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Rimini

Pope visits Meeting and the challenge of a faith that becomes culture

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'Build this civilisation of love without ever tiring.' These were the closing words of John Paul II's address at the 1982 Rimini Meeting 'For Friendship Amongst Peoples'. Today, forty-four years later, another pope is attending the Rimini Meeting, which officially

opened yesterday, thereby symbolically picking up where he left off. This is not only because the title chosen for this 47th edition is the final line of the Divine Comedy, 'The love that moves the sun and the other stars'; it is also because the organisers of the Meeting have placed the reference to the encyclical Magnifica Humanitas at the heart of the most significant talks and exhibitions. There, too, the building of the civilisation of love is at the centre of reflection on the challenges posed by the digital age. 'Only the certainty of the love that moves all things,' said President Bernhard Scholz yesterday at the opening of the Meeting, 'allows us to "face the challenges of our time without losing heart".'

However, it seems that the organisers of the Meeting had Leo XIII in mind rather than John Paul II when building a bridge between him and past popes. They described the encyclical Magnifica Humanitas as the new Rerum Novarum, the Leo XIII encyclical of 1891 which is considered the cornerstone of the Church's social doctrine in the modern age. Just as the latter offered a 'Catholic' reflection on the Industrial Revolution, so, according to the organisers, does *Magnifica Humanitas* point the way to 'preserving what is human' in the current Industrial Revolution.

Beyond the in-depth exploration of the theme, Pope Leo XIII's visit to the Meeting also has significant meaning for the Communion and Liberation movement, which organises the Rimini event. Here, one cannot help but draw a comparison with the visit of John Paul II, albeit from a distance. There was a substantial overlap between the Polish pope's accession to the papal throne in October 1979 and the birth of the meeting in August 1980. By the time he arrived at the Meeting in 1982, John Paul II had already published three encyclicals: *Redemptor Hominis*, the manifesto of his pontificate in which he identified Christ as 'the centre of the cosmos and of history'; *Dives in Misericordia*; and *Laborem Exercens*. John Paul II felt a particular affinity with the experience of CL, and his presence in Rimini indicated that a faith which becomes culture and fosters a critical perspective on every aspect of reality was the path the whole Church should follow. 'A faith that does not become culture,' said John Paul II, 'is a faith that is not fully embraced, not fully thought through, and not faithfully lived out'. The Pope then endorsed the vision of the Rimini Meeting, which was based on the idea that only a conscious identity with clear judgements about reality could truly engage in dialogue with others and claim to be an instrument of 'friendship among peoples'.

Over the last 44 years, both the Church and society have undergone significant changes, and the Rimini Meeting has experienced various phases that reflect the transformations and internal developments of the CL movement. The number of

meetings, exhibitions, and other events has increased to such an extent that it has sometimes created confusion about the Meeting's true purpose, calling into question its fidelity to the original vision.

Nevertheless, it remains the most important Catholic cultural event, certainly in Europe and perhaps in the world. This is what Leo XIV recognises above all else as he arrives in Rimini just one year into his pontificate. For the American pope, it is also crucial that faith becomes culture in a world that, just as it did 40 years ago, faces growing divisions and threats to its survival. It is important that Catholics play an active role in society. Today, we will hear what Leo XIV considers to be the essence of this active role.

In the meantime, however, Leo XIV's visit could yield an important initial result: the restoration of peace and friendship not so much between peoples, but between the different factions within Communion and Liberation. It is no secret that the movement has undergone great turmoil and an internal schism in recent years, which has led to the de facto placement of the CL Fraternity under the administration of the Holy See. However, through this visit, the Pope is offering significant recognition to the current leadership, headed by Fraternity president Davide Prosperi, whilst simultaneously seeking to encourage unity and understanding. It is as if he is saying that one cannot expect to foster friendship amongst peoples if the people of CL are the first to be divided.