

TO WHERE ?...



("Meditation" of a President at the end of her term)

When four years ago I came into the Directing Committee of Pax Romana, without the lightest idea of ever becoming its president, I was deeply convinced that I had many things to change in the Movement... But now, after these four years, two of them as president of PR, I must confess that it is PR which has changed many things in me... (Perhaps we have grown a little bit together !)

Used to an apostolate that even on the national life has the possibility of immediate fruitfulness, I understood, through PR that the Church is built on perseverant efforts and has the patience to follow our human trials.

Used to an apostolate where the contact between people takes for granted a common denominator of culture, I learned, through PR what is meant by the catholicity of the Church beyond all the barriers of race and culture.

Used to the University in a context where all personal contacts come, so to speak, naturally and spontaneously, I realized deeper and deeper that even an intellectual work in a world-wide scale is nothing if it is not built on a conscious dialogue between people.

PR has been for me an enlargement of my vision of the Church. It is therefore now that I fully realize what we mean ~~PR~~ by PR as the presence of the Church among the University people.

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Time is gone when PR was only conceived as a kind of confederation allowing the exchange of experiences among students of different countries. Obviously this aspect still remains in the fictionomy of PR, but nowadays PR has to be a deeper reality.

In the last years PR has really become a movement of truly world dimensions : not only Europe an North and Latin America, but also Asia and more recently Africa form PR. All these new groups live in a non catholic milieu and are feeling the difficulties and the challenges of the Church in the Mission lands. Christalized forms of apostolate based on tradition, can not give them the answer they are looking for.

By their very presence among the PR community, they are urging us to go a step forward. Needing a clear guidance in the aims to attain, requiring efficient help in methods and experiences to work out, they are asking PR to become really and truly what it is meant to be : an International Movement.

My last thoughts before leaving the international organs of PR is nothing bul a meditation on what is implied in its definition as the International Movement of the Catholic Students.



In the contemporary life, the world is continuously acquiring new features. Every University, every sphere of social life suffers the impact of the new trends. PR is a movement in as far as it is vividly attentive to the actual needs and answers them in an efficient way.

The development of the international life, even within the Church, has led us to a paradoxal situation. We make plans and programs, we draw schemes and projects, but we scarcely answer to the burning questions of our time. If we are a Movement, we must really move towards well-defined goals and this in an organic sequence of meetings, congresses, etc.

So many achievements take place in the international catholic life, that we wonder why the apostolate on the different levels is not more fruitful. When we loose the idea of movement we can't do anything but carry a lifeless body.

This is why the growing expansion of PR through all the continents, in order to have a real significance, asks the deepening of its life as a movement.

A Movement we are when some conditions will be fulfilled:

- First of all, PR has to be always searching its own expression. At all levels, from the international body to the individual student, PR is only alive when people are continually asking themselves - where are we going, why and how?

Of course, the Christianization of the University remains always our fundamental aim. Looking to it as our final goal, we can judge the legitimacy of the various activities we undertake, the efficiency of our methods, the urgency of our apostolate. When we ask these questions, fully aware of the needs the university students have to face in our days, we are making the first steps for the building of a true dynamic movement. After the last four years when this exchange has taken place in a very intense way among the international leaders, time comes when it has to be taken by every student who belongs, through his federation, to PR.

- In this searching for new expression, PR has to be in the forefront of the University life.

On one hand, PR is deeply faithful to the idea of a University aiming to the discovery, radiation and transmission of truth, to the formation of intellectual personalities and to the training of the leaders of society; on the other hand, PR takes deeply into account the new features of the modern University, born from many different needs and sometimes very far from the classical idea.

It is obvious that PR has to make a tremendous effort in order to find the right expression for the University apostolate in Africa, avoiding the danger of a European rationalistic outlook, but, at the same time, trying to find out a more integrated University life, than the one that the scattered African University can provide. Of course Africa is but an example of this deep principles of adaptation PR has to achieve through its geographical spreading.

- One can ask now who is going to do this work which



characterizes the true movement .

Having institutional structures, PR can not confine its work of searching to a single unity of this structure. A continuous exchange from the bottom to the top and from the top to the bottom is also a token of a real movement. This is true in all spheres of PR : between the local unities and the national organs ; between the national federations and the international movement.

- This exchange means that PR is alive and can only be alive through the personal contact of people in different situations. A deep sharing of life, a warm understanding of each other, in pooling together the apostolic experiences, are the expression of this liveliness. In this sense we can understand what we mean when we say that PR is the "meeting point of all the efforts made all over the world to christianize the University".

Working on the international level, PR has nevertheless a completely distinct outlook from the neutral international organizations. For these ones, the international life is a possibility to accomplish a definite aim, to solve a concrete problem. Practically it does not matter so much the echo the work finds among the individuals. For PR, the international life is a sharing of the universality of the Church. It has, therefore, a deep spiritual meaning : it is a step towards the congregation of the nations in the Mystical Body of Christ.

This insight brings us to two conclusions :

1) Beyond the problems to be solved, beyond the exchange which has to take place, there is a spiritual reality which comes first. Nothing but a living charity. It is obvious, therefore, that in the growing participation of PR in the organized international life and in the work PR undertakes on its own, we have to avoid the tendency to judge and to evaluate the work at the same as the neutral organizations. We need therefore to deepen our personal spiritual life and the spiritual roots of our international activities.

This does not mean that we neglect the human efficiency of what we do. On the contrary, in our times, we have the duty to be hundred percent efficient. But true and stable efficiency can only come in a Catholic movement from the very life of the Church.

2) PR helps to build the unity of the nations both as a community and through individuals. We will see further what is the deep meaning of this community. Here I want to stress that the action undertaken by PR on the international level has only its full dimension when every individual who belongs to PR is deeply conscious in his daily life of the catholicity of the Church.

It is true that our meetings are becoming more numerous and each one of them is in itself a real achievement towards a Christian international spirit, but we have to be sure that all of us plunge in this spirit.



The achievement of the Church on earth, through the congregation of the nations faces nowadays a most burning problem : the meeting of the different cultures. It is Africa, with the vertiginous integration of its cultural emotional elements ; it is Asia, with the heavy background of milenary civilizations fully aware of their own values ; it is even America trying to find the balance between a restoration of the sources and the delight in everything which is new ; it is the purification in Europe of a true Christian civilization from the many accidental features brought to her by the events of history. Their meeting together and understanding are not easy.

It is in the purest forms of their cultural values, that this meeting has to take place. The task of the University people who have to be on the forefront of the world of culture is, therefore, a most relevant one. In as far as PR has promoted in a very intensive way, in the last years, the meeting of students of different continents, it has been already contributing to this interplay of cultures. But PR has to go further in a systematic way. Deep study in a wide scale and a personal interest of everyone of us are needed.

Contributing to the deep meeting of cultures, PR will perform a most relevant task in the world. But through it PR will also acquire a new understanding of the balance to be found between unity and diversity which Cardato Futuro has taken the first place in our discussions.

Owing to the historical circumstances and to the cultural backgrounds, our Federations are very different in the way they approach their presence in the University milieu. Isn't true that for the Latin-american Federations what matters is the continuous struggle for making Christ present in the University, being in the forefront of every enterprise aiming to make the University faithful to itself ? Isn't true that for our Dutch Federation and for some of the other Nordic ones, the root of their action is in their essays to build a true and solid community among all the Catholics ? So many other examples could be found throughout the world...

This diversity is the expression of the richness of the Church and of the different ways in which different groups catch the same values of the University apostolate. In this sense, diversity is a possibility of a fruitful being together, of a deep and enriching exchange. If we stress mainly the value of the community or the outgoingness of an intense apostolic action, we are living essential values that we should share with the other students. This potencial richness of the diversity has always been stressed in the past in PR. But it is time for another step.

Diversity is already in itself a calling to unity. This unity means much more than having the same general ideals. It means two things :

- that everywhere in the world when there is a Catholic student there is the spirit of PR alive, that is, the deep concern with the conversion of the other students, with the christianization



of the University and of all activities related to it - that though putting the accent on particular aspects of the University apostolate the Federations deeply realize the wide perspectives of their role as witnesses of Christ in the University community. This consciousness implies having the same concrete goals, understanding the same "language", making a real effort towards the fulfilment of the same fundamental role among the University people.

If we want to bring Christ to the University milieu, we have (each one of us) to overcome our traditional outlook and to go further towards an active and multifarious apostolate. Only then we will share truly the international dimension of the Movement.

This apostolate is not an abstract and vague idea. It is life - it is our daily life, wherever we may be.

Whether we are studying in Madras or Lisbon, in London or New York, we share in Pax Romana life, if we are deeply urged by the conversion of the people around us. We live in such a time that the idea of the conversion of the world, the spreading of the Gospel can't be lived but in a deep sense of urgency.

PR is living this apostolic idea in a well defined context. The University, even in its classical forms, fulfills a very specific role in society. As apostles, among University people, we have to deepen our belonging to the University, to deepen our culture, to become aware of the needs of the social life.

We have to turn again to the essential fundamentals of the University life and of its radiation in society. But now, we are tired of what seems to us only a cold intellectual attitude. It doesn't matter so much that our own understanding of the intellectual life was sometimes very incomplete. What matters is that intellectual life has only a human meaning if it is part of an integrated whole. The exact condition of the University student has to be defined. Not for sociological studies but for a better understanding of the elements which integrate his life.

To the students in the University we have to bring the elements for the answer they are looking for. Not schemes, though they are useful tools. Not lectures, though they can open the minds. Not light talks, though they can help to share in the community. But the radiance of a unified life, really centered in Christ, full of love and human qualities. As an International Movement we have to discover together how can we build this unification in ourselves, in our groups, in a world scale.

It is then that PR can be in every University throughout the world a dynamic presence appealing to Christ. It is then that PR can be present in the organized international life not as a structure without soul but as the real community of the Catholic students from the whole world.

These are the lines in which the Movement has grown in the past years and at the same time the lines which are asking

for a better improvement.

So much is to be done, but more than ever it has to be done by each one of us. Every student is essential and unique in the Movement. Let us hope and pray that each one of us will be entirely faithful to his role.

Pax Romana is, in its student branche, a youth Movement. As young people, we are always unsatisfied, always uncomfortably settled in the world. Let us not take these features in the only negative way of super-criticising. Let us take them in the positive and up-turned (?) way of building the Church with all the gifts we have received from God.



Fundação Cuidar o Futuro