



THE ULTIMATE AIMS OF "PAX ROMANA"

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I - The historical development of the aims of "Pax Romana"

As far as "Pax Romana" has been developing, its aims have been defined in ever new expressions, answering to quite concrete needs of the Movement at given stages. By these successive and opportune definitions the Movement has reached its maturity and at present is able to bring to all Federations in different countries and in various cultural and social situations, the fundamental ideas of the university apostolate which "answers", as Pius XII has emphasized, "to a very definite vocation creating special needs, possibilities and duties, common to all, men and women, from all races and cultures, within the apostolic life of the Church".

During the early years of its existence, "Pax Romana" was mainly the enlargement of the notion of entraide, originated in a group of European federations. To the outburst of an international mentality which was beginning to take shape about the years 1920, the Church answered by a stronger assertion of her universal character encouraging the brotherly meeting of Catholics from different countries, so far too much closed in the narrow and traditional circles of their parishes and dioceses. The Catholic student groups belong to the first who became aware of this new challenge presented to them by the enlargement of the international frontiers.

In the carrying on of these new possibilities, "Pax Romana" soon became, after a time of silent work during the war years, the expression of an idea of apostolate, in which the specific role of the University dominated all studies and exchanges, and of a service, done by the Federations to the University community and by the international Movement to the national groups.

The continuous deepening of the idea of "Pax Romana" lead us to see in it "the meeting point of all the efforts made all over the world to christianize the University". Out this definition have obviously come out the dynamism and the spiritual strength of an authentic Movement. At that time it has been clearly seen that "Pax Romana" could not be taken as a confederation where only lateral relations would take place. It was stated, on the contrary, that "Pax Romana" should have a life of its own

on the international level. Such a life would spring at the top (the international organs of the Movement) from all the experiences and efforts made at the bottom (the local and national units). And from this life a new elan would flow down to the activities of the Movement at every level. Such a dynamism has been more and more required by the increasing presence of groups coming from the continents where "Pax Romana" had but begun its task. In these countries where the University had no tradition and where the University people, while still students, were closely bound to the social and political development of their native countries, all had to be thought over again under new light.

"Pax Romana" has then become a world-wide Movement. It was felt necessary to meet the present needs with a stronger organization seen as the vehicle of the Movement. Different means, complementary activities, original methods were discovered to provide more flexibility in action. An organic life, impregnated with the most valuable ideas of the Movement, was developed, enabling an adequate training in lay apostolate within "Pax Romana". (This is the point where we are at present, I think).

Through the deepening of those different perspectives, the immediate aims of "Pax Romana" have been clarified, keeping however as definitely acquired its ultimate aims. Again and again these aims need to be explained, to be made visible and clear. In fact it is mainly them and not only the definitions asked by the historical development of the Movement, which can give a deep meaning to all our work, our meetings, our discussions and methods.

It is not difficult to experience what I am saying. When we are at a meeting like this one, we become well aware that there are nearly untangible elements in a definition of "Pax Romana". We sense that through the dialogue between different people and cultures, which takes place within the framework of the Movement, deeper values are at stake.

II - The great current of the lay apostolate

"Pax Romana" is not an isolated case in the life of the Church. Its forty years of existence have flow at the rythm of a wider reality - the lay apostolate itself. This apostolate has been developed under the clear and decisive orientation of the last Holy Fathers, first suggesting, but soon requesting the presence of the laity in all fields of human life. From this orientation of the Hierarchy an outburst of the theology of the laity issued. There names like Congar, Lubac, Rahner, are the pillars of



a rout which we guess rich in possibilities.

But to reduce the lay apostolate only to a guidance from on high, would mean misunderstanding the width of its scope. The Church is hierarchical and teaching, having for that an adequate structure, but she also is expression of a life that brings charisms. If the orientation from the Hierarchy is at the root of the lay apostolate, it also meets there the life of the laity, under all the aspects which it has taken during these past years. This apostolate has come out from the greater responsibility which the laity has assumed in the apostolic mission of the Church - not in order to bring a solution to the lack of priests, to take their place in a better or worse way (always an inconvenient substitution), but, on the contrary, with the awareness that the lay people are living, necessary, unique, members of the very Body of the Church. Cardinal Suhard had already remarked that when the Church invites the laity to an apostolic task, she does not make it in a spirit of a temporary solution but in the desire of entrusting all the responsibility for the human society to the lay people.

The lay apostolate grows out of the confluence of these two realities. Its experiences are manifold and develop at all levels and in all walks of life. We can think of apostolate in a work milieu going to the extreme in temporal engagement; teams working in religious and pastoral sociology, searching for a new humanism; groups of Christian couples trying to make their family a temple of God in the heart of the city of men; lay people from all professions and states of life leaving their countries to help build new Christian communities in total unity to their bretheren from other races and cultures; meetings between Catholics and Protestants or Orthodox in the search for unity in life and thought; liturgical renewal looking for the adequate expression of a life of prayer capable of integrating all the experiences of a life in the world... It is a living current which flows through the Body of the Church; it is an effort of continuous search in which the very life of the Church is fulfilled, it is a convergency of aspirations and of attempt, in which the same spiritual values are at work. Through this current of the lay apostolate the Church is present in the world of our time.

III - "Pax Romana" as expression of the mystery of the Church

"Pax Romana" is one of these efforts, the one which is achieved in and by the University people. It plunges its roots in this immense

current of apostolate. And within this human search for new forms and methods through which the Holy Ghost vivifies all apostolic work, "Pax Romana" becomes expression of the inner mystery of the Church. Only at the light of this mystery, revealed and made visible in the growth of the lay apostolate, can we understand the whole meaning of "Pax Romana".

This is why, in spite of all the failures and many difficulties, we find in "Pax Romana" the wonderment which brings forth the faithfulness and which can only be fostered by the radiating force of the mystery. There, also, we find the reason for those paradoxes of the meeting of the supernatural with the human, of the grandeur of God working through the weakness of man - there the mystery becomes quite untouchable into its depth.

To be an "expression of the mystery of the Church" is not an abstract sentence sounding out of time, unrooted from the concrete situations. On the contrary, "Pax Romana" is expression of this mystery in our time, in the concrete and fascinating conditions of the world where we live, in each cultural and social situation where the members of the Movement are supposed to bring Christ.

(Shall I add in brackets that it is an easy temptation in our Movement to forget the importance of this basic "raison-d'être" in everyday life. Very often, facing the amount of work to be done we risk to break this ontological relation to the very essence of the Church. Then we need more than ever to understand that there is no life of the Church "outside" the Church, that the Christian experience, individual or collective, is an experience within the Church).

"Pax Romana" is therefore a sign of the mystery of the Church - this idea has many consequences. It means first that "Pax Romana" is responsible for the radiation of this mystery in the University, in the world of culture and in all activities connected with these fields. I put a stress in this sentence - "the radiation of the mystery of the Church" - and I do not simply say "the radiation of the Church", because it seems essential to me to make visible the ultimate realities from which we live. If we want "Pax Romana" to have in the world a presence radiating both the "stillness of vision" and the balance of action which are at the very core of the Church, we have to believe more, in theory and in practice, that, by our apostolic life, we share in the redemptive work of Christ who is present in the world, "continued in space and time by the Church".

Facing situations of crisis at the University or in society, it is easy to want nothing but to give an immediate and direct solution to



them.

"Pax Romana" cannot subsist but by being faithful to what is specific to the Church. Now the mission of the Church and of all her living organs is a religious mission. Even when we search the promotion of the most authentic spiritual values, her mission is not a cultural one, meant in its immediate reality. It is not either a social mission, even if we are on the forefront of all the transformations of the life of man and of the peoples. The religious mission of "Pax Romana" is the work for the coming of the Kingdom of God. This mission consists essentially of continuously giving birth to the Church, of making her life, of extending her, of making her fruitful in the works of faith and of grace among the University people. I am quoting Cardinal Montini in his speech to the II World Congress for the Apostolate of the Laity : "... the Church has in herself the immediate aim of her role. The Church does not serve any other aim than the one which is immanent to the assertion of her own existence. The Church must work directly for herself not for an egoistic self-sufficiency or for the desire of limiting the bounty and the activity of men but because she has in herself an unique, superior, complete way of life, in which all ways of human and temporal life should seek food, taking her not as a means at their service but as a principle out of which their own perfection may spring".

The primacy of purely religious values in the mission of the Church, and so of "Pax Romana", does not exclude the presence and the interest for all the aspects of human life. On the contrary, Redemption attains man as a whole and in the complete framework of his existence - Redemption is the great reality of the plan of God giving a meaning to every created thing and to all events of the destiny of each individual as well as to those of the historical process. The supernatural plan where Redemption is achieved crowns and accomplishes the natural plan where human virtues and institutions find their fulfilment. The Church is then bound to the development of all the values that take shape in the human community.

"Pax Romana" is therefore responsible for helping the University to reach the maximum of its own perfection. Here we use the word University in its double sense : as a living community, made up of people destined to be children of God, and as a radiating centre of Truth. And it is these two worlds, the world of people and the world of ideas, what "Pax Romana" has to christianize. "Pax Romana" shares then in the specific task of the laity - the "consecratio mundi", the sanctification, from within, of all structures and institutions.

In this vision of the role of "Pax Romana", we are far from a strictly organizational or federative idea which would see in "Pax Romana" but the static gathering of the Catholic students. It is a dynamic work which is accomplished through the attempts of the daily life of our group.

IV - "Pax Romana" sharing in the specific mission of the Church

"Pax Romana" fulfils its own role by participating, in all expressions of its life, in the mission of the Church, diversified in the three levels, where the messianic titles of Christ (the Priest, the King, the Prophet) are continued.

The lay apostolate also takes a function of "ministry" in which the three functions of the Church for sanctification, teaching and government take specific shapes.

The participation in the sanctifying role of the Church makes of "Pax Romana" (seen as a whole and in each of its members) a pole of sanctity in the world. Before presenting made up solutions to the problems of men, before establishing intellectual systems, we should collectively stand before God in the attitude of offering and sacrifice, and our best offering, as lay people, is, as Father Congar remarks, "our holy, religious, prayerful, dedicated, charitable, merciful, apostolic life".

All the work which "Pax Romana" accomplishes at all levels will take place in this offering. It will never be a material or bureaucratic task but the total expression of our surrender to God. "Pax Romana" exists, on the international level, to help us make of our apostolic tasks a great offering which highs up from the farthest parts of the world to join in the great Sacrifice of Christ.

"Pax Romana" also participates with the Church in the Movement of mankind en route since Pentecost towards the Parousia, in the expectation of Christ the King. Under this light, all the activities acquire a new meaning, everything becomes sign of the Providence of God who lovingly looks our walking in life through the succession of time. The meeting of the Church with the world which "Pax Romana" makes concrete on the university level, cannot be faced in the incidental character of the different situations - it also is a stage, a special stepping stone, within the large movement which has began with the Incarnation of the Word and which will only end when Christ gloriously reigns over all things and men. In these successive efforts, even when they are tentatively made, "Pax Romana" helps



the accomplishment of the great work of the Church, who grows and develops in her historical incarnation, by the decisions of the authority and by the living experiences of all the faithful.

These experiences are not hazardedly made. They are lead by a clear vision of the Faith. Because the act of faith which is at the heart of Christian life implies the acknowledgement of Christ as Son of God and also the acceptation of His message and of the means which He offers for our salvation. It is just in that surrender to the message that we can stress a specific role for "Pax Romana". "Pax Romana" will not only reveal the Person of Christ but will also try to make known and lived out His message. It is a message of life - not of empty words - what we have to communicate to men. This transmission supposes a counscious, permanent, totally faithful witness. And it also supposes an effort towards the discovering of new and daring means for its accomplishment. To incarnate in ever original expressions the witness of Christianity is the Catholic students'own role, as individuals and as group. "Pax Romana", as an expression of the Church, participates, in a certain sense, in her mission of teaching. And this mainly by helping to create a language adapted to the needs of our time, intelligible to all minds, open to all cultures. The indispensable effort of thinking and reflexion requested by the dialogue of the Church with the world now at a moment in history when new sociological behaviours take the lead of events, when culture requires an intense deepening and understanding of all the values of a integral humanism - this effort is very specially allied to the faithfulness of the University people to an authentic Catholicism.

The Church as an answer to give or rather numberless answers to give to a world that looks for solutions, to the multiple problems of demographic growth, of fanatic nationalisms, of totalitarian imperialisms, of 2/3 of still under-nourished mankind, of barriers which hatred or misunderstanding place between peoples and nations. In many circumstances "Pax Romana" will speak on behalf of the Church, able to help radiating the thinking of the Church and to contribute decisively to it by her engagement in the concrete situations where the problems appear.

V - "Pax Romana" in the community of love of the Mystical Body

In this meeting with the world, "Pax Romana" is not a conglomeration of isolated efforts but the revelation of a living community through

which Christ Himself comes in dialogue with men.

When the apostolate of the laity truly plunges in the mystery of the Church, it becomes a real overflowing of the life of love within the Trinity down to human relationships. The specific work of the Church in its continuous fruitfulness is the restauration of the true community, the revelation of the love of God for men. This is what the contemporary man actually expects - even when he wastes himself in an endless activism or when he annihilates himself in an useless passivity, he is searching a relationship of love which he does not know but of which he dreams in his deeper being. "Pax romana" has to reveal this relation of love, not by disguising it in pseudo-intellectual arguments but by making possible the meeting with the Person of Christ Who is the living God. It is in this vision of the community of love that a true intellectual apostolate can take place. It will never be the display of a rationalistic attitude but a more global apprehension - more mystical and more contemplative - of the mysteries of Faith.

During years and centuries, the Church, having the care of answering to multiple heresies, has impregnated her apostolic attitude with a certain rationalism. In our time, however, the Christian world looks for food again in the sources, and he meets the living God in the Bible and in the Liturgy. God is grasped not as a system - He is a Person Who comes in communion with us in history, in the events, in signs, in symbols. It is no longer question of ideologies that are in opposition with little isolated points - it is Faith as a whole, not only as doctrine but as life, that is at stake.

Before establishing the relationship of love with the non-Christians, we must be rich in love for our own community. I dare say that very often the apostolic work has no fruit because it comes out of nothing... It should always be the radiation of a community, of the presence of Christ in the group.

Very often we speak of the unity which is achieved in "Pax Romana" through the diversity of Federations and persons. Perhaps we still think too much of an arithmetical meeting where complementary values are coolly added to one another... The unity which we seek is far beyond this elementary aspect! In "Pax Romana" there is a meeting and a dialogue. There is the unexpected, wonderful meeting with real brethren and real sisters, the discovery that we belong to the great family of men which is the family of the children of God... And after the meeting there is the dialogue, the

exchange of what we have and we are, a demanded and accepted exchange.

Meeting and dialogue are the atmosphere of the very life of "Pax Romana" - vital meeting and dialogue with Christ, centre, "raison-d' être", aim and spirit of all our Movement, meeting and dialogue beyond all the frontiers and races, assuming all values, enriching the community with all what is original and unique. Bound among one another by Christ in the Church, we are strong in our unity which is a sign and a hope for the divided world. Coming from all parts of the world, with such different experiences, we can look at one another, take in hand our common destiny, unite ourselves more closely in the charity of Christ and endlessly repeat, with our tongue, with our heart, with our acts : "You and you and you and I, are One and We".

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

