

# LET'S NOT EXAGGERATE THE “WITH NO IF'S OR BUTS”...



by Bro MARIANO DI VITO, OFM CAP.

“If” and “but,” are the words possibly most frequently used in our delightful Italian language. Every assertion, proposal, assurance, resolution, and outcome... depending on the person's convictions and possible personal gain are all inevitably preceded by an “if” or a “but.” This capacity to make distinctions and foresee other viewpoints, I consider part of the essential complexity and non-uniformity of things and most especially of man.

To shield ourselves however, in the “ifs” of far off and impossible realisations, or to relinquish anything good and beautiful happening with the “buts” prompted by our doubts in our neighbour, means almost always a fixation in prejudices or a past that can never return or a future that is just illusory, and so just an excuse for our not doing

anything here and now, in the circumstances we find ourselves.

However, as well as the over use of these two words, I think it is equally vital to avoid using that expression, “with no ifs or buts!” which is also used a lot today.

This is not because I do not think that there are circumstances and moments in everyone's life that need clear and decisive choices, even at personal cost, but because I consider that the ‘Truth,’ even though ‘One,’ must be always sought after like a splendid multi-faceted diamond that radiates lights and colours always infinitely varied.

When the expression “with no ifs or buts” is overused, there is very probably a desire within us to see everything one dimensionally – almost always our own dimension! – and we narrow the already narrow paths of our thinking, and also of our uncertainties, so that we risk, something that can become really dangerous and destructive, the closure of those spaces of encounter and dialogue that are the special and distinctive characteristic of *homo sapiens*.

Let us for this new year, that is a gift from the Lord and a sign of His providence and love for all His creatures, continue our journey with hope, faith and courage.

Despite all the terrible wars in the world being fought over boundaries, religions and social and economical problems, significant and encouraging signs are still found. These signs of hope are most cer-

tainly the fruit of that will to listen to the reasons and motives of others and of that deepening and expanding of our own convictions, and, not least, of our restraint in proposing, if not actually imposing them.

The wars instead are the blatant proof of our cultural, religious and political differences and uncompromise that we see everywhere printed in huge block capitals on personal banners in every possible language but with the same unmistakable meaning: This is my ideal! “With no ifs or buts!”

Brother Pio, in a school essay of 1905, wrote the following: “By the grace of God, we are at the beginning of a new year. This year... we must dedicate it all in making reparation for the past and in proposals for the future. And with our good proposals must follow with equal pace our good actions” (Letters IV).

Dawn is always accompanied with gentle warm colours. May this be a fitting image for our proposals of this year for a reciprocal, respectful and dialogic openness to all the Lord may place along our paths.

Let's not exaggerate the “with no ifs or buts”...

Beginning with this number, we have been able to add an extra four pages to our journal. We thank you for your continued support that makes this possible.

A Happy and Peaceful New Year!