

Dear Sir,

I have carefully read and appreciated the article published by Cardinale Ravasi on your eminent newspaper, on "Domenica", the excellent cultural insert, of last 14<sup>th</sup> of February, 2016. With a greatly serene judgement, and with the right open-mindedness, he has faced the rough relation and the un-compatibility between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry, lasting from centuries.

I was happy to learn that, without prejudices and with the wide cultural view that identifies himself, he has talked about Freemasonry, and, beyond all the caveat and the Church's official and written positions, widely known, he has admitted, without any preconceptions, that between the two realities, there are also some common values, which unites, also if not ipso facto cancelling the different visions and the pronounced or even sharp differences.

In articles 1 and 4 of the Constitution of Grande Oriente d'Italia-Palazzo Giustiniani, the most ancient Masonic Grand Lodge, constituted in 1805, the identity of our organization is defined very clearly: (our organization) " assimilating the Ancient Landmarks, pursues the search of Truth and the perfection of the Human Family; it acts in order to extend the bonds of love to all the mankind; it supports the Tolerance, the respect of oneself, the freedom of conscience and thought".

Universal Freemasonry, in its own nature, is neither a Religion, nor a substitute; is has not any dogmatic positions, does not propose any ways that are salvific for the soul; but to be admitted, it asks people only to believe in a Supreme Being. We simply call it Grand Architect of the universe, without giving any specific attribute to it, like Christian religion does.

But I stop here, because the aim of this letter is not to discuss with Cardinale Ravasi about theology and Divinity, but with serenity, to try to start a constructive dialog, on some new and undisputed fields, respecting the different identities.

From a long time, Grande Oriente d'Italia, is trying to do this, with the aim to demolish those walls, that nowadays are no more justified. On the occasion of my first celebration of the XX September [celebrating the facts of Risorgimento], I said that "my great dream was that one day a Pope and a Grand Master could attend together the celebration of Porta Pia, ending up a centuries-old conflict".

Freemasonry is not an enemy of the Church, of any Churches, and always has been the House of dialogue and Tolerance". It is not opposed to any religion, and leave the brethren free to follow their own faith. But time changes and humanity is threatened by great dangers: like the fundamentalist terrorism, the decadence of values, the uncontrolled globalization. The greatness of laical, spiritual and religious institutions, to which Man adheres looking for some personal ways of improvement and elevation, is in the ability to face the delicate challenges, by taking part and sharing the raising necessities and problems. And the greatness is also in having the courage to go beyond any "mutual hostility, outrages, prejudices", like between the Church and Freemasonry.

As the president of the pontifical Council for Culture, wisely has remembered, quoting the document of the German bishops of 1983, the points of contact between Church and Freemasonry cannot be ignored, which find some common values in the communitarian dimension, in the human dignity, the fight against materialism, in the charity. On this, we can freely discuss, keeping the differences, but reducing the distance which the Philippines' bishops in their document articulate. But the important thing is to start, also if with a limited reconciliation, and debate about it, and not to continue to profess an absolute and intransigent un-reconciliation ex cathedra. Who owns Truth? Man or just God?

Like the same Cardinale Ravasi, some years ago, wrote: "Truth is only one, but like a diamond it has many faces, from our point of view, we are able to see only one of those faces". So, who is sure to be able to see all and hold the unique Truth, is a deluded soul. It is for this reason that freemasons, with humility and many doubts are perennially looking for it, leaving dogmas to the others. But always searching for the dialogue and debating with anyone.

Stefano Bisi, Grand Master  
Grande Oriente d'Italia