

14. August 2020

**“Dominus Jesus”
Part 2**

In spite of the abundance of this subject area, it is appropriate in the context of daily spiritual reflection to work out only the most essential points in order to give the faithful the right orientation as to how the relationship of the Catholic Church to other religions is to be evaluated. This is all the more important, however, because a certain disorientation is spreading and with it an uncertainty with regard to the proclamation of the faith.

I can only strongly recommend to read the letter "Dominus Jesus" on this subject. It gives clear guidance, rejects all forms of relativization of our holy faith and also emphasizes the importance of the Catholic Church with her mission to proclaim the Gospel and to bring about true unity among people.

On the eve of the wonderful Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary (the day on which I was received into the Holy Catholic Church in 1980), it is my great concern to set the simple truth against the present confusion in these matters. The faithful must not lose the impetus and zeal to proclaim the wonderful message of the Gospel in word and deed, in order to honour the Heavenly Father and serve mankind.

Thus, Pope Benedict XVI, as the prefect of faith at that time, may give us a clear direction today, which is still valid. It is nothing other than what the Gospel and the Church have always taught. Those who deviate from it must justify themselves and not those who hold on to the true teaching. In this way I hope to contribute to the strengthening of the faithful, so that they will not be confused by a spirit which wants to adapt the glorious message of faith increasingly to the spirit of this world, fearing to be in conflict with the "mainstream" and thus making the Gospel a lukewarm brew which can only be spat out by the returning Lord (*cf. Rev 3,16*).

Dominus Jesus under 21 says:

Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God, and which are part of what “the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions”. Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human

heart is prompted to be open to the action of God. One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an ex opere operato salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments. Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. 1 Cor 10,20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish very clearly between the spirits, which prayers and rites of other religions are suitable as preparation for the reception of the Gospel and which are an obstacle. Thus, we must clearly warn against an overly optimistic attitude towards an inculturation which does not carry out the necessary discernment of spirits, thus contributing to confusion.

Under point 22:

With the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ, God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity (cf. Acts 17,30-31). This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism “characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that ‘one religion is as good as another’”. If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.

Also a clear direction: recognition and respect for human efforts to seek and serve God and also for the truth found in religions (seeds of the Word). At the same time one knows about the limits and errors of other religions.

Further under point 22:

In inter-religious dialogue as well, the mission ad gentes “today as always retains its full force and necessity”. “Indeed, God ‘desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2,4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the promptings of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God’s universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary”. Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, as part of her evangelizing mission, is just one of the actions of the Church in her mission ad gentes. Equality, which is a presupposition of inter-religious dialogue,

refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ — who is God himself made man — in relation to the founders of the other religions.

A very essential and clarifying statement. Dialogue is only one of the activities and not the only one in relation to the proclamation of the Gospel. The equality in the dialogical conversation refers to the dignity of the person but not to the content of religion.

That leaves one last essential statement for our theme in the context of the daily speeches:

Under point 23:

In treating the question of the true religion, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught: “We believe that this one true religion continues to exist in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus entrusted the task of spreading it among all people. Thus, he said to the Apostles: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’ (Mt 28, 19-20). Especially in those things that concern God and his Church, all persons are required to seek the truth, and when they come to know it, to embrace it and hold fast to it”.

To Catholics, then, the true religion has been entrusted by God and is to be spread among all people. This is the truth to which we are committed in faith.

With this I would like to close the topic for now!

The question of the impact of the practice of yoga has led to this extended consideration. Through the remarks of the last two days it should become clear that we cannot simply abandon ourselves to a spiritual practice or healing system that belongs to another religion or spiritual system. It is always in the spirit of discernment to examine what one is getting involved in and what effects this can have on the soul in terms of true faith. The good of faith entrusted to us by God needs to be protected and passed on to the seeking people.