

Commitment to and Prayer for Unity



In the Church of the monastic complex of San Gregorio al Celio - “birthplace of the link between Christianity in Britain and the Church of Rome” - the Pope presided at First Vespers of Third Sunday of Lent on Saturday evening, 10 March, together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, Primate of the Anglican Communion. It was a “fraternal encounter” that, according to the Pontiff, was marked by “a profoundly ecumenical character”. The hope is that from this there might be a “stimulus for all the faithful — both Catholic and Anglican — to renew their commitment to pray constantly and to work for unity”.

Recalling the thousand year history of the Holy Hermitage of Camaldoli, the mother house of the congregation founded by St Romuald, the Pope emphasized “the great fruitfulness of the Camaldolese tradition”, testified to by among other things the cultural and spiritual tradition which it offered to elaboration of the Italian Constitution and to the reflection of the Second Vatican Council. It was a religious journey marked the continuous search for the “right balance between the eremitical and the cenobitic spirit”, between the need to dedicate oneself totally to God in solitude, to support one another in communal prayer and to welcome others “so that they can draw upon the wellsprings of spiritual life and evaluate the events of the world with a truly Gospel-formed conscience”.

The Archbishop of Canterbury also spoke about this two-fold dimension within the monastic view St Gregory. “The balance in the monastic life of solitude and common work and worship, “he recalled among other things, “is something that seeks to enable a clear, even 'prophetic' vision of the other”. Only in the “daily immersion of contemplation”, in deed, is it possible to “see the needs of others as they really are”, to experience torment for their needs “so profound and tragic”.

“The inseparable labour of action and contemplation, of solitude and community,” Williams

underlined again, “is to do with the constant purification of our awareness of each other in the light of the God whom we encounter in silence and self-forgetting”. From this derives the need for a daily “discipline of silence and patience”, which allows the truth to manifest itself fully purifying “the distortions in our vision that are caused by selfishness and greed”.

This theme was indirectly recalled the next morning, Sunday, by Benedict XVI at the Angelus, dedicated to the Gospel episode of the Purification of the Temple. “A typical prophetic action”, he termed it, specifying that it is “impossible to interpret Jesus as violent”, because “violence is contrary to the Kingdom of God” and is “never useful to humanity”.

Osservatore Romano