the Roman milieu and denied credit as the main movers behind the two papal documents, respectively. The reason for this, according to our Author, is to be found

in the strong influence that the "Jesuit party" had on the Roman Curia, especially on Cardinal Vincenzo Petra (1662-1747), Prefect of the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* and Major Penitentiary of Holy Roman Church, and perhaps even on the Roman Pontiff himself, Benedict XIV. However, while Norbert soon recovered his standing, especially as author of anti-Jesuit literature and, thanks to the role of the Marquis de Pombal, as architect of the process of expelling the Jesuits from Portugal, Castorano spent the last years of his life forgotten, in the isolation of his remote birthplace, the Castorano that gave him his name.

Claudia von Collani, in the fourth and last article in this field, on "Carlo Orazi da Castorano 康和子 and the Jesuits in the matter of the Chinese Rites", concentrates on the relationship between the Franciscan Sinologist and the missionaries of the Society of Jesus. This scholar identifies two phases of this dialectical relationship. The first phase goes on until the Consitution, *Ex illa die*, on the Chinese Rites (1716). In this phase, relations between the opposing sides appear to be serene, even while never wholly cordial. In the second phase, which follows that papal document, the Franciscan, working for the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, feels obliged to support the position of the Apostolic See. The delay on the Jesuits' part in obeying the dispositions of Rome contributes to hardening the polemics, which becomes one of the principal causes of the subsequent condemnation of the Jesuit practice conerning the Chinese Rites. The Jesuits, carrying out their ministry in the court of Kangxi, and therefore subject to Imperial policy, appear to the *Propagand Fide* missionaries, and to Castorano himself, not only as allied with the Emperor, but also as supportive of the Imperial orders to expel the missionaries who do not follow the practice of the Jesuits.

I avail myself of this occasion to wish our colleagues and readers a restful, well-deserved, summer break.

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