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MEETING IN MILAN

Freemasonry wants a "mea culpa", Catholic Church commits examination of conscience

CULTURE

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Dialogue, and even collaboration, between the Church and Freemasonry must go ahead, perhaps with a "permanent table" as Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio hopes; but it is even more interesting to know that the significance of dialogue lies in the fact that the Catholic Church must change, must recognise that it has formed a wrong judgement on Freemasonry and thus should remove the stigma that prevents so many Catholic Freemasons from receiving communion.

~~This is the gist of the "historic meeting" organised by GRIS~~ - with a selected audience and closed to the press - which took place last Friday, 16 February, in Milan with the presence of qualified representatives of the Church and Freemasonry: on one hand the three Grand Masters of the three Italian lodges - Stefano Bisi for the Grand Orient of Italy (GOI), Luciano Romoli for the Grand Lodge of Italy of the ALAM (GLDI) and Fabio Venzi (in connection from Rome) for the Grand Regular Lodge of Italy (GLRI) -, on the other hand the Archbishop of Milan Mario Delpini, the aforementioned Cardinal

Coccopalmerio, the Franciscan theologian Zbigniew Suchecki and, above all, Bishop Antonio Staglianò (in the opening photo with Grand Master Bisi), President of the Pontifical Academy of Theology and the real star of the afternoon, according to what was reported to the Daily Compass by a few present.

The three Freemasons - two of whom made their speeches public - with different nuances all defended the compatibility of Freemasonry with the Catholic faith: Bisi recounted how his growth in the Catholic sphere led him to join the Grand Orient; Romoli ranged from Sant'Anselmo to Cardinal Zuppi; Venzi stressed how English rituals have been Christian since their origins.

Therefore, the Church's repeated condemnations (almost 600 in three centuries) are said to be the result of the Church's inability to understand exactly what Freemasonry is. Bisi (pictured left with Grand Master Luciano Romoli) also expressed his disappointment at the fact that Pope Francis had opened the Church's door to homosexuals, then "to divorcees, but forgot that among Freemasons there are also many Catholics who are prevented from receiving communion and when it came to granting credentials to a Freemason ambassador he said "no".

In short, is it possible that the "Who am I to judge?" and "Todos, todos, todos" do not apply to Freemasons? But the Grand Master must be well aware of who he is dealing with and that after every rebuke follows encouragement, valuing those in the Church who practise dialogue and are always willing to ask questions: thus in conclusion he quotes Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini and then hopes - and hopes - that "one day a Pope and a Grand Master may meet and walk a piece of the road together, in the light of the sun", indeed "in the light of the Great Architect of the universe".

In the face of these clear and well considered presentations, the Catholic counterpart was disconcerting. In the collaborative atmosphere of the meeting, the intervention of poor Father Suchecki, who had prepared a learned report on the Church's pronouncements against Freemasonry, appeared only as a due act, moreover also somewhat snubbed by Bishop Staglianò, who appeared intolerant of the reminders of doctrine. Archbishop Delpini - who, after imposing the date, time and conditions of the meeting, showed up 45 minutes late - and Cardinal Coccopalmerio pretended to know nothing about Freemasonry, but in different words they said the same things, two in particular: satisfaction for this 'meeting between people' and not between opposing acronyms and the need to continue and intensify these meetings, perhaps with a 'permanent table', as Coccopalmerio pointed out.

And so it was Monsignor Staglianò's turn to take the stage, and also much more time than expected, laying the foundations for the future: scheduled to explain the reasons for the irreconcilability between the Church and Freemasonry, he actually gave a long speech-show tearing apart the doctrinal approach on the Catholic side and basically going along with the demands of the Freemason exponents. It is interesting to note that Staglianò is always keen to appear inexperienced in the matter and therefore only present to bear witness to his faith. In fact, not only has he already attended at least one such meeting in 2017 when he was bishop of Noto, Sicily, but upon his arrival in the meeting room he demonstrated great familiarity with several Masonic exponents. And it may be a coincidence, but his episcopal cross was moved (hidden?) to his inner left breast pocket, not visible to the public (as seen in the photos): a strange way of bearing witness.

But returning to his speech, the line of dialogue is clear. Staglianò gets the doctrinal clutter out of the way: doctrine, he says in synthesis, does not exhaust membership of the Church, indeed this is first and foremost life, an assertion with which one could agree if it were not an expedient to make faith 'liquid'. And indeed Staglianò continues: "I am interested in the Christian event, not the doctrine". And how is the Christian event defined? As the manifestation in Jesus Christ of "God who is love, only and always love". And therefore Mercy: if the world is corrupted by original sin, Mercy comes from even before original sin, and "rains on the just and the unjust", on all. And here is the passage that relates to Bisi's complaint: "If, for example, a homosexual couple should not receive a blessing, God decides, not me. "Who am I to judge?" means precisely this: (...) who am I to judge that a human condition is such that raining God's Mercy on the just and the unjust does not even touch it with its moisture, because sometimes the moisture of the water of God's Mercy is enough to regenerate a life'.

So, it is clear that this is also the way to overcome irreconcilability with Freemasonry. And an ad hoc theology is also being prepared. In fact, Staglianò also criticised the document of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith that last November reiterated the ban on Catholics joining Masonic lodges, because it is reductive, it remains on the level of doctrinal confrontation. Now we need other categories, "we need a healthy sapiential theology", the one that Pope Francis has asked the Pontifical Academy for Theology headed by Staglianò to develop. What does this mean? "A theology capable of thinking critically about everything, of responding also to the critical instances of universal reason, because we live in a world where if you do not dialogue you risk being absolutely out of the world. Sapiential means that it knows how to unite science and wisdom of life'. Isn't that clear? It doesn't matter, what one must

understand is that in the end on the "wisdom of life" one can also collaborate with Freemasons, in good works and for the common good. Mercy rains down on everyone anyway.