

An answer to a friend in the West

April 5, 2020

Dear friend,

During September of 2018, you presented me with Pope Francis's new book, "The Name of God is Mercy", in its French edition, published in 2016 by Robert Laffont Publishing House.

I knew that my Open Letters to Pope Francis, and also my letters to his predecessors, might have seemed to you somewhat unjust, or exaggerated to some degree, even though I have never received any direct response from Rome.

I sat down to read this book. Rest assured that I took my time doing so in the hope of assimilating its 'deep' content. It has, however, sorrowfully, caused me deep disappointment.

Must I remind you of what I wrote, spontaneously, in red, at the foot of the last page the moment I finished reading the book? I immediately e-mailed you what I had written, then.

O how it pains me to make that message public, today! It would have never occurred to me that I would, one day, be obliged to make public what I wrote to you then. But I find myself obliged to do so. I know well that I am doing so as a Catholic Priest. I am a Priest in his eighty-eighth year of age and, consequently, could depart from this earth any moment to stand in front of Jesus, whom I have tried to love and serve.

I find it necessary, however, to make clear that Pope Francis concluded his book with these words: "Let us remember always the words of John, the Crusader: 'At the twilight of our life, we shall have to account for love.'"

I wrote at once, in one burst:

"What love?!"

"Is exposing injustice—which has become a general and daily practice in all the West—not a means in which love can be lived in a way nearer to truth and reality?"

"What I read in this book is worthy of a Priest, not a Pope." (October 3, 2018)

I have to point out, though, that the first encyclical of Pope Francis, entitled "The Joy of the Gospel", published in 2013, looked as though it constituted for the Catholic Church, a commitment that is exceedingly daring and decisive in order to finally resist the vicious injustice which is killing billions—yes, billions of marginalised people throughout the whole earth. I had thought that it emerged from the spirit that dictated to Pope John Paul II his well-known ninety-four declarations, spread over his whole Papacy, regarding clearing the Church of its past. These came in a powerful book, put together by an Italian journalist friend of the Pope, called Luigi Accatolly. The book was entitled, "When the Pope asks forgiveness". It might be

useful to mention that this book was published in three printings at the same time, in Italian, English, and French.

Returning to Pope Francis's Encyclical, "The Joy of the Gospel", it gives me pleasure to state that I found in it, as a Catholic Priest, a long awaited, clear expression of the final freedom from the catastrophic mirage, affecting the whole Church in the East and West, which the solid alliance between the Church and the 'Temporal Powers', which had started with Emperor Constantine since 313.

O how sorrowful I am to say that this theological break-through, has not produced any fruits! Despite that, I wonder if one has to be blind in order not to see that, day after day, the whole world is sliding into the horrors of successive, meticulously programmed and varied, wars, including the war exceeding every description, which, for more than nine years, was waged against my homeland, Syria, by 140 countries, headed by the United States?

Admitting the superiority of the 'humanistic' American mind—is there any doubt about the 'humanism' of the Americans?!—I must bring to mind the total economic siege imposed on Syria and other countries, and extended even in the time of the catastrophic Corona Virus, for nothing except that it is a 'renegade' country in the eyes of the United States.

It is said, and written, that the Pope acts with extreme humility, and with simplicity that brings him nearer the poor and the refugees who are able to meet with him. This is good. The attractive headings which accompany what is published for him and his representatives in the world in the Vatican's newspaper can never make me forget that he has never—not him, nor his many representatives, spread in the countries of the earth—condemned the warmongers, those spreading fear and terror, hunger, and death in the whole world! Can he, or his many representatives in the countries of the earth, not know or pretend not to know that these same powers always want to impose their total and final domination on the whole world, even at the cost of igniting a nuclear war—which it is known that they continue to studiously prepare for it, even in this Corona time, in the heart of Europe, and especially in Italy?

I wonder, if Christ were in the Pope's place, would He have made peace with these powers, as Pope Francis is doing all the time, and as his many predecessors did?

We should not forget that the Pope represents Lord Jesus, and he cannot but be the representative of Lord Jesus! In this, he has a dignity that is unmatched on earth! So, what is he waiting for? What is he afraid of?

The great truth, which no one has the right to forget, or pretend to forget, is that Jesus Christ aligned himself with every human being, especially those suffering! And O how numerous are those that are suffering injustice, hunger, cold, and sickness... in brief, everything that touches their dignity, freedom, even their life! Is there anybody who is ignorant of the fact that these people were in the past, and are still the majority of all the people on earth?

I repeat: What is the Pope waiting for to rise in defense of the suffering Christ in all the suffering people? Is he not the representative of the Christ who accepted crucifixion for nothing but for speaking the truth about God and man?

Is the temple of Jerusalem, from which Jesus, the meek and humble, expelled the traders with anger and violence, more holy than the temple of humanity? So, what prevents the Pope's strong condemnation, in the name of the self-same Jesus, Himself, of the politicians who are destroying humanity and the earth at the same time?

Dear friend,

Have confidence that all this, and a lot more, made me expect—during the Evening of Prayer, which the Pope, alone, held on the evening of March 27, 2020, in St Peter's Square—an unprecedented event, initiated by Pope Francis. I had expected him to react as a prophet standing tall, alone in his full spiritual stature, in front of God and the whole humanity—which is gripped by terror of death in the shape of Corona Virus—whose eyes were mesmerized on him!

In my view, it is the first time in history, in which the Pope of Rome stands in such a position, a position in which he could have freed himself from any internal establishment pressure, or external political pressure, so as to act as a representative of Lord Jesus who is truly present in the billions of suffering people in the earth, and proclaim his total alignment with them, as did his teacher, Jesus!

I expected him also, in this evening, to proclaim to the whole world his adamant intention to separate completely the past of the Church, which is full of connivance with political and financial powers, from a present and a future, which he wants to be truly and always in the service of all the people, especially the suffering people!

O how rightful was that famous Syrian Saint, Irenee, who was the Bishop of the city of Lyon, in the Gauls country, which is France today, in the second century, when he said his famous words: "The Glory of God is the living human being!"

Dear friend,

Yes, I had expected in my love and simplicity, such a prophetic rising! I am sorry to confess to you that this historic moment of prayer in St Peter's Square was, to me, one of the most miserable moments in the history of Christianity.

Dear friend,

In a week, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus!

I wonder, when shall we celebrate the resurrection of His Church?

Fr Eias Zahlaoui