



ATHENS, ROME AND JERUSALEM...

BY BRO MARIANO DI VITO, OFM CAP.

Three ancient cities full of history and charm, but most importantly crossroads to cultures, art and thinking that have profoundly influenced not only Western way of life, but with equal measure and significance all of mankind.

It is said that they represent the head, the arm and the heart of the Western world. But also much more!

The Greek *sofia* (wisdom), the Roman *jus* (law and justice), and mercy from its fount the Holy One of Israel, can still today in our troubled times serve as a compass and prevent us, if nothing more, from foundering terribly and cruelly against the always larger and more dangerous rocks that unforeseen but steadily cross mankind's path.

So often attempts have been made to favour one vision over another and even to obstruct or just regard with indifference or suspicion the others. Our emeritus Pope Benedict on the other hand, on several occasions, has tried to communicate the vital necessity of keeping

them together because all three, over and above their role in history or their simple symbolic significance, testify to the need for the quest of harmony (communion...) in a complementary diversity, not just in the realm of thought but above all in human relations from those of every day life to those most complicated and often antagonistic in international affairs. The root reason for this is to be found in man himself who is complex and at the same time longs for unity. He is continuously unsatisfied and searching for that existential integration that gives, or rather re-gives him, true equilibrium, freedom (understood as the capacity to choose) and peaceful social coexistence.

We are in the month dedicated to Our Lady, the mother of Jesus and ours, and while we invoke her as her sons and offer her hymns and flowers, we must not forget to look to her as the glorious exemplar of renewed humanity, who "brought together" everything. Saint Luke in

fact at the end of the narration of Jesus' infancy, says that the Mother of the Lord "kept" (*sun-ballo* in Greek) all these things in her heart treasuring and reflecting on them (cf. Lk 2, 19.51).

The best offering that we can make in this special month is to learn how to "keep together" these things which is the opposite to what the devil does, the derivation of his name being *dia-bollo* that signifies to break, to divide and to separate!

There is a saying that all roads lead to Rome. Our beginnings are from Rome, Athens and Jerusalem, and if we are able to keep them together in dialectical accord, perhaps these roads, that over the last centuries have become impenetrable, narrow tracks, will lead us, or at least bring us closer to the One who is Wisdom, Justice and Mercy in person!

Fr. Mariano Di Vito