

The Victory of the Church into the World

The presence and work of the Church in the world for two millennia is a testimony to the fact that she is an establishment and a presence, which does not rely on the forces of this world, but on another power and another work, which surpasses the worldly, relative and transient things. The Church is the work of God in history, and her foundation was laid by Jesus Christ, through His Passion, Death and Resurrection. Its permanence through history cannot be explained without the presence, power and work of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Who sustains and perfects all good. Before His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, the Saviour assured us: “I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it“ (Matt. 16, 18).

Appearing in the world as a divine-human settlement on the day of Pentecost, the Church sought to embrace all peoples in her bosom, to be transformed into the new people of God, called to “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light“ (I Pet. 2, 9). In this sense, all the works that the Church has carried out in the world, with strength, courage and perseverance throughout the centuries, have their basis or foundation. Through her, once ascended into heaven, the Saviour continued to preach the truth of His gospel, to guide people on the path of Christ’s truth for the salvation of all, and to sanctify them by the work of the Holy Spirit, through the Mysteries and holy works of the Church. Thus, the establishment of the Church has forever become an oasis of light, peace and truth, which all people can be comforted, strengthened and enlightened from. It should also be noted that an equivalent alternative to the Church for the whole human race cannot exist, that is why people are called to be aware of the value, necessity and work of the Church for each of them. They should love her, seek her, defend and serve her, when she is slandered, neglected and disregarded by some people who do not want to receive teaching and light, courage and strength, help and blessing

from her. Those who do not love, want and seek her are those who do not really know her or those who in their wickedness and unbelief do not want to know another life and another reality, which only the Church can offer. Man will realize how necessary the work of the Church is in the life of every man and every human society only when he experiences the presence and work of the Church in his life, and when he shares in her gifts.

This is because she came with a different message, life and perspective, which did not only aim at this life and this world, but she had in mind both the material and the spiritual realities. Moreover, the spiritual things have priority, as she includes the seen and unseen, the temporary and eternal. Taking into account such complexity and purpose, we can explain the fact that she has been often challenged and persecuted throughout her bimillennial history, adversity manifested since the beginning of her existence in the world. In the New Testament era, there are real challenges and persecutions against the Church, both from the Jews and the Gentiles. Then, in the middle of the first century AD, terrible persecutions broke out against the Church, which lasted until 313, when Emperor Constantine the Great gave freedom to Christians to manifest, and then new perspectives of public manifestation opened for the Church. So, the Church has overcome all the trials she has been subjected to in the first centuries, because Jesus Christ is the Founder and Head of the Church, and the Holy Spirit guards and animates her according to the good will of the Father. The demonic powers of the age could not defeat the life-giving powers of the Church, which came from above from the Father of lights.

The same power guided the Church in the following centuries, so that all dangers, adversity and enmity were overcome. No less, the same was true in the twentieth century, when the Church was confronted with state militant atheism, during the communist regimes, which set the marginalization and annihilation of the Church as their political goal, by all possible means, hitting her from the inside and outside to collapse. On the contrary, as a result of these demonic strategies, the Church continued to persevere, so that after the collapse of these regimes, people need the presence and work of the Church even more. The Spirit of God present in the Church has succeeded in turning evil into good, enmity into love, and falsehood into truth.

Nowadays, the Church is confronted with an accentuated spirit of secularization, which means an unfavourable context for the work of the

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Church and for the salvation of people, no less aggressive and dangerous, compared to the adverse circumstances of the past mentioned above. Today's spirit keeps people captive in an ideology of pleasure, eroticism, consumerism, irrational accumulation of material goods, and violence. This secular spirit rises against the values of Jesus Christ's Church, her servants and the faithful, who are often caricatured, ridiculed, slandered, etc. Thus, the gaze of contemporary man is exclusively directed on the passing things of this world, suggesting that these are the only ones to be considered by man, and as such, they are the last reality which man of today should relate to.

The COVID-19 pandemic added its part to this spirit of secularization present in the world since March 2020, which has greatly transformed people's lives. During this time, they had the bitter experience of isolation, loneliness, fear of illness and death. In other words, the accentuated anxiety has taken over a large part of humanity, with a whole procession of consequences, often dramatic, on a personal, family, and social level.

In response to these states of affairs, the Church must come up with a new ethos of hope and dialogue with the world, with a new vision or missionary strategy, through her theology and servants. They must be appropriate to this new context of the Church's existence, inspired by the everlasting pastoral-missionary ethos of the Body of Christ, but also taking into account the new problems and challenges she faces today. Thus, having the "hidden treasure", the Church will be able to make it accessible to today's man, who is emptied inside of the deep meaning of life, crushed by fears of all kinds and increasingly disoriented. Thus, through her new approach, the Church will succeed in being a beneficent, enlightening, pacifying and reconciling presence, for a world often characterized by irreconcilable antagonisms, harmful adversity and destructive violence. The victory of the Church in the world is in fact the power that has overcome the world and which is the divine power present in her, and which is also the power of Jesus Christ's Spirit of love, the Founder and Head of the Church.

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