



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0639

Giovedì 15.10.2009

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY SEE AT WORKING SESSION 10 ON "COMBATING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, AND DISCRIMINATION, ALSO FOCUSING ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS AND MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS" AT 2009 OSCE/ODHIR HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING (WARSAW 28 SEPTEMBER-9 OCTOBER 2009)

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY SEE AT WORKING SESSION 10 ON "COMBATING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, AND DISCRIMINATION, ALSO FOCUSING ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS AND MEMBERS OF OTHER RELIGIONS" AT 2009 OSCE/ODHIR HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING (WARSAW 28 SEPTEMBER-9 OCTOBER 2009)

Here below the address delivered by Mgr. Anthony R. Frontiero of the Holy See Delegation on 5th October 2009 at 2009 OSCE/ODHIR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on the Working Session 10, "Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Discrimination, also Focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of other Religions":

Mr. Moderator,

The Delegation of the Holy See appreciates this opportunity to participate in this important discussion. Incidents of hate, discrimination, violence and intolerance against Christians and members of other religions continue to occur all too frequently in the OSCE region, and are symptomatic of the lack of peace in the world. Pope Benedict XVI lamented this situation, saying "Speaking of Christians in particular, I must point out with pain that not only are they at times prevented from [publicly and freely professing their religious convictions]: in some States they are actually persecuted, and even recently tragic cases of ferocious violence have been recorded. There are regimes that impose a single religion upon everyone, while secular regimes often lead not so much to violent persecution as to systematic cultural denigration of religious beliefs. In both instances, a fundamental human right is not being respected, with serious repercussions for peaceful co-existence. This can only promote a mentality and culture that is not conducive to peace."¹

Authentic tolerance and respect is a civic discipline, not just a personal attitude. The objective of the OSCE commitment to combat intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of the other religions is not to somehow "level the playing field", or indifference towards world views, but to genuinely respect the

differences among us. Indeed, neutrality toward world views cannot be truly tolerant and respectful. Likewise, an absence of convictions does not define tolerance; and in the absence of some compelling notion of the truth that requires us to be tolerant of those who have a different understanding of the truth of things, there is only scepticism and relativism.² An authentic notion of tolerance in pluralistic societies demands that in their dealings with unbelievers and those of different faiths, believers should grasp that they must reasonably expect that the dissent they encounter will go on existing. At the same time, however, secular political cultures must encourage unbelievers to grasp the same point in their dealings with believers. When secularized citizens act in their role as citizens, they must not deny in principle that religious images of the world have the potential to express truth. Nor must they refuse their believing fellow citizens the right to make contributions in a religious language to public debates.³

The Round Table Meeting on the theme *Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians*, held in Vienna in March 2009, was a successful and hopeful event, and revealed the possibility of constructive dialogue toward mutual understanding and respect among Christians, members of other religions, and non-believers. It is hoped that a follow-up to the Round Table will be forthcoming. In the face of ongoing incidents of intolerance, discrimination and violence against Christians and members of other religions, the Delegation of the Holy See proposes that this august body conceive of a new tolerance, not the indifferent tolerance that says, "We should be tolerant because it works better", but the true tolerance of differences engaged civilly. In conclusion, I hold up such a notion described by Pope Benedict XVI, where he says: "Fruitful dialogue between faith and reason cannot but render the work of charity more effective within society, and it constitutes the most appropriate framework for promoting fraternal collaboration between believers and non-believers in their shared commitment to working for justice and the peace of the human family."⁴ Respecting the order as an Other who is also a seeker of truth and goodness, enables the believer and the Other to enter into a conversation, a dialogue that leads to mutual enrichment rather than to a deeper scepticism about the very possibility of grasping the truth of things. A listing of concrete recommendations on this Item will be furnished to the Secretariat along with the text of my remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

1 Benedict XVI, *Message for the World Day of Peace* (2007), no. 5.2 Cfr. George Weigel, *The Cube and the Cathedral* (2005), 110. 3 Cfr. Jürgen Habermas, *The Dialectics of Secularization* (2005), 50-51. 4 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 57.[01500-02.01] [Original text: English][B0639-XX.02]
