



To live in “harmonious coexistence” IS THE FRUIT OF LOVE

by fr. FRANCESCO D. COLACELLI

“You are called to serve not only as a beacon of faith to the universal Church, but also as a leaven of harmony, wisdom and equilibrium in the life of a society which has traditionally been, and continues to be, pluralistic, multiethnic and multi-religious.”

These were Pope Benedict XVI's words pronounced in his homily given in Jerusalem, during his much awaited apostolic visit to the homeland of Jesus. Words that he addressed to the faithful of the Holy land, but which all of us must feel directed to ourselves also.

If Christians are called to live in “harmony, wisdom and equilibrium” in a society that has a consolidated tradition of living together, in a more or less peaceful way, between different ethnic communities, cultures and religions, this is all the more so for the rest of the world so as to assure living in “harmonious coexistence.”

Leaving aside the political interpretations given to the Holy Father's words by the secular media, always ready to underline what divides rather than what unites, if one reads the complete text of the Pope's

homily, we discover that he explains to the Christian community of Jerusalem, and also to us, how to become the “leaven” of society. He tells us: “Hold fast to the hope bestowed by the Gospel, cherish the pledge of Christ's definitive victory over sin and death, bear witness to the power of forgiveness, and show forth the Church's deepest nature, that is as the sign and sacrament of a humanity reconciled, renewed and made one in Christ.”

As St. Paul, the great herald of Christian hope, who “knew the cost of that hope, its price in suffering and persecution for the sake of the Gospel,” did.

And as, in more recent times, St. Pio of Pietrelcina did, who underwent humiliations and misunderstandings but upheld by the knowledge that “behind the visible hand of man,” there is “the hidden hand of God so that not even a hair of one's head will perish without our heavenly Father's permission who watches over us.” Thanks to their faith and hope “the bitterness of the trial was alleviated by the balm of His goodness and mercy.”

One cannot explain otherwise St. Paul's role as “leaven” of

the people in the first century of Christianity and the “world-wide clientele” that Padre Pio gathered and continues to gather in San Giovanni Rotondo and in every corner of the world.

This is the only way that we can explain the “wonder” that our fellow friar saint has not just with Catholics, but also with Christians of other denominations, as well as with Jews, Muslims and Hindus. It is the fascination of one who emanates “harmony, wisdom and equilibrium” and who attained this directly from its fount, that is from that God who is the Father of all men and women and who through His Son, told us: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13,35). In the light of this we prepare ourselves to welcome in San Giovanni Rotondo the Vicar of Christ from whom we are confident that we shall receive the evangelical wisdom and testimony to appraise in Padre Pio as well as his more noticeable charisms, also his continuous daily combat to love God and all men and to hope against all hope. ■