

Sì sì no no

THE ANGELUS ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTICLE REPRINT

Let your speech be, “Yes, yes,” “No, no”; whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37) • November 2006
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THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

A while ago, a reader wrote to *Courrier de Rome*:

Dear *Courrier de Rome*:

I read with great interest your article of September last about our new Pontiff. At last! Indeed, the recommendation to pray for the Holy Father and to show filial respect, as distinguished from the obedience commonly invoked, are well taken, for indeed these are due him *a priori* and in every instance, even before we see what he says and what he does....

...It seems to me that the judgment made about the election should be wider than the judgment made about the person elected, about whom we should know the interesting aspects—such as his recognition of the crisis in the Church and his critiques of the liturgical reform—as well as his limitations, in particular his non-Thomistic formation. And I implore the newly elected pope, who has asserted that he desires to apply Vatican II in faithful continuity with Tradition, to emphasize its continuity with acts of the magisterium such as *Quanta Cura* with its Syllabus of Errors, *Aeterni Patris* (on the necessity of Thomistic philosophy), *Mortalium Animos* (against “common way” ecumenism), and *Humani Generis* (against the “new theology”).

It is also necessary to consider the direction of the election. In fact, Cardinal Ratzinger was elected by three or four “more or less conservative” cardinals against the “progressives.” With all the limits of the moderates (the two factions of the conclave were not progressives and traditionalists,

(continued on p.20)



but rather progressives and moderates, both of which have liberal Catholicism as their frame of reference), the bloc that supported Cardinal Ratzinger...concentrated on themes such as recognition of the grave problems of the present hour even in the bosom of the Church, desire for greater attention towards doctrine, and the will to prevent any further evolution in a progressive direction.... If we consider that those who elected Benedict XVI were all made cardinals on the criterion of their alignment with the new ecclesial direction, the choice of a candidate whom they knew would meet with strong disapprobation from the world and the Church's numerous enemies is humanly surprising. These are some considerations that deserve to be met with joy; they give us reason to hope that the diabolical blindness that has weighed on the human element of the Church and paralyzed it since 1960 has begun to lose its grip.

For understanding the reality, it is also necessary to take into account the considerable effect that external conditions have upon the Pontiff himself. That is why, on the one hand, I do not know what the real significance of his initial acts is. Cardinal Siri asserted that the discourse outlining the program of Pope John Paul I (Albano Luciani) was in reality the work of the Secretary of State, Cardinal Villot; Paul VI, during his coronation ceremony, declared that he wanted to defend the holy Church against errors, which is not what we observed subsequently (it is clear that he wanted to reassure the "conservatives," defeated during the conclave); Pope Roncalli did not seem revolutionary during the first years... And it is likely that the reigning Pontiff was also elected thanks to some agreements. On the other hand, we think of the old tactic of "the carrot and the stick." I was struck by the way some progressives, who had feared this election, hastened to try to gain the ascendancy with the newly elected pope by protests of solidarity. And I was not surprised by the blackmail perpetrated at Cologne by the Franco-German episcopate: if he makes concessions to the traditionalists, then they, the standard-bearers of progressivism, will create a real schism. And what Ratzinger himself said during the enthronement Mass is significant: "Pray for me that I do not flee before the wolves...."

What will the pontificate of S.S. Benedict XVI be like? The man Ratzinger, considered by many as a "restorer," is in reality an oscillating centrist: where will the pendulum stop? It will probably take some time to tell. At present, he seems to be a little less bad than his predecessor: fewer trips, more sobriety, more time devoted to governing the Church; but, as was foreseeable, he still has not broken with the fundamental evils, and limits himself to a moderate reading of Wojtylism. The name he chose also leads one to think of a moderate liberal orientation. In the best of cases, he will be a "transition pope" like John XXIII, but in the opposite direction, and transition implies oscillations... There are some elements that incline us to prudent expectations, and there are unknowns. I appreciated the comment of H.E. Bishop Fellay: when Benedict XVI finds his back to the wall—and reality is pushing him in that direction—he will come to a decision and go in the right direction. But let us pray a great deal to the Blessed Virgin, who is "on our side," that Pope Ratzinger, who has read the actual Third Secret of Fatima, will not wait for the gangrene to spread before he passes from "extreme evils" to "extreme remedies."

Signed, *S. P.*

We preferred to let some time elapse before responding to this letter, which obliges us to make an assessment, insofar as this is possible at present, of the new pontificate. Let us begin by remarking that...it was permissible for us to prefer to remain silent on the occasion of Pope John Paul II's passing away without thereby personally failing in our duty to pray for the deceased pope, the pope to be elected, and the new pope. We did not think it opportune to remind our readers of this duty because every Catholic knows, if only by a supernatural "sense," that he must pray for the Church and for the Pope, and that he must do so

all the more as it seems that the object of his prayers seems to be failing, or runs the risk of failing in his very high duties as Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth.

As regards his first point, our friend will allow us not to share his optimism in the invitation he addresses to the Pope to emphasize the continuity [of the post-conciliar Church] with Tradition, and especially with *Quanta Cura* and the Syllabus, *Mortalium Animos*, and *Humani Generis*.

It is not that we think that Benedict XVI does not *want* to highlight this continuity; we think that he *cannot*. Subjectively, this is impossible for him

because of what our reader tactfully calls his “non-Thomistic formation,” and which for our part we do not hesitate to call his “neo-modernist deformation,” strengthened in our judgment by what the same Cardinal Ratzinger wrote in his autobiography about the theological studies of his youth, as well as the content of numerous of his works. Objectively, it is impossible for him to highlight any sort of “continuity” between the encyclicals mentioned and the conciliar documents: the opposition between them is such that either one continues to adhere to the first and refuses the latter, or else embraces the latter and abandons the first. And we have as confirmation on this point, if any were needed, Cardinal Ratzinger’s *The Principles of Catholic Theology*, in which he explicitly calls the conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* an anti-Syllabus, and, implicitly, an anti-*Pascendi*.

Words and Deeds

Our friend considers as one of the “interesting aspects” of the new pontificate the recognition that there is a crisis in the Church. But we ask him: Did not Paul VI recognize it also? Did he not speak of the “auto-demolition” of the Church, and of the “smoke of Satan” in the temple of God? And what did he do to remedy it? Did he not use his authority rather to favor the demolishers within the Church, and did he not, conversely, strike his faithful children who attempted to resist this ruin. Did not John Paul II also say that the Council must be interpreted in the light of Tradition during the consistory of November 6, 1979, personally telling this to Archbishop Lefebvre and thus raising many hopes? But what happened afterwards? Did he not inaugurate a new notion of Tradition, “living Tradition,” which allowed them to declare the death of mere Tradition, which is not only living but also coherent with itself such that it cannot teach today the contrary of what it taught yesterday?

Liturgy

As for the liturgy, we know that the new Pope seems to love the beauty and the solemnity of the offices, and that he personally has tried to restore to them a dignity that, with John Paul II, had completely disappeared. We rejoice over it, but we are nonetheless far from attributing to this fact the importance our friend does. We know from the Ratzinger autobiography that in his youth he adhered to the “liturgical movement,” and however simple and sincere this attachment might have been, we shall keep from forgetting that the liturgical movement was one of the “movements of *aggiornamento*,” having as its goal to “be done with” the Counter-Reformation of the Council of Trent, and to become open to the “separated brethren,” in contradistinction to the Marian movement, devoted, on the contrary, to

“the development of Catholic originality” vis-à-vis the Protestant world, in keeping with the Council of Trent.¹ Some German bishops warned Pius XII against the seriously negative aspects of the liturgical movement; Pius XII wrote the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* specifically to condemn the numerous errors of the liturgical movement, errors, he wrote, “touching Catholic faith and ascetical doctrine” (§8), and “approximating to the errors long since condemned” of Protestantism. A disciple of Rahner, H. Vorgrimler, wrote that in Germany the liturgical movement was one of the movements that arose to deliver the Church from the yoke of “the Roman system.”² All these considerations do not make us pessimistic about the intentions of the new Pope as regards the liturgy, but simply prevent us from becoming too easily enthusiastic.

“Prevented by Affection”

And assuredly it is a great trial when one whom thou believest to be a prophet, a disciple of prophets, a doctor and defender of the truth, whom thou hast folded to thy breast with the utmost veneration and love, when such a one of a sudden secretly and furtively brings in noxious errors, which thou canst neither quickly detect, being held by the prestige of former authority, nor lightly think it right to condemn, being prevented by affection for thine old master. (*Commonitorium*, X)

These words of St. Vincent of Lerins describe very well the frame of mind about the Pope besetting many Catholics in these sad years. Sincerely attached to the papacy, “prevented by affection” for the person who is, or at least who ought to be, in the highest degree “a doctor and defender of the truth,” these Catholics have a hard time accepting the harsh reality, and the least glimmer of hope suffices to nourish their illusion of a real and radical resolution of the crisis in the Church.

We perfectly understand this mentality. But we also understand how much any hope that is not based on the facts of the matter is dangerous to faith. We cannot reasonably hope if we do not have a real motive for doing so, and we should not cultivate illusions simply because we would like to have reasons for hope. That would be tantamount to rendering useless a resistance that has been ongoing for 40 years and to accept without any rational basis that which, with reason, we would not accept in order to preserve the faith in its entirety, the faith without which it is impossible to please God.

Now, if we hold to the facts of the matter, we have heard the new Pope reaffirm at Cologne, on August 19, 2005, in his discourse on non-Catholics, the unacceptable principles of ecumenism.³ “We all know

SI SI NO NO
THE ANGELUS ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTICLE REPRINT

there are numerous models of unity,” he affirms. But we all know, or at least we should know, that our Lord Jesus Christ wanted for His Church a very precise model of unity, and that He established its principle and foundation in the primacy of Peter:

When the divine Founder decreed that the Church be one in faith, and in government, and in communion, He chose Peter and his successors in whom should be the principle and as it were center of unity.⁴

The First Vatican Council had already affirmed:

But, that the episcopacy itself might be one and undivided, and that the entire multitude of the faithful through priests closely connected with one another might be preserved in the unity of faith and communion, placing the blessed Peter over the other apostles He established in him the perpetual principle and visible foundation of both unities.⁵

Since this is the model of unity established by our Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, this model of unity must be reaffirmed with apostolic courage and firmness before those who stray far from His one true Church. Inversely, so-called “dialogue” constitutes a betrayal of revealed truth and a lack of honesty and charity towards the separated brethren.

The Pope assured the assembly:

This unity, we are convinced [is it then a subjective opinion and not a truth of faith?], indeed subsists in the Catholic Church....On the other hand, this unity does not mean what could be called ecumenism of the return: that is, to deny and to reject one’s own faith history. Absolutely not!⁶

Are we then to believe that there are as many “faiths” as there are “sects,” and that the infallible Church was wrong when it affirmed that

there is but one way in which the unity of Christians may be fostered, and that is by furthering the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it; for far from that one true Church they have in the past fallen away.⁷

It [this unity] does not mean uniformity in all expressions of theology and spirituality, in liturgical forms and in discipline. Unity in multiplicity, and multiplicity in unity.⁸

We could accept this if it really meant “expressions of theology and spirituality,” of “liturgical forms” and “discipline” that were different but totally orthodox (as in the Catholic Eastern Churches united to Rome). But unfortunately this is not what he means. Consequently, what place will the countless heresies of the Protestants and the heresies, less numerous but no less real, of the Eastern schismatics have in this “unity in multiplicity, and multiplicity in unity”? And what place will their refusal of the primacy of jurisdiction (and not simply of honor) of the successor of Peter,

which Christ placed as the foundation of the unity of His Church, have? Benedict XVI does not say. And yet it is this that counts if unity is not to be an empty word to which no reality corresponds.

More than an exchange of thoughts, an academic exercise, it [ecumenical dialogue] is an exchange of gifts in which the Churches and the Ecclesial Communities can make available their own riches.⁹

We would simply like to know what “riches” the schismatic and heretical communities could place at the disposition of the Catholic Church which she does not already possess in full.

We stop here, for the citations could go on and on, but it should be clear to any Catholic that no one, still less the Pope, has the right to reduce the Church founded by the God made man to the level of the sects that have proliferated because of the pride of men.

The December 22 Discourse

In his Christmas Address to the Roman Curia¹⁰ Benedict XVI explained what he means when he says that he “wants to apply Vatican Council II in faithful continuity with Tradition.” He begins by rejecting “a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture,” according to which “it would be necessary to go courageously beyond the texts [of Vatican II] and make room for the newness in which the Council’s deepest intention would be expressed” since these texts “are the result of compromises in which, to reach unanimity, it was found necessary to keep and reconfirm many old things that are now pointless.” But what does Benedict XVI oppose to this “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture”? He sets against it “the hermeneutic of reform,” that is to say, “innovation in...continuity”: continuity of “principles” and innovation in “practical forms” because “[b]asic decisions [that is, the principles]...continue to be well-grounded, whereas the way they are applied to new contexts can change.” Pope Benedict XVI gives the example of the conciliar Decree *Dignitatis Humanae*, maintaining that the “discontinuity” or “rupture” in the domain of “religious freedom,” which he unequivocally calls “freedom of conscience,” is not a substantial discontinuity or rupture because, he says, “the principles” of the doctrine remain, even though the “practical forms that depend on the historical situation” have changed. But what would these principles be that have remained intact in *Dignitatis Humanae*? That the human person is “capable of knowing the truth about God” and that he “is bound to this knowledge,” Benedict XVI tells us. The conciliar declaration on religious freedom will have preserved these principles, and thus it did not canonize “relativism”; it simply considers “religious freedom as a need that derives from human coexistence [society], or indeed, as an intrinsic

consequence of the truth that cannot be externally imposed.”

The principle thus enounced, according to which man is “capable of knowing the truth about God,” would require many clarifications. But this is not what interests us. What interests us is knowing whether these are all the “principles” of Catholic doctrine on “religious freedom.” Let us open Leo XIII’s encyclical *Libertas*, which enables us to recapitulate what a long series of Popes have affirmed and defended against the “modern liberties” promoted by liberalism.

The Church has always affirmed that everyone has the duty to profess the *true* religion (and to seek it when he has a doubt about the false religion he professes):

And if it be asked which of the many conflicting religions it is necessary to adopt, reason and the natural law unhesitatingly tell us to practice that one which God enjoins, and which men can easily recognize by certain exterior notes, whereby Divine Providence has willed that it should be distinguished, because, in a matter of such moment, the most terrible loss would be the consequence of error. [§20]

The Church has always affirmed that from this duty of man towards Divine Revelation proceeds his right to freely profess, even in public, the *true* religion; and that not only individuals, but also civil societies, being “from God,” have the duty to honor Him:

Since, then, the profession of one religion is necessary in the State, that religion must be professed which alone is true, and which can be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic States, because the marks of truth are, as it were, engraved upon it. [§21]

The Church has always affirmed that “the need that derives from human coexistence” [Benedict XVI, Christmas Greetings] in no wise derives, as a logical consequence, from the “freedom of religion,” but rather from the *tolerance* of false religions, if this tolerance proves to be necessary “for the sake of avoiding some greater evil, or of obtaining or preserving some greater good” (§33). But “if, in such circumstances, for the sake of the common good (and this is the only legitimate reason), human law may or even should tolerate evil, it may not and should not approve or desire evil for its own sake,” (*ibid.*), and “the more a State is driven to tolerate evil, the further is it from perfection.” Lastly, it always remains true that “it is contrary to reason that error and truth should have equal rights” (§34).

Moreover, if indeed “the truth cannot be externally imposed” (the Church has never done this; she has even forbidden Christian princes to do so when they intended to), that in no way means that error has the right to be freely promulgated; to not externally impose the truth does not dispense from the obligation to impede the diffusion of errors that would render the search for truth and its possession more difficult for men.

Now, where are these principles to be found in the Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* and the conciliar doctrine on “religious freedom”? For in this doctrine of “religious freedom” no distinction is made between true and false religions, so that, as Leo XIII said of liberalism, they “end at last by making no apparent distinction between truth and error, honesty and dishonesty.”

Once this fundamental distinction has been omitted, false religions are ascribed the “right” to be publicly professed and propagated on a par with the true religion, even in Catholic countries. From the initial error, it follows that the State can have no duty either to the true God or to the true religion, but that it has only one duty: neutrality towards religion, and, as liberalism teaches, “to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges” (§21). There is yet another consequence: one no longer speaks of the tolerance of false religions; this principle has been supplanted by “the freedom of religion” as Benedict XVI clearly states. From this distorted perspective, the duty of the Catholic State to impede the diffusion of false religious doctrines has no more basis; it is even considered as an intolerable violence against “the freedom of religion.”

What emerges clearly is that all the Catholic principles regarding religious liberty have been abandoned one by one. But Benedict XVI affirms in his speech to the Roman Curia that they have all been maintained. He even added:

The Second Vatican Council, recognizing and making its own an essential principle of the modern State with the Decree on Religious Freedom, has recovered the deepest patrimony of the Church. By so doing she can be conscious of being in full harmony with the teaching of Jesus himself (cf. Mt. 22:21), as well as with the Church of the martyrs of all time....while she prayed for the emperors, she refused to worship them and thereby clearly rejected the religion of the State.

Should we thus believe that Jesus taught what the Roman Pontiffs call “that fatal principle of the separation of Church and State” (*Libertas*, §38)? Or that the martyrs gave their lives, not to bear witness to the true religion, but to demand liberty for false religions as well as for the true religion? Or that the Church, despite the promises of her divine Founder, for centuries strayed from her “deepest patrimony” and only recovered it with Vatican II, accomplishing all this with the Decree on Religious Freedom, by “making its own an essential principle of the modern State”—the modern State that takes no account of either faith or revealed morality? To ask the questions is to frame the answer.


SI SI NO NO
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As regards the “external conditions” imposed upon the new Pope, it should be observed that: no pope is obliged in conscience to respect “agreements” that may have influenced his election, especially when these are bad for the Church and for souls. The new Pope must liberate himself from being “hedged in” by prudently choosing his collaborators (such is the secret of every good pontificate). Will Benedict XVI do so? And especially, is he able to distinguish between good and bad collaborators? The trust he has placed in personages like Walter Kasper and Bruno Forte make us highly doubtful.

We are in perfect agreement with our reader when he characterizes the theologian Ratzinger as oscillating. However, he is not really a centrist: to date, his pendulum has swung more in the direction of the “new theology” than in the direction of Catholic theology, and his books, which he has never retracted and which are selling today more than ever, are the proof. For the moment, Benedict the Pope does not seem very different from Ratzinger the theologian, and, having studied him for years, we did not expect that he would be: the Lord has promised the grace of state to his Vicar, a great grace and in certain

conditions, He also promised him infallibility; but He never promised that He would work miracles, and changing a man’s entire intellectual formation would require a miracle, in our opinion. This does not mean that the Divine assistance—at the very least that assistance which consists in preventing irremediable mistakes—will be lacking to the Church; nor will there be lacking, our reader may rest assured, our prayers for the Church and for the new Pope. 

Hirpinus

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- ¹ E. Fouilloux, “Theologico-spiritual Movements and the Council,” in *On the Eve of Vatican II* (Lovanio, 1992), pp.188, 198.
- ² Herbert Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner* (New York, 1986).
- ³ Address to the Ecumenical Meeting held at the Bishop’s House during the World Youth Days at Cologne, August 19, 2005. The English version has been taken from the speech posted on the Vatican website.
- ⁴ Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*, on the Unity of the Church, Dz. 1960.
- ⁵ Dogmatic Constitution I on the Church of Christ, Dz. 1821.
- ⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Ecumenical Meeting, August 19, 2005.
- ⁷ Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, on Fostering True Religious Unity (Kansas City: Angelus Press, 1998), \$15.
- ⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Ecumenical Meeting, August 19, 2005.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Text of the speech is taken from the English version on the Vatican website.



Enemy Islam

An interview with the Bishop of Rumbek, Sudan



A reader wrote:

Dear Editor:

...We must weep over the green light given by the ambiguity of the Conciliar Acts to the slogan about the “three monotheisms” and of “multiethnic and multiracial society.”

The Arabs have seized the opportunity for the planned conquest of the Christian West through immigration ever since 1967, by subsidizing with petrodollars the pro-abortion campaigns of the 1970’s and by organizing the massive illegal influx of the most rigorously Islamic masses. And what does our hierarchy do? It suppressed from the concordat [between the Church and the Italian government] the Catholic religion as the “religion of the State,” thereby opening the way to the construction of a mosque in Rome itself.

The only hope we have left at present is that Italy is not one of the nations that has lost the faith, as the prophecy of Fatima puts it, and the recitation of the rosary in families and churches continues to be widely practiced and propagated.

Dear Friend:

Il Giornale of May 23, 2004, published an interview by Stefan Lorezetto with Bishop Cesare Mazzolari, M.C.C.I., a member of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus [and Bishop of the diocese of Rumbek], in the Sudan, in a zone which at that time had not yet fallen completely under Muslim domination, which gave him (we do not know if that is still the case) a certain freedom of action and of speech.

The frankness and courage of this “frontier” bishop are admirable, as is his insight that we would not have so much to fear from the Muslims if we were not such bad Christians. It is to be feared, conversely, that Islam is the “scourge” of God, as the Assyrians were in olden days for the chosen people. As He did then, God finally will break the “scourge,” but only after having used it to correct His rebellious sons. [The interview is reproduced below.]

“The moment of martyrdom approaches,” the Bishop says. “I hope that the Lord will give us the grace to endure this shedding of blood. There is a need for purification. Many Christians will be killed for the faith. But from the blood of martyrs will spring a new Christendom....Either God will send us a strong leader capable of forging a new path, or He will permit a chastisement, a measured trial that will lead us to wisdom. The world is blind and dumb. We need a big electroshock.”

Do you convert many Muslims?

Absolutely not. To approach a Muslim would mean sentencing him to death. Those who spontaneously convert are subsequently forced to flee. But they are caught and punished even a thousand miles away.

Are there Catholics who embrace Islam?

Yes, unfortunately. At least three million persons have migrated toward the north, pushed by famine, and they have had to pronounce the *shahada*, the [Muslim] public profession of faith in order to obtain work. The converts are marked with a red-hot iron. They are branded on their side, like cattle, to distinguish them from infidels.

Is the the God of the Christians the Allah of the Muslims?

No! Where is the notion of the Trinity? The greatest of prophets [for the Muslims] is certainly not Jesus Christ [and for them, Christ is not God].

Do those who speak of a clash of civilizations exaggerate?

No. And we are just at the beginning. The Church...is only now beginning to recognize Islam’s challenge....What is at issue is not that

we are right and they are wrong. We boast of a Christian tradition that we no longer practise in our daily lives. The Muslims are consistent in their daily practice and their proselytism is superior to ours. When a Muslim teaches you to say *sukrna* (thank you), he is already a missionary, for Arabic is the language of the Koran.

And yet very many of your confreres in Italy have agreed to the conversion of churches into mosques.

The Muslims will be the ones to convert us, and not the other way around. Wherever they settle, sooner or later they become the dominant political force. The Italians have a very naive notion of hospitality. They will quickly perceive that the Muslims have taken advantage of their kindness, by bringing in ten times as many people as were agreed upon. They are much slier than we. They demolish my schools, and you, you open wide your church doors to them. If someone is a thief, do not give him a room in your apartment.

Is Sharia [Koranic law] in full force in the Sudan?

The fundamentalist government maintains that it will only be applied to Muslims. We don’t know what will happen to a Christian accused of something since there is no right to self-defense.

Roberto Hamza Piccardo, secretary of the Union of Muslim Communities in Italy, tells me that in the Sudan, the flagellations are only symbolic, because “the flogger holds the Koran under his arm so as to lighten the lashes.”

I know the man. If you begin to listen to him, he’ll tell you a thousand more lies like that one.

Piccardo tells me that certain articles of Sharia law, such as cutting off a hand, represent “very rare cruelties committed by local bosses who torment poor folk.”

That is not true. It is the State that rigorously applies Koranic law, which cuts off the hands and feet even of Muslims, and which arrests people without proof.

He also told me that the leader Hassen El Turabi, “an eminent jurist,” is against the application of capital punishment to apostates, that is to say, to Muslims who become infidels, contrary to what the Koran prescribes.

El Turabi is the sliest person in the world. He is very intelligent; he is a lawyer; he speaks English better than the English and French better than the

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Si Si No No

THE ANGELUS ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTICLE REPRINT

French. He has a forked tongue. I'll give you a specific example: in the English-language version of the Sudan constitution, it is affirmed that the religion of the State is Islam, and that the other religions are tolerated. In the Arabic-language version, on the contrary, the line about tolerance does not appear.

But in November of last year [2003], El Turabi went to pay his respects to Gabriel Cardinal Zubeir Wako, Archbishop of Khartoum, the first Sudanese cardinal. As for you, after 23 years spent in the Sudan, no one has touched a hair of your head.

Haven't you noticed though that all my hair has turned white? The greatest punishment the Arabs know how to inflict is oppression—deceit in their relations with strangers. If he can trick you, he does it wholeheartedly. He brags of his capacity to set a snare for you; being called a liar is for him a compliment. El Turabi leads someone like Bush around by the nose where and when he wants to, to say the least. As for me, rather than be ridiculed and played for a fool, I prefer to receive a slap. The Muslims fill you with fear; they hold you in a state of permanent insecurity. It is a psychological torment worse than torture.

Does slavery exist in the Sudan?

They swear that it does not. They even went to Geneva to say so. Yet my missions are full of ex-slaves. In 1990, I personally redeemed 150, by paying less for them than for a pure-bred dog: \$50 for women, \$100 for men. I did not do it after that, because I realized that it could become a vicious circle. They use them as shepherds or they place them in service in wealthy families in Khartoum. They are obliged to attend Muslim schools.

Are you afraid?

I would not be doing the work I do if I were afraid. When someone is afraid, he cannot survive. When I realize that one of my priests is afraid, I remove him from the mission. It is a contagious disease. If one day I become afraid, I pray that God will take me.

Will you return to Italy?

My country is the Sudan. I have promised my faithful that I will not abandon them, even when I'm dead. They already know where they should bury me.

Is there something that our readers and I can do for you, Father?

Pray very much. 🙏

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