

Swiss bishops against the logic of financial markets



Berne, 31. The minds of millions of Europeans are teeming with thoughts and worries about the difficult financial situation: under fire above all is speculation, which makes profit at all costs the compass for a form of behaviour that has heavy repercussions on families and on the weakest social categories. This is the scenario that serves as the background to a message — signed by the Bishop Markus Büchel of Sankt Gallen, at the request of the Bishops' Conference — which the Bishops of Switzerland have published with a view to the National Day on 1 August.

It is above all intended as reflective and propositional in order to encourage the community to follow the simple but fundamental advice that “money is at the service of man and man is not a slave of money”. Money, the prelates say in particular, “is not made to be increased by itself. It is not an end in itself”. If, they note, “the whole of the financial world were to live for itself, it would lose its *raison d'être*. Those who invest for gain with no regard for the unhappiness of their neighbour are acting in a decidedly irresponsible way”.

The negative spin-offs are reserved for the weak. In illustrating in *L'Osservatore Romano* the causes that prompted this reflection, the Secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Communications and the Media, Simon Spengler, referred precisely to concern for the situation of poverty and marginalization that is spreading among many tiers of the world population. “A large number of people in Switzerland and throughout the world”, he affirmed, “are distressed by all the daily news they are bombarded with on the financial crisis, the crisis of banks and the lack of money. These people are afraid that the crisis will become unmanageable, with burdensome consequences for everyone”. The people, he adds, “are under the impression that the international financial market is uncontrollable, that things are going from bad to worse and that the consequences are particularly bad for the poor, workers, the elderly, the out of work, refugees and those who live in the poorest countries”. In this context, he explains, “the Swiss Bishops wanted to remind all Christians of the principles that must form the foundation of our relationship with money and the responsibility incumbent on government leaders, politicians and bankers”.

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