

CHURCH

Cardinal Sarah: «Nobody can forbid the celebration of the Eucharist»

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If for years, the Church has lived in confusion, not to mention apostasy, then in recent months we have witnessed an acceleration that cannot fail to disorientate and install bitterness in the ordinary faithful. Much is said about the fight against sexual abuse, but

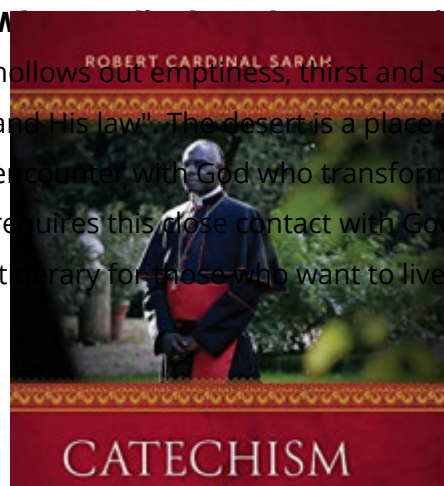
then we helplessly observe a mega-operation at the highest levels of the Church to protect Father Marko Rupnik. He is the Jesuit and artist, who has been found guilty of sexual abuse and had an excommunication mysteriously lifted in record time. In the meantime, we are faced with the concrete possibility that a bishop who espouses heretical theses may even become the guardian of Catholic orthodoxy: this is the German Heiner Wilmer, who last December seemed destined to lead the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, but whose appointment was stalled by the intervention of about twenty cardinals directly to the pope, but which today once again seems possible. In addition, there is the tragic spectacle of the trial underway in the Vatican for the investment in the London building at the centre of very dubious financial transactions, which has left the image of the reigning pontiff badly bruised.

Yet, these are just a few examples of what is happening – to which could be added the disgrace of the German “Synodal Path”, the war against the liturgy which belongs to the tradition of the Church, a more than ambiguous preparation of the Synod on synodality, the revelations and the denunciations contained in the testimonies of Monsignor Gänswein, Cardinals Müller and Pell in recent weeks - which give the idea of a Church transformed into a battlefield.

So how does an ordinary member of the Church, but also a consecrated person, a bishop and even a cardinal avoid being sucked into a diatribe that risks being entirely "mundane"? Or not be discouraged by a Church that seems to obscure the presence of Christ rather than reveal it, in which the "betrayal of the apostles", their "filth", is dramatically present, *as the then Cardinal Ratzinger once said?*

It's by re-focusing on our life's task, which is conversion. This is exactly what the book by Cardinal Robert Sarah reminds us, *Catechism of the Spiritual Life*, which begins precisely with the words of Jesus, reported by the evangelist Mark: "Repent and believe in the Gospel". Cardinal Sarah proposes an itinerary to experience Jesus, which is an absolute must for those who, in these times of great upheaval, in the world and in the Church, want a fixed and eternal point on which to build their lives.

Which is a **"path in the desert"** because "the desert, hollows out emptiness, thirst and silence in man and thus prepares him to listen to God and His law". The desert is a place "where one can experience a deep mystical encounter with God who transforms and transfigures". Holiness, which is our goal, requires this close contact with God. The path in the desert is a compulsory spiritual itinerary for those who want to live seriously: «This, following Abraham, Moses, the



prophets and the Chosen People, we agree to enter into it; we die to ourselves there so as to rise again more alive, bearing the fruits of the Spirit".

The itinerary of this book is the one proposed to us by the seven sacraments:

Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, Penance or Confession, Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick. This is because these are the gifts Jesus left us to live constantly in His presence. "Through his sacraments, Christ took us by the hand to carry us to Heaven". Living this experience to the fullest, growing in a world-proof personal faith, is also the best service we can offer the Church: «We have enough eminent specialists and doctors in the ecclesiastical sciences – says Cardinal Sarah -. What the Church tragically needs today is men of God, men of faith, and priests who adore in spirit and in truth".

It's not about escaping from the world, from problems and contradictions, to take refuge in a spirituality that keeps out a reality that you don't know how to accept. Far from it: the journey in the desert, the experience of meeting Jesus, serves to "then return to the world to proclaim Jesus Christ". We are in the world, but "considered in the light of faith, the world appears as God sees it, quite different from what it seems in the eyes of those who rely on their own efforts and judgements".

This gives us the capacity to form a clear and very concrete judgment on what is happening in the world. And Cardinal Sarah demonstrates this in many pages of his book, for example in the chapter dedicated to the Eucharist, which we could define as the heart of this volume. "The Eucharist - the Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation of Divine Worship tells us - is a fundamental need, a vital necessity. (...) A Christian without sacraments and without the Eucharist is a walking corpse. As the martyrs of Abitene said (...): "We Christians cannot live without the Sunday Eucharist". (...) Without the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, the world is doomed to barbarity, decadence, and death». With this awareness, a clear judgment on what happened in recent years, during the time of Covid, is formed and of which we report extensive excerpts:

"No government and no ecclesiastical authority can legitimately forbid the celebration of the Eucharist. The recent closing of churches in many countries, for public health reasons, is not the first attempt by public authorities to stifle and definitively destroy the Church of God, or to challenge the fundamental human right to honour God and to offer worship that He is due. (...) Too many Christians imagine that in order to be with the times and take an active part in them, it is necessary to set aside, as something concerning only the private sphere, their faith and their relationship with God, which have too often been described to them as an escape from their

responsibilities and a way of cowardly way of leaving the world to its tragedy. Hence the passivity with which the trivialisation of the Faith and of religious practice has been accepted by formerly Christian peoples, as was illustrated so sadly by the way in which governments, for public health reasons, were able to deprive believers, of the opportunity to celebrate the great mysteries of their faith worthily, solemnly, and in the community. People submitted without resistance to these decrees, which paid no heed to God.

(...) Our societies have panicked at the thought of death. Life, they tell us, is the most precious good, to be protected at all costs. But is just remaining alive really living? What is this survival for which we must agree to make all sorts of sacrifices? Have we not reached the point where, in order not to avoid losing their life, people paradoxically have stopped living - stopped travelling, conversing, helping one another, showing their faces and their smiles, shaking hands or embracing, praying together? For what sort of survival should we give up going to the house of God to give Him the worship that is worthy of Him and to receive the Eucharist, the source of life, "the remedy of immortality", as the Church Fathers called it? What is the remaining life worth, if we cannot even accompany our elderly who are approaching death and comfort them?

(...) Certainly, we must carefully take all the necessary hygienic precautions in a time of epidemic, but not to the point of killing every outward expression of charity, or giving up the Eucharist, the source of life, the presence of God in our midst, the application of Redemption both for the faithful who are present and also for all the living and the dead. While taking necessary precautions against contagion, bishops, priests and lay faithful ought to oppose with all their might any health and safety regulations that respect neither God and nor freedom of worship, because such laws are more lethal than the coronavirus".