

Holy Mass for the solemnity of the Most Blessed Redeemer
(Venice, Basilica of the Most Sainted Redeemer – 16 July 2017.

Homily of the Patriarch, Francesco Moraglia

Dear priests and deacons, religious men and women,

Honourable Prefect, Mr. Mayor, civil and military authorities, brothers and sisters

To all I wish a feast of the Most Holy Redeemer rich in faith and gestures of brotherhood.

Hope – as the Apostle Paul reminds us in the second of today's readings - hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, (Romans 5; 5)

Hope is one of the three theological virtues, it is the power that comes from God and leads us to Him, and in us humans it gives rise to a new way of seeing things, to feel them, to live them; A new energy that, from the moment of baptism, lives in us.

Some of us may remember one of Dostoevsky's enlightening thoughts: "*Only the idea ... that there is something infinitely more just and happier than me fills me with all-out tenderness and glory ... whatever He did ... If men were deprived of the" infinitely great, they could no longer live and would die in despair ... "*

We are thus projected towards the future for which the disciples of the Lord searched to the eighth day; In biblical language, the day of the Risen Jesus.

Hope, through the latest realities - those of every day - turns to God and so our earthly life resembles the "bricks" with which we build our eternal dwelling.

Without eternal hope, even earthly hopes are difficult to hold on to, because they are unstable, fragile and, above all, disappointing. And of this the passing of years teaches us very eloquently.

The New Testament - unlike what Marxist and other ideologies claim - attaches great importance to earthly life for its intrinsic value and because it determines eternity.

The Apostle Paul actually reminds us: "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad*" (2 Cor 5,10).

The Christian virtue of hope, however, must not be confused with human optimism that sometimes borders on the irrational or pure desire; It is, rather, the certainty of being saved and of reaching the place where the risen Jesus has gone before us.

Hope is - first and foremost - the risen Jesus, with God as the protagonist; Only afterwards does it become human virtue with man as the protagonist. Then hope shapes a new way of thinking

and acting. At the beginning, however, everything coincides with the event imposed on the disciples from the outside; The resurrection or, better, the Risen Lord, is the beginning of hope.

In such a world, Christian hope is something very different from what could be drawn from the title of the book - released several years ago - which collected the ideas of some Neapolitan children: "*I hope that I manage*".

Christian hope is not this vague hope, but it is the certainty that is born of faith and concerns the both the earthly life and the life to come. We have, then, a Hope with capital H that sustains our "little hopes" of every day which can never substitute for the Great Hope which somehow keep it awake while this in turn holds them all together. And all are nourished with respect, in every circumstance, to autonomy.

Christian hope is completely different to that of the world.

Yes, for the Christian, the latest hopes refer to multiple realities; for example, establishing more just personal and social relationships through education and a policy that is not self-referential but forward-looking and committed to reducing the great differences between people, nations and continents. It is a commitment to a development project that is real, diffused, shared; development is the new name of justice, was already taught fifty years ago the encyclical of Paul VI *Populorum progressio* (see paragraphs 76-80).

It is an illusion to think of a worldwide redistribution of wealth without a "conversion" of politics. The richer countries with advanced technologies must look more carefully at the ways in which poverty and misery lead to death. When there is investment and wealth production with the individual placed centrally in the manner of the Gospels, then there is an improvement in living conditions.

This is the foresight required for an intelligent policy that has been desirable for thirty or forty years ago by leading countries - the principal reference here is to Europe - that they should not withdraw into themselves, reducing politics to finance and economics; They must invest, overcoming the logic of emergencies and partisan interests. And it would have been real foresight to understand that the international debt of some countries was growing dramatically and they would no longer be able to repay it.

Thus politicians who were experts in economics and economists "lent" - as they say - to politics should have devised different strategies and, if they were prevented from doing so, they should have criticised the drift that was going on and, above all, taken note of it.

Of course, poverty is the result of the lack of access to culture, communication, large investments, large-scale economic projects, lack of adequate technologies, and above all lack of access to basic resources: water and raw materials.

A fairer distribution of resources between people, between states, between continents is urgently needed, because peace does not just depend on this social justice among men and states. Working for the development of whole regions means building peace.

The technosciences can become important tools in the service of development, but only within a political project that places the individual at the centre. Ultimately, we should consider the principle of the universal destination of goods - culture, water, environment, raw materials, capital - and finally the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, the common good and the protection of the environment. Prevention here would avoid painful and expensive later interventions.

For the Christian the way of hope and commitment also involves the rigorous exercise of political, social, economic and financial responsibility, especially from those who, at every level, have high levels of responsibility and are involved in organizations and institutions which have the power to affect the daily lives and, therefore, the daily existence of so many communities, families and people. Of course, having a sense of God here helps greatly.

In any case, as was unfortunately the case of the Veneto banks, which unmistakably highlighted the level of attention, vigilance and responsibility this is absolutely necessary to avoid disruptions but, above all, to pursue and guarantee adequate levels of social justice, especially when the losers are exactly the most vulnerable citizens, the small savers.

I turn a cautious and strong appeal to politicians, for this should not happen: political friends, it is a signal of what we expect as citizens and we feel it is due. This, too, for the Christian, is concrete commitment for the common good and can not be culpably neglected.

And what to do now in the face of the epochal issue of migrants, often motivated by their impossible living conditions? The distinction between refugees and economic migrants is not easy to make, it is not obvious, it can seem unconvincing.

Here policy can no longer stammer; it must speak a clear language, it must above all have a project which - to date - has been lacking and which still seems to be lacking, since migrants and those who are welcomed must know into what kind of political and social project they are moving. The same must apply in the area, in the territory, and for national policy.

The people feel the urgent need for policies that are not slogans, inconclusive announcements, but an expression of a real commitment by everyone - Italy, Europe, the United Nations – animated by a solidarity which is based on a concrete and healthy realism. Yes, solidarity and realism must go together.

Many people continue to be disillusioned because they no longer believe in a policy of announcements and tweets that sometimes do not turn out to be true and, at other times, are ridiculous for their obviousness. But for some, what matters is simply telling you that they are here and have no intention of giving up...

If finance, economy and migrants - actually more related than they sound - will not be governed by a policy that is genuinely aimed at the common good, then finance, economy and migrants become territories conquered by the shrapnel of politics or different types of lobbying. And we will be forced to rethink things that we have already seen, with the difference that today we have means that some decades ago did not exist and which now allow, thanks to the internet, real-time operations, which once seemed unthinkable, to be carried out.

Avoiding, therefore, naive or ideological approaches, we must open ourselves to the reality that is before us because – even though it is difficult - is the reality before which we are called to take a stand and make decisions that are worthy in both terms of our humanity and Christianity, with important short, medium and long term stages.

A policy that loves meetings and genuine encounters, and which aims at solving, at least in part, these problems must, first and foremost, be able to evoke the spaces of true secularism - free from different forms of ideologies - placing the human person at the centre.

The Gospel resonates with force “*Render ... to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, and to God that which is God’s*” (Mt 21,22); here every true discourse on secularism begins.

The meeting takes place, in fact, between people and cultures that are committed to a joint dialogue with no easy road ahead and they must take hold of rights and duties. Yes, rights and duties. It is therefore necessary to rediscover the principles of reciprocity, acceptance, , legality, legal certainty and redress, without forgetting the essential and full respect of the culture, laws and traditions of the host country.

As inhabitants of the city - the polis - we all have a right to know what is the thinking, on the sensitive issues of common life, of those who live near and next to us. Here are just a few examples:

- Do women have rights? And what about men?
- Is there a right to religious freedom?
- What are the limits of the state with regard to the citizen, if any?
- Is there a the right for freedom of conscience to be respected by those who do not share your faith and culture??
- In the end, is the “other” considered an obstacle, an enemy or a travelling companion with whom to share goals in view of the common good??

It is about establishing a dialogue that does not decay into monologue, a real dialogue between the parties, dealing with objective reality and seeking common points. It is working for a united city, where each is able to express their own story in an inclusive way, and which does not live only on ancient glories and memories.

This city does not fear the context of pluralism, and it does not give way to relativism because it is open to a plurality that does not disregard the free and passionate quest for truth. It is, in short, being able to say "yes" and "no", outside of any ideological or politically correct attitude.

In particular a city like our beloved Venice - which has a fascinating history, unique in having been seen over the centuries, and still today, as a "bridge" between the West and the East - must live its identity as an inclusive and welcoming city that knows how to keep alive a history in which - as we know - there are is both light and shade.

Both civil and ecclesiastical communities who love their history should be able to look forward and respond to the urgent needs of the present timewhilst not forgetting where they come from. The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* teaches that time is greater than space (see. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, paragraphs. 222-225).

The fundamentals of healthy secularism can allow for coexistence between people of different cultures, ethnicities, nationalities; these principles - should be stressed – will not be open to a relativistic drift if all are lovers of truth. To use an image, this secularism - in cultural terms - is the equivalent of the myriad piles on which Venice was built, and thanks to which - despite the passing of centuries and the delicate environment of the lagoon - the city continues to live.

Venice, in its unique beauty, is God's gift of imagination to man - and we Venetians are rightly proud of it - but it is also the result of man's ingenuity and commitment. And then, the works of man - the creations of the most sophisticated technique - come to fruition, but always respecting the unique and fragile nature of this city, which must be protected from the many injuries that can be inflicted upon it. Pope Francis, in the encyclical *Laudato sì* on the protection of creation, is very clear in this regard.

At this point it is imperative to demand that, in an acceptable time, the great works that have been initiated are completed, having first verified their functionality; it is now something which is owed to the city and its people who, in various ways, have contributed to their achievement.

For Christians - as was already said - there is not only the great Hope, that of future life. There are also the "little hopes" that - for those who, already on this earth, want to be builders of the Kingdom of God - cannot ignore justice and truth. The fundamental theme of peace is rooted right here, in justice and truth, and not in a secondary way.

The Feast of the Redeemer helps us to be intelligent and welcoming in the time in which we are called to live, as people who know that they have already been saved but who are still fixed in hope, founded in the Risen Jesus.

We entrust to the Mother of the Redeemer our beloved city of Venice, the Venetian people, and with them all the men and women of good will so that – as on that day in Cana - she will help us to do what the Lord Jesus tells us (See John 2,5).