

A "PROVIDENTIAL" BOOK

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"MODERNITY'S ALTERNATIVE:
HOW HISTORY IS FORMED IN THE DEPTHS OF THE PEOPLES".

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I am happy to meet with you all to briefly introduce Rocco Buttiglione's new book, entitled "Modernity's Alternative: How History Is Formed in the Depths of the Peoples".

The book Buttiglione has written is undoubtedly "providential". St. Thomas Aquinas used to say that "Providence" is the "prudencia Dei," the prudence of God. God provides the good things we need, with practical sense, at every moment of life.

In 2013 God gave us Pope Francis. A shepherd with the "smell of sheep" who helped us discover the richness of the Latin American Church as a contribution to the universal Church. In the year 2025, we cannot doubt that God has once again been magnanimous with his Church by giving us Pope Leo XIV, who integrates in his person, many worlds in a harmonious way: the North American culture, thanks to his birth in Chicago and his love for the people of the United States. Caribbean culture, through his maternal grandparents who were "gens de couleur libres". European culture, thanks to his French, Italian and Spanish roots. And, again, in a very special way, Leo XIV embodies Latin American culture, thanks to his long pastoral experience in Peru.

The book that we present today, without having planned it, is like an "intellectual introduction" to the profound significance of the pontificate of Pope Francis and the pontificate of Pope Leo XIV in the context of contemporary history.

Why do I dare to say this? The main reason is that Buttiglione's book helps us to think that modernity has not only been European or Anglo-Saxon rationalist thought. Modernity has also been that other way of facing the challenge of the dignity of every human being that has been born since the discovery of the Americas.

Indeed, modernity is not only the thought of the enlightened European philosophers, but also the cultural synthesis that springs from the encounter of the gospel with the "new world" and that gives as fruit an original form of baroque culture and a profound fraternity among Latin American peoples.

Rocco Buttiglione manages to explain through this book how the miraculous apparitions of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe on Tepeyac Hill not only allowed for the conversion of two peoples at odds - the Spanish occupation forces and the indigenous communities - but also for the "mestizaje", that is, the emergence of a new way of facing the challenge of the presence of the "other", without exterminating them, but on the contrary, building families and sowing civilization.

Likewise, in Rocco Buttiglione's book, we find important tools for the "transpolitical understanding of contemporary history". In other words, the author helps us to understand that we are not merely in an "epoch of changes" but in a true "epochal change", which, in order to be properly interpreted, requires overcoming two very frequent temptations: the uncritical approval of every fashion and contemporary cultural trend or its radical, merely reactionary rejection.

I would like to emphasize how Buttiglione does not position himself as a mere conservative or liberal intellectual but manages to appreciate in an analytical and differentiated way the truth and the limits that exist, for example, in contemporary economic development. Buttiglione has been a profound scholar of the various forms of capitalist economy. He has appreciated on more than one occasion the contributions of the famous "Austrian school" and of the so-called "social market economy". However, through the critical use of a robust anthropology centered on the dignity of the human person, he manages to detect that there are deficiencies in the

global development model that have caused the impoverishment of enormous regions of the planet.

This robust anthropology was not born artificially in Rocco's mind. He learned it by studying the experience of the historical and cultural struggle of the Polish people and, in particular, by learning directly from an extraordinary teacher he had in the city of Krakow. I am referring to Karol Wojtyla, better known to us as St. John Paul II.

Rocco Buttiglione's book allows us to see how history is built from the depths of peoples and their cultures, and how providentially our recent Popes have contributed to this reflective and pastoral effort!

How important it is to think about History! It is important not to achieve a certain erudition, but to understand the present reality and help us to see the future with hope.

Rocco Buttiglione's book is, then, a book that recognizes how God, acting in history, builds "bridges" to unite cultures and peoples. It is a book that leaves me, as a reader, with the feeling that there is a path to the future different from the one marked by violent confrontation, the building of walls and mistrust between nations.

The book "Modernity's Alternative" is like a map to point us in the direction that Pope Leo XIV pointed out to us in the early days of his Pontificate. Peace in the hearts of people and among nations is built by excluding war, and rediscovering that we can read our differences in another way. Discovering differences should not be the object of pointing out and excluding the "other" but a reason to grow in an enriched humanity.

The book we present today has a "foreword" written by Pope Francis. In this text, Pope Francis comments on the thought of Rocco Buttiglione. At a certain point, Pope Francis questions us:

"What can help us to understand the people, and in particular the holy and faithful People of God, without distorting them, without

manipulating them, without the purely instrumental or ideological gaze, to contain our secret desires for power, to avoid committing treason against people, especially the most vulnerable and excluded?

I am of the opinion that in the end the answer to this question implies a question of faith: to remain faithful to the certainty of love that Jesus Christ shares with us. However, so that this does not sound abstract, it is necessary to look at how the certainty of faith is incarnated in the culture of the simple and how it is expressed symbolically".

This is also the invitation that Pope Leo XIV makes to us today: if we do not want a society ever more immersed in mistrust, antagonism and violence, we need to rediscover the living Person of the Risen Jesus Christ! To truly discover him implies an encounter with the concrete community of our brothers and sisters, especially the simplest ones, who so often surprise us by evangelizing us beyond our own expectations.

This is the experience of faith lived by Pope Leo XIV in Peru! This is the experience of faith that today can also revive all of us: to live the experience of concrete and empirical communion, to purify our gaze and animate our hearts with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Only in this way will we be able to find new ways to express culturally that our present and our future do not depend only on our own strength, but above all, on the Love of God that precedes us and always accompanies us through the Church.

Thank you Rocco Buttiglione for helping us to appreciate Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV through your thought and reflection! Thank you for giving us an intellectually powerful meditation that allows us to move forward with firmer steps towards the future that frightens so many, but that for us, should open us to a new horizon of confidence and authentic Hope!

Amen.