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Allocutiones

SALMO 32: INNO ALLA PROVVIDENZA DI DIO*

Distribuito in 22 versetti, tanti quante sono le lettere dell'alfabeto ebraico, il Salmo 32 è un canto di lode al Signore dell'universo e della storia. Un fremito di gioia lo pervade fin dai primi accenti: « Esultate, giusti, nel Signore: ai retti si addice la lode. Lodate il Signore con la cetra, con l'arpa a dieci corde a lui cantate. Cantate al Signore un canto nuovo, suonate la cetra con arte e acclamate » (vv. 1-3). Questa acclamazione (tern'ah) è, quindi, accompagnata dalla musica ed è espressione di una voce interiore di fede e di speranza, di felicità e di fiducia. Il cantico è « nuovo », non solo perché rinnova la certezza nella presenza divina all'interno del creato e delle vicende umane, ma anche perché anticipa la lode perfetta che si intonerà nel giorno della salvezza definitiva, quando il Regno di Dio sarà giunto alla sua attuazione gloriosa.

Proprio al finale compimento in Cristo guarda san Basilio, il quale spiega così questo passo: « Abitualmente si dice "nuovo" o ciò che è inusitato o ciò che è nato da poco. Se tu pensi al modo stupefacente e superiore a ogni immaginazione dell'incarnazione del Signore, canti necessariamente un canto nuovo e insolito. E se percorri con la mente la rigenerazione e il rinnovamento di tutta l'umanità, resa vecchia dal peccato, e annunzi i misteri della risurrezione, anche allora canti un cantico nuovo e insolito » (*Omelia sul Salmo* 32, 2: PG 29, 327B). Insomma, secondo san Basilio l'invito del salmista, che dice: « Cantate a Dio un canto nuovo », per i credenti in Cristo significa: « Onorate Dio non secondo il costume antico della "lettera", ma nella novità

* Ex allocutione die 8 augusti 2001 habita, durante audientia generali in area quae respicit basilicam Sancti Petri in Vaticano christifidelibus concessa (cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 9 agosto 2001).

Emerge allora una magnifica prospettiva universalistica. Dio proclama: « Volgetevi a me e sarete salvi, paesi tutti della terra, perché io sono Dio, non ce n'è un altro » (*Is* 45, 22). Così diventa chiaro che la predilezione con cui Dio ha scelto Israele come suo popolo non è un atto di esclusione, ma piuttosto un atto di amore di cui tutta l'umanità è destinata a beneficiare.

Si profila così, già nell'Antico Testamento, quella concezione « sacramentale » della storia della salvezza, che vede nell'elezione speciale dei figli di Abramo, e poi dei discepoli di Cristo nella Chiesa, non un privilegio che « chiude » ed « esclude », ma il segno e lo strumento di un amore universale.

L'invito all'adorazione e l'offerta della salvezza riguardano tutti i popoli: « Davanti a me si piegherà ogni ginocchio, per me giurerà ogni lingua » (*Is* 45, 23). Leggere queste parole in ottica cristiana significa andare col pensiero alla rivelazione piena del Nuovo Testamento, che addita in Cristo « il Nome che è al di sopra di ogni altro nome » (*Fil* 2, 9), cosicché « nel nome di Gesù ogni ginocchio si pieghi nei cieli, sulla terra e sotto terra; e ogni lingua proclami che Gesù Cristo è il Signore, a gloria di Dio Padre » (*Fil* 2, 10-11).

La nostra lode del mattino, attraverso questo Cantico, si dilata alle dimensioni dell'universo, e dà voce anche a quanti non hanno ancora avuto la grazia di conoscere Cristo. È una lode che si fa « missionaria », spingendoci a camminare per tutte le vie, annunciando che Dio si è manifestato in Gesù come il Salvatore del mondo.

CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM

LITTERAE CONGREGATIONIS

Episcopus dioecesanus quidem nuper Congregationi de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum litteris mandavit de sensu et applicatione recentis Instructionis Liturgiam authenticam *« De usu linguarum popularium in libris Liturgiae romanae edendis ». Dicasterium id opportunum duxit litteras eidem Episcopo exhibere, quae ob peculiare momentum etiam publici iuris fiunt.*

Prot. n. 2071/01/L

Rome, 5 November 2001

Your Excellency,

This Congregation for Divine Worship wishes to express its deep gratitude to you for the work that you have recently done to correct misunderstandings in some quarters regarding this Dicastery's Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam*, on the use of vernacular languages in the publication of the books of the Roman Liturgy. In the letter that Your Excellency had written on this matter, of which you were kind enough to transmit a copy to this Congregation, you were quite correct in your interpretation of the manner in which the *Nova Vulgata* edition of the Sacred Scriptures is envisioned by the Instruction as a point of reference for liturgical translation in vernacular languages. This Dicastery concurs with Your Excellency's concern that those engaged in scholarly biblical studies understand that their legitimate freedom of inquiry is not hampered by the document, and indeed, may even be assisted by it.

Given the nature of certain statements that have entered the public domain through articles, internet postings and the like, the scope

for misunderstanding of the Instruction on the basis of a superficial reading has unfortunately increased. Indeed, some even seem to have reached the erroneous conclusion that the Instruction insists on a translation of the Bible from the Latin *Nova Vulgata* rather than from the original biblical languages. Such an interpretation is contrary to the Instruction's explicit wording in n. 24, according to which all texts for use in the Liturgy 'must be made directly from the original texts, namely the Latin, as regards the texts of ecclesiastical composition, or the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, as the case may be, as regards the texts of Sacred Scripture'. The Instruction in fact provides a clearer statement on the use of the original biblical texts as the basis for liturgical translation than the norms previously published in the Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, n. 40a, published on 26 September 1964 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 56 [1964] 885).

Further reflection also leads the Congregation to express its own perplexity at the fact that any disquiet among scholars should be occasioned by the principle, expressed in the above-mentioned paragraph of *Liturgiam authenticam*, that the *Nova Vulgata* 'is normally to be consulted as an auxiliary tool, in a manner described elsewhere in this Instruction, in order to maintain the tradition of interpretation that is proper to the Latin Liturgy'. It would be rational to think that translators of the Sacred Scriptures would naturally welcome any and all 'auxiliary tools' that would shed light either on the texts themselves or on the context for which the translations are intended, in this case, celebrations of the Roman Liturgy.

The particular genius of the Latin language has contributed to a tradition of biblical interpretation which must continue to be a *part* of the common heritage of the Latin Church as it has found expression in different ways in her Liturgy. Certainly, it is reasonable that a translator of the Scriptures should work with the original languages before consulting other versions, including the Latin. Afterwards, however, it can only be beneficial for a translator to consider the Latin text as a window through which to view the same Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic text from the standpoint of a healthy sympathy with the best insights of the

Latin Church over the centuries. This is substantially what the recent Instruction calls for as regards the preparation of translations intended for use in the Roman Liturgy. Since the most recent revision of the Vulgate text found now in the *Nova Vulgata* was undertaken with the intent to preserve as much as possible the traditional '*Latinitas biblica christiana*' (to use Pope Paul VI's phrase, cf. John Paul II, the Apostolic Constitution *Scripturarum thesaurus*), while also updating the text in the light of modern biblical scholarship, the *Nova Vulgata* remains an apt instrument for such a purpose.

Emphasizing this instrument makes it possible to cultivate the necessary appreciation for the rootedness of many distinctive elements of the euchology of the Roman Liturgy in the Vulgate or Neo-Vulgate text, so as to foster a greater harmony in translation between liturgical prayer and the biblical text itself. In light of such considerations it is difficult to see how simultaneously keeping an eye on the Latin version could impoverish the vernacular biblical translation being produced for liturgical use. Indeed, it is more reasonable by any standard to assume that the translation might thereby be greatly enriched.

Your Excellency has also very helpfully noted the practical indispensability of the *Nova Vulgata* if those preparing a Lectionary are to determine precisely which text is being prescribed for liturgical reading. Since the readings for the Liturgy are prescribed in the *Ordo lectionum Missae* by reference principally to their versification in the *Nova Vulgata*, it is quite true that there is no other way for the Lectionary to be prepared, in purely practical and absolute terms. A vernacular version of the Bible may have used another numbering of the verses, so that the chapter and verse citations alone are insufficient without the use of the *Nova Vulgata*.

At the same time, it might also be noted that a more complex problem arises in some parts of the Bible where available ancient manuscripts, either in the original languages or in early translations, display variations that seem not to stem merely from copying or translation errors, glosses and the like, but rather, to indicate parallel but divergent

textual traditions. Such a divergence is evident, for example, between the Hebrew and the Greek texts of Samuel, where the translator may thus be faced not only with the question of which tradition to follow, but whether it is possible to resolve difficulties in one text by resort to the other. Similarly, the text of Sirach has been handed down to us in several distinct principle manuscript traditions, both Hebrew and Greek, and there is no Hebrew text that transmits the entire book. In fact, the discovery of new manuscripts, such as those made in the last century near the Dead Sea, have only brought this general difficulty of multiple traditions into greater relief. For the preparation of a Lectionary, then, the Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* provides a sure basis for navigating through a forest of options as provided by the textual data for such parts of the Scriptures, and for choosing accurately the text prescribed for the Sacred Liturgy, where a certain textual unity is simply a necessity. The text to be translated is to be one that corresponds to the manuscript tradition reflected in the *Nova Vulgata*.

Here one sees clearly that if the Church is to prescribe the use of any specific biblical readings for any purpose, in practical terms it is possible to so only by reference to some officially approved edition of the Sacred Scriptures. And while some apparently would object to the designation of a Latin text for such a purpose, these same critics appear not to have adverted to the fact that it is precisely the choice of a Latin text, instead of an officially approved text in the original biblical languages, that leaves the textual critic the scholarly freedom that rightly pertains to his task of determining the original text by scientific means. At times, the determination of a given manuscript tradition by the *Nova Vulgata* provides the textual critic with a necessary datum for his work as regards a translation for liturgical use, but it does not limit the exercise of his responsible discretion in evaluating textual variants within that tradition.

While constantly defending the inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures as such, the Church has never claimed unalterable perfection for her own officially approved Latin edition of the Scriptures, and has sought to improve that version several times. It is not to be excluded,

and indeed, it is to be expected, that such work continue in the future. To this end, biblical scholars have all due freedom to propose corrections or improvements in that text wherever they believe them to be necessary or desirable, keeping in mind, of course, that their criteria for the 'best' text or even the most 'original' text may not in every instance coincide with the Church's criteria for the *canonical* text. In responsibly proposing eventual revisions to the official edition of the *Nova Vulgata* or, with certain qualifications, the *Ordo lectionum Missae*, biblical scholars could at least be said to be working within their area of competence.

Determining which texts belong to the Church's canon and which texts are prescribed for the Sacred Liturgy, however, lie outside the area of competence of biblical scholars in general, or of textual critics in particular. It is the Church herself, on the basis of her tradition, that has established the canon, and it is the competent ecclesiastical authority that prescribes the use of specific texts for liturgical use. As regards the rites of the Latin Church, that authority is the Holy See. Nor is there anything unscientific about such a limitation upon the scholar's field of work. A microbiologist cannot verify the presence of a given organism by looking through the wrong microscope at the wrong slide. Analogously, a textual critic cannot properly determine an original biblical reading for a prescribed liturgical text by working on the basis of a manuscript tradition altogether different from the one that the Church intends to be proclaimed at a given liturgical moment. In some cases, the choice of a given variant might render a translation less relevant or even completely irrelevant to the liturgical situation for which it is prescribed.

The Instruction *Liturgiam authenticam* has been criticized in some quarters for prescribing the norms that it does instead of setting out the various methods of exegesis found in documents such as *Divino afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII, or the 1993 document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on the interpretation of the Bible in the Church. In fact, the Instruction says in n. 34 that translations of the Scriptures for liturgical use should 'be prepared in accordance with the *principles of*

sound exegesis and high literary quality, *but also* with a view to the particular exigencies of liturgical use as regards style, the selection of words, and the selection from among different possible interpretations' [emphasis added]. It would seem unnecessary, precisely because of the Holy See's previous and abiding teaching on the matter, for the new Instruction to have entered into the precise meaning of those 'principles of sound exegesis', a venture which in any case would have exceeded the competency of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. What that Dicastery might have been expected to provide, instead, were those criteria by which a translation — itself presumably the work of competent biblical scholars using the best scholarly tools available to them according to norms that have already been established by the Church — might also be deemed an appropriate one for use in the Roman Liturgy. And this, in fact, is what the Congregation did do.

This Dicastery is very grateful for Your Excellency's assistance in clarifying this matter in those venues of public debate and private contact where the discussion is currently taking place. Since Your Excellency has taken the initiative to enter into this discussion, the Congregation wishes not only to express its thanks to you, but also to take this opportunity to add the above reflections of its own, which it considers in complete agreement with those that you have expressed.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Jorge A. Card. MEDINA ESTÉVEZ
Prefect

✠ Francesco Pio TAMBURRINO
Archbishop Secretary

THE ORIGINS OF THE COLLECT FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY «PER ANNUM»

Dominica VIII «per annum»

Da nobis, quaesumus, Domine,
ut et mundi cursus pacifico nobis tuo ordine dirigatur,
et Ecclesia tua tranquilla devotione laetetur.
Per Dominum.

= 1970MR,[1] p. 347; = 1975MR, p. 347; = 2000MR, p. 458.
= 1974MA 191/2.
Cf. Ver 633; cf. Gell 1174; cf. Eng 1054; cf. SGall 947; cf. SupTre 1094; cf. 1474MR 1357; cf. 1570MR 1917; cf. 1962MR 1473; Bruy 170; Copp 899.

Cf. Ver 633: [Mense Iulii, preces diurnae cum sensibus necessariis], Item alia

Da nobis, Domine Deus noster,
ut et mundi cursus pacifico nobis tuo ordine dirigatur,
et Ecclesia tua tranquilla devotione laetetur.
Per.

Cf. Had 929: [Incipiunt orationes cotidiane] alia:
Cf. Gell 1174: [H]ebdomada VI post Pentecosten:
Cf. Eng 1054: [H]ebdomada VI post Pentecosten:
Cf. SGall 947: [H]ebdomada VI post Pentecosten:
Cf. SupTre 1094: Dominica III post Octavas Pentecosten:

[1] The abbreviations employed here are listed in Anthony Ward, 'The Origins of the Collect for the First Week "per annum"', in *Notitiae* 36 (2000) 351-362.