

THE CHURCH POLICY AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

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Received: 22 Apr 2019

Accepted: 30 Apr 2019

Published: 13 May 2019

ABSTRACT

In this approach on the parameters of Vatican policy during and after the Second Vatican Council, we will try to focus on the missionary activity and the Vatican policy for Africa and the rest of the world.

KEYWORDS: *Second Vatican Council, Mission, Portuguese Africa, Missionaries in Portuguese Africa*

INTRODUCTION

The Second Vatican Council explicitly stated an untold listing of what it considered to be highly reprehensible human attitudes. Where they were included, arbitrary arrests, violation of human integrity, degrading work conditions, etc. Many of these guidelines later collided with the Portuguese colonial policy. The Bishops who followed these guidelines were considered non grata people by the Portuguese Dictatorship.

On the other hand, Missionaries had to live in the same conditions as local people. This fact gave Missionaries in the Portuguese Colonies an objective view of the serious problems. Taking the community of foreign Missionaries in Portuguese Africa to be profound protesters of the Portuguese Dictatorship Regime.

The Missionary

During the Second Vatican Council, there was a commission exclusively responsible for analyzing the issue of the missionary activity of the Church. This commission received guidelines, concerning this issue, to develop five points: "missionary duty", "missionary vocations", "training and action of missionaries", "indigenous clergy and respect for local cultures" as well as "relations between dioceses and missions". The work of this commission gave rise to a decree entitled *De Missionibus*, with a markedly juridical character.

In the introduction to this document, an important idea was defined that will shape the whole abroad policy of the Vatican, after the Second Vatican Council, "... the Church is by nature, missionary..." [1].

The "missions" would be carried out by the missionary activity and would ordinarily be exercised in certain territories recognized by the Holy See. The proper purpose of this activity would be the evangelization and implementation of the Church in the peoples or groups where it was not yet established. Thus, it would, therefore, be necessary to develop everywhere, particular indigenous Churches, endowed with their own strengths and maturity, with their hierarchy linked to local people, sufficiently provided with the means to a full Christian life, in which the main means of implementation would always be

the preaching of the Gospel. It became clear the idea that the division of local Christians would always be detrimental to the mission and the Vatican policy itself [1].

For the mission's project to succeed missionaries should be subject to the social and cultural conditions of the local people with whom they would live, and to have constant participation in their cultural and social life through the various exchanges and problems of human life and familiarization with the various national and religious traditions. They should also participate in the efforts of peoples who, fighting against hunger, ignorance, sickness, and lack of freedom, had not yet attained their goals while avoiding to interfere in the government of these peoples or nations where they were missionaries. The document emphasized the claim that the Church strictly forbade anyone to "embrace" the Catholic faith, if it did not want to, and it was even forbidden to induce someone by "indiscreet" processes to profess that faith. On the other hand, it was also very explicit that no one could be removed from it by iniquitous vexations [2].

Therefore, Missionaries should give birth to communities of faithful, leading to a life of dignity to be well accepted by these communities, and encouraging them to value their local culture and, as far as possible, to provide for themselves. They should always respect the cultural and millenarian riches of the peoples who they wanted to evangelize [3].

It would be necessary to multiply diocesan and regional schools in which future catechists would carefully study the Catholic doctrine and also organize meetings or refresher courses in the disciplines or arts useful for their own lives. On the other hand, all those who dedicated exclusively to these occupations should have a fair remuneration and a convenient standard of living and social security.

In the young Churches, the native priests should undertake with "passion" the evangelization, organizing common actions with the foreign missionaries, with whom they would always form a single presbytery, in any case under the authority of the bishop. The bishops should call to their dioceses or always welcome the missionaries sent by the Holy See, and effectively favor their initiatives [3].

Concerning collaboration and cooperation with society, and for all to know, the states at the moment the situation of the Church in those territories and in the rest of the world, missionary news should be facilitated by modern means of communication, so that everyone would know exactly what the missionaries were doing, and that coordination of the news and cooperation with national and international bodies was also necessary. [4]

The question of the missionary "duty" of the bishops was also addressed, and it was agreed that the bishop in his diocese should always promote and direct the missionary work so that the whole community would become a missionary. Not being able to ignore the aims of the mission or to distance themselves from them, it was their duty to support and defend the evangelizers.

The Church in the world

The Second Vatican Council acknowledged that there was at the moment a disturbance of the spirits and that a change of life conditions was underway, linked to a broader transformation, which tended to give predominance, in terms of action, to mathematical and natural sciences techniques. This scientific mindset would shape culture and ways of thinking in

a different way. It was recognized that the technique progressed so much that it transformed the face of the earth and tried to conquer space [4].

It has also been recognized that mankind has moved from a predominantly static conception of the order of things to another, preferably dynamic and evolutionary, and this problem should arise the attention of all bishops and Christians.

It was very explicitly considered that peoples who were more closely connected to ancient traditions felt the demand for an ever more personal exercise of freedom, which should be recognized and accepted by the Church[4].

Developing and newly independent nations had the desire, which should be respected, to participate in the assets of civilization, not only in the political but also in the economic field, and the right to aspire to play their role freely in the world plan. It was also recognized that these newly independent nations began to have unwanted dependence on other, wealthier countries. Developing nations that were not yet independent and where self-determination movements were to emerge should be respected.

The right of all citizens to participate in the economic, social and political life of the communities in which they were in was recognized, and that cultural goods should be effectively extended to all [4].

Concerning the "Freedom" of citizens and peoples, the Second Vatican Council also took a stand, recognizing that it was only "in the freedom that man could convert himself to the good," and that, in those times, men greatly appreciated and they sought with "passion" the individual freedom, having all the reason and the Church support.

Consequently, it was found that it increased the awareness of the eminent dignity of the human person, being superior to all things and their rights and duties to be universal and inviolable. It would be necessary to make accessible to man all the things he needed to take a truly human life: food, clothing, home, the right to freely choose the state of life and to establish a family, the right to education, work, to good reputation, to respect, to the right information, the right to act according to the norms of his own conscience, the right to his life protection and the right to freedom even in religious matters. Thus the social order and its progress should always revert to the good of human beings, hence the order of things should be subordinated to the order of people and not vice versa [4].

The Second Vatican Council

The Second Vatican Council made a list of those things which it considered totally infamous: everything that opposed life, such as all kinds of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; anything that violated the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental tortures, and attempts to violate one's consciences; anything that would offend the dignity of the human person, such as inhuman living conditions, arbitrary detention, deportation, slavery, prostitution, trade of women and youth; and also the degrading conditions of work, in which workers were treated as mere instruments of profit and not as free and responsible persons. All these points were considered infamous, as they corrupted human civilization, as well as the excessive economic and social inequalities among the members of any society [4].

Therefore, human institutions, whether private or public, should serve the dignity and destiny of man, while at the same time combating all forms of political or social subjection and safeguarding fundamental human rights under any political

regime, progressively adapt themselves to spiritual realities.

Economic development should remain under the management of man and not be left only to the discretion of a few individuals or economically stronger groups, or only the political community, or some more powerful nations. On the opposite, it would be required all levels to have in their management as many men as possible, or all nations, in the case of international relations. It would also be necessary for the initiatives of individuals and free associations to be coordinated and organized in harmony with the activities of the public authorities.

Development should not be abandoned to the mere "mechanical" course of economic activity, or to public authority alone, and should therefore be denounced as erroneous both doctrines which, on the pretext of false liberty, were opposed to the necessary reforms, such as those that sacrifice the fundamental rights of individuals and associations to the collective organization of production [5]. The fundamental rights of the human person should include the right of workers to freely create associations which could represent them authentically and to contribute to the right order of economic life, as well as the right to freely participate, without risk of reprisals, in their activities.

As for the exercise of political activity, whether in the communities or in representative bodies, according to the Second Vatican Council, it should develop and act within the limits of the moral order, with a view to the common good, dynamically conceived, according to the order legally established or to be established. But if a public authority, beyond the limits of its own jurisdiction, oppressed citizens, it was lawful for them, within the limits set by the natural law, to defend their rights, and those of their fellow citizens, against the abuse of that authority. Consequently, it was inhuman and reprehensible for political authority to assume totalitarian, authoritarian, or dictatorial forms that would harm the rights of individuals or social groups [5].

CONCLUSIONS

The exercise of political activity, whether in the communities or in the representative bodies, should, according to the Second Vatican Council, to develop and act within the limits of the moral order, with a view to the common good, dynamically conceived, according to the juridical established order or to be established. But if the public authority, beyond the limits of its own jurisdiction, oppressed citizens, it was lawful for them, within the limits set by the natural law, to defend their rights, and those of their fellow citizens, against the abuse of that authority. Consequently, it was inhuman and reprehensible that political authority

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3. *National Secretariat of the Apostleship of Prayer.*

4. Cfr. *Conc. Vat. II*, «*Declaration of Religious Freedom*».
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