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# *Ad lectores*

The first part of this second issue of our journal in 2021 is dedicated to the Doctorate *honoris causa* in Philosophy – Integral Ecology, conferred by the Pontifical University Antonianum on Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, on 21 October last, at the seat of our University in Rome. This is only the fourth time in its long history that the Anonianum has conferred an honorary Doctorate and the very first time the honour has been awarded other than to a member of the Order of Friars Minor. Likewise, this is the first ever Doctorate conferred *ad honorem*, not in theology, but in philosophy, and, moreover, our first ever Doctorate of Philosophy with specialization in Integral Ecology. It is worthy of note, too, that with this fourth honorary Doctorate in its history, the Antonianum takes up again awarding the degree, not by reason of outstanding contributions to the study of the specifically Franciscan cultural and spiritual heritage, but in consideration of intellectual and teaching merits of far broader, more direct, significance for the worldwide Church – as was the case of the Antonianum's very first honorary Doctorate, that awarded, on 18 November 1955, to the Blessed Gabriele Allegra, the translator of the Catholic Bible into Chinese.

Published in this issue is the discourse of Patriarch Bartholomew himself, a veritable *Lectio magistralis*, which was also the Inaugural Lecture of the academic year at this University. So, too, is the *Laudatio* for Bartholomew of Constantinople, significantly delivered by none other than Pietro Cardinal Parolin, the Papal Secretary of State. The Cardinal took the occasion – particularly meaningful in the setting of this University of the Holy See, the Antonianum – to convey to the Patriarch the gratitude of the Holy See for his closeness to the Chair of Peter, both in charity and in the outspoken candour (parrhesia) of his teaching, candour that has been there before the eyes of all since the Patriarch's attendance at the Holy Mass celebrated on 19 March 2013 to mark the Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry of Pope Francis, a singular attendance since the "Great Schism."

Indeed, the contribution with which this issue of our journal opens, and which is central to the record offered here of the event our Univer-

sity held, could not but be the discourse of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. In the title the Patriarch chose for his *Lectio magistralis*: *Il Patriarcato Ecumenico nel mondo contemporaneo: visione e testimonianza sociale* (The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Today's World: Vision and Social Witness), an echo may be discerned of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution *Gaudium et spes*. In the lecture itself, the ancient institution of the Patriarchate of Constantinople is placed in relationship to the somewhat fluid socio-cultural context of the present age of humankind.

In a lecture he delivered in January 1967, in the Protestant parish of Amiens, in the midst of the social and ideological turbulence of that historical moment, Paul Ricoeur expounds his perspective on the Christian Church in a "post-religious age of faith" (âge post-religieux de la foi). This lecture was only published a few years ago, in the volume *Plaidoyer pour l'utopie ecclésiale* (Labor et Fides, Genève 2016).

Ricoeur's "ecclesial utopia," which is first of all an ecumenical utopia, is dedicated to the elimination of any prejudicial and ideological contrast between community (communauté) and society (société): It had been the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies who put side by side, quite distinct from each other, community (Gemeinschaft), founded on solidarity, closeness and affective involvement, and society (Gesellschaft), which is defined with reference to formal and functional relations among parties with their own interests to pursue. Ricoeur underlines that this is quite simply a matter of two forms of humans' social being, and that no benefit would accrue from viewing them as mutually contrasting. Rather, these two forms exist together, with complex dynamic and evolving links between them. As for the community of faith, the Christian Church, it must know how to unite, bring together, these two registers, these two "languages,", of poetry *ad intra* (la poésie interne) and of prose *ad extra* (la prose externe), on pain of fossilization. This must be so since human beings, in their universality, remain always and in fact in the horizon of a particular faith; which makes a properly hermeneutic contribution.

Ricoeur is thus able to explain to his brothers and sisters in the faith, beginning with those of the Reformed Church, that «the function of worship is to constitute that internal body of the community, with a view to preaching to every human being, which is the true

preaching» (*La fonction du culte est de constituer ce corps interne de la communauté, en vue de la prédication à tout homme, qui est la véritable predication*, p. 62).

The utopian vision of the Church, conceived by the philosopher Ricoeur more than half a century ago, is brought to fruition by Patriarch Bartholomew in his *Lectio magistralis*. The "prose" of the commitment to the care of our Common Home, joined to the commitment to social justice, is not simply juxtaposed to the "poetry" of the worship of God, in the liturgy, rather ... ecclesial ministry and service to humankind are interwoven and build up each other.

Bartholomew essentially sets forth the duties of the See of the Apostle Andrew, the one he now governs, beginning with the responsibility of service to the Orthodox Churches worldwide, among which it holds the primacy. He recalls the extraordinary event that was the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which met in Crete between 19 and 26 June 2016, and which it was for the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in the exercise of the ministry proper to it, to preside over in charity, and to coordinate. Given that the Orthodox Churches recognize only the first seven Ecumenical Councils, this Pan-Orthodox Council would be for them the first Council since Nicaea II, held well over a thousand years ago (787 A.D.).

The Patriarch brings out at the same time how, as the First Throne among the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, he pioneered initiatives on critical questions of global concern, such as care for creation and social justice. He explains at once that the care of the natural resources of our planet is «a matter of being true to God, hence to the created order,» and arises from the virtues of justice and charity, in both their vertical and horizontal dimensions. This is so, Bartholomew explains, «because we are social beings, and we share this world. We are created for personal encounter; and, as persons, societies, and nations, we are to be judged on the basis of such interaction.» Here is Christian personalism expressed with a genuineness and a simplicity that speak of the Good News of Jesus Christ and are evocative of Sacred Scripture's teachings concerning the human being as *imago Dei*. The logical and ontological links between the personal and the social being of humans, and the care of the Common Home, as set forth here by the Patriarch, are those that are likewise found in the teaching of *Fratelli tutti* and in

that of the previous Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*. This is far from an accidental similarity, since this teaching is recognizable, too, in these words that Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew pronounced together, linking universal brotherhood and the care of the Common Home: «The future of the human family depends also on how we safeguard – both prudently and compassionately, with justice and fairness – the gift of creation that our Creator has entrusted to us. Therefore, we acknowledge in repentance the wrongful mistreatment of our planet, which is tantamount to sin before the eyes of God.» (*Common Declaration of Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I*, Jerusalem, 25 May 2014, n. 6).

In Patriarch Bartholomew's *Lectio magistralis*, just as in his many other discourses, in different parts of the world, it is possible to acknowledge without further ado that all that he says may quite simply be traced back to his faith and to his acceptance, on the example of the Apostle Andrew, of the call addressed to him by the Lord. This is evidently at the heart of his teaching: Religion is not one among the many different human activities, for it represents rather the horizon within which everything stands out. On a more strictly philosophical plane – given that, as it happens, it is in philosophy that the honorary Doctorate was being conferred on the Patriarch – it is possible to recognise here a reflection on the value of religion itself. The arguments put forward by Bartholomew take the form of a "justification of religious faith," to put it as would Josef Schmitz. History and culture have already clarified and validated, so to speak, the authentically human value of living in faith. The Patriarch now spells out how obvious is

> the error of all those who have characterized – and who continue to characterize – religion as a "neurosis," as an "illusion," or as "opium for the people," the error of all those who have underestimated the power of religion, its social contribution and the culture that it has created. How could anyone affirm that it was a "neurosis" that built the Parthenon in Athens, Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, St. Peter's here in Rome, all the other unequalled monuments of art and religious inspiration, likewise the admirable abundance of charity and love in the name of the Merciful God? (p. 301).

Taking one's cue from the lightly subtle irony found in these words by Bartholomew, one would be inclined to exclaim: It is much better, and much more "human," to live such a collective neurosis than to be relegated to the leaden grayness of certain sectors of our societies, subjected to horizonless dynamics, with no heaven above and only ... *sub specie mortalitatis*, confined to the merely ephemeral.

Utopia, in this sense, namely that of non-place, of an unfulfillable dream, of a grand illusion, is certainly not the lot of the believer, of the one who lives a religious experience; rather:

> It is excessively utopian to expect that sociality and social cohesion may be achieved through globalization, economic progress, improving living standards, science and technology, digital communication and the Internet. It is impossible for there to be a world of peace and of justice without the contribution of the great spiritual powers of humanity – namely, without religion. (p. 302).

Thus Bartholomew turns, perfectly naturally, from the prose of the commitment to the care of our Common Home, the Earth, and to greater justice in this world, to the poetry of the faith, as one who knows in Whom he has put his trust (cf. *2 Tim* 1,12); he does so with that ease that could not but be bestowed by a *habitus* of worshipping the Trinity and of centering the heart on Christ. Indeed, every Christian is now called – by example, even ahead of any spoken words – to go on from the prose of active engagement in the care of our Common Home to the poetry of the song of praise. Orthodoxy itself is thus being traced back to one of its most profound meanings, inasmuch as the etymon itself indicates the gift / call of rightly honouring the Most Holy Trinity, in Christ and in the Church, giving the Trinity ορθοδοξία, "rightful glory" – that of *homo vivens gloria Dei* (Irenaeus of Lyon) – as the Patriarch explains:

> For the Church to intervene in "human affairs" is not simply an exercise of "horizontal sociality" or a case of "additional activity," but an important manifestation of the Church's spirituality, of her Eucharistic, communitarian and eschatological, nature, and of the very identity of her life (p. 304).

Stéphane Oppes