



## In Jesus Christ the new humanism

### Outline summary on the way to the Fifth National Ecclesial Convention

*Every man is destined to be the listener of the word which is the world. He must answer, too. Through him, everything should come back to God as an answer. — Romano Guardini*

**The 5th National Congress of the Italian Catholic Church will take place in Florence from November 9th to November 13th 2015. The topic is "In Jesus Christ the new humanism". This meeting, which takes place every five years, will be attended by the delegates of all the dioceses and the Italian ecclesial world. The congress will deal with the cultural and social changes which are affecting our world and people's behaviours and ways of thinking leading, sometimes, to an "eradication" of the essential values for our personal, familiar and social life. The aim of the congress is to lead every man to behave like Pope Francis usually suggests: we must "interpret" the world we live in and follow Jesus's law of love. The Church can preach its faith concretely only if it is next to people's real life. This draft, whose this paper is a summary, gives an introduction to the topics of the Congress and some suggestions to be prepared and reflect on it.**

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#### *The time of gratitude and discernment*

Many were the answers to this important initiative – narratives, testimonials, suggestions, recommendations – arrived to the Preparatory Committee by all the members of the Italian Church. In order to face the challenges of the contemporary world, these generous answers show a need for community discernment and also suggest the desire to walk together, to enjoy the taste of being Church in Italy, here and now. The word that best expresses this reality is "taste". 'Taste and see' (Sal 33). The look that has tasted the goodness is a grateful one, which differently looks at: that also looks at the invisible, because strengthened by love. It is a taste for the human being, the awareness that becomes love, this is the real challenge which we are called.

#### *The loving gaze*

It does not mean then to abstractly define the time limits and boundaries of a "new humanism": for the whole society however, we must choose to start from witnesses and experiences of the Christian faith and spaces of the "good life of the Gospel". The draft, deliberately not exhaustive, along with other depth materials is available on the web site ([www.firenze2015.it](http://www.firenze2015.it)). The website is a place to build together, with the intention to involve especially young people and widening "ad extra" the reflection on the human being today, even through the social media ([Facebook](#); [Twitter](#) @ Firenze\_2015, [YouTube](#)).

## **FLORENCE, "THE HISTORY" OF AN ANCIENT EXPERIENCE FROM LOCAL CHURCHES: IT IS SOMETHING "MORE" OF A CHRISTIAN GAZE**

In Florence, the city that hosts us, we feel at once a special care for the human beings that was expressed through the language of beauty, by the artistic creation and seamless charity. This 'integral' beauty we received today, needs to express itself in new ways and environments. How can do it?

A first feedback, as a result of the call, could be already found from a copious material submitted to the Preparatory Committee from Dioceses, movements and associations.

From this, we can perceive a sharp reading of needs, especially of those who are "in the 'frontline', and then a creative and generative response capability, supported by listening to the Word of God, and therefore bringing something 'more' compared to the technical solutions brought by other lay people.

From these stories and witnesses arise four forms of the humanism 'embodied':

### *A listening humanism*

In order to avoid the prescribed theories and the abstract ideal models, the way forward is to recognize "now" the beauty of the human, although the awareness of the limits and without flattening on the matter of fact. Listen to the human means to see the beauty of what's there, hoping for what still can be, and being aware and grateful for what we continuously receive.

### *A concrete humanism*

The reality is greater to the idea (*Evangelii Gaudium* 233). "Concreteness" means to dialogue with life, finding the dynamic synthesis between truth and lived, following the footsteps of Jesus.

There are not two separate parameters, practical and theoretical; but rather the attempt to "be witnesses of Christ through new life gestures and different humanity".

### *A plural and integral humanism*

In Christ, the new humanism has different layers and full of nuances, "prismatic" and polyhedral: only from the set of real faces, as children and the elderly, as suffering or peaceful people, as the Italian citizens and immigrants came from afar, it shows the beauty face of Jesus. Although it is only one, the human family is marked not by homologation and uniformity, but by the beauty and "mutual acceptance of differences."

This perspective is beyond the reductive outlook on the human and the fragmentation found also in our communities, and on any dualism between truth and action of charity. The way of completeness is the way the human.

### *A humanism of interiority and transcendence*

The transcendent humanism is not an oxymoron. The divine transcendence and the proximity of love - that in Jesus coincide - intertwine in the innermost depth of the human person (*Gaudium et Spes* 16). The way then is not to run to the "professionals of the spirit"; but, to use moments of silence and prayer in parishes and families, associations and movements, in order to offer bread of the Word daily, the Eucharist's support and the gathering on the way.

## THE SCENERY OF THE GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT

Which is the context where we are called and challenged?

The horizon seems overshadowed by threatening clouds. The growing diversity and cultural complexity, the arrival of many immigrants, bearers of values and different mentalities, the economic crisis with its dramatic consequences, it is common to try to impose equivalences rather than preserve the differences, there are many signs of "anti-humanism" that create discomfort and confusion but also impulses and desires, and be aware of being everybody called to read the signs of the times to build together the future of the Country. What are the issues and ways to address these challenges?

*A no-meaning man?*

The collapse of totalitarian ideologies gives way to new knowledge that claim to explain human behavior automatically or by procedural evaluations. In the way of life, without taking into account the theoretical plane, it seems difficult to give the meaning of man and woman. Everything seems to melt into the "soup" of equivalences. Everything seems to be reduced to the arbitrary and contingent situations, just because no shared criteria seems to resist.

Today prevails an exaggerated individualism that has not only dramatically loosened the ties that strengthen the community, but has also weakened the links that draw the human face:

this is evidenced by the expression of many contemporary artworks, from the faceless men of Magritte to the twisted faces and defeats of Francis Bacon.

How to regenerate these constitutive laws to give voice to the desire for recognition, unity and communion of the human family?

*Is a Man only a product?*

The loss of the bonds that constitute us gives a conception of a man as an indefinite construction, entrusted exclusively to their own hands, to the laws of the system or technique. If the future frightens us, the horizon becomes more uncertain, and the search for artificial fixed points becomes increasingly frantic.

The risk is to stay grounded on themselves while fails, or it is hard to place, the other: the other with whom we meet and we fight, the other which is a limit to our self, the other with his own prerogatives, sometimes annoying, or when he consults us making us free from ourselves.

The face is the manifestation of the other to me and in which I manifest another.

The difficulty to recognize the other's face is causing the dissolution of our own face, because faces may take shape only with the relationship and the mutual recognition.

If we cannot take a chance to meet with the face of the other (Evangelii Gaudium), we would become inhuman.

*May only me in the world?*

The self-referential is the evil which seems to suffer our time. The claim to be self-sufficient, will erase the other from our own horizon, making it a support or a possible threat to beware; certainly excluding the other as the one from whose hands get ourselves.

The origin of many forms of injustice, corruption, violence depends on the consideration of the other solely in terms of ourselves.

*"The person always lives in relationship" (Lumen fidei 38)*

In today's reality, the time we live in is complex and records a huge need for relationship: it is gathered in permanent communication and global network, but also in many practical experiences of commitment, that bear witness to the value and dignity of the human; in solidarity between generations within families, or in the many experiences where families are able to perceive themselves as social subject, that extends its ability to care beyond the small group.

The approach to the consumption has changed, with a renewed more sober focus on the lifestyles. Both in production and food choices are recovered ties with the tradition. Innovative experiences of youth entrepreneurship and cooperation re-starting from the land are emerging, with women protagonists in many cases. It is increasing the sensitivity of the defense of environmental assets.

Although the levels of corruption and illegality in this country are still too high, the protection of legality as a common good is growing up and an explicit choice concerning trade and the enterprise freed by the mafia is going to develop. The educational effort continues as a privileged way to defend and promote the human dignity, while schools remains an important point of reference to the families. Volunteering is another great resource for the Country: we can note that the competence is added more and more to the generosity towards the last and penultimate, greatly increased with the spread of the dramatic effects of the crisis. Recently it is also a wonderful example of warm humanity given by the people directly involved by the landing of immigrants. All these experiences of relationship maybe are "not important" signals for the media, but certainly concrete, which open paths of hope for the Gospel announcement full of humanity.

*Recognize ourselves children*

If we are in a position to recognize the tangle of interdependence as we are formed, the separated fragments are recomposed into a nity of differences. The relationship is not added from outside to what we are: we are in fact, relational beings. This mainly because we do not come from ourselves, but we receive from others parties: our existence means to "exist with" and to "exist from" something unimaginable and impossible without the other. If we don't acknowledge this real matrix of our relational dimension, it couldn't exist an authentic autonomy and responsibility. It is possible to have an authentic relationship only if we recognize ourselves as generated, in other word, children: to the heart of the human meaning revealed in Jesus Christ is first of all our being children. In the incarnate Son He was revealed the truth of our being.

## **THE REASONS FOR OUR HOPE**

The human and the divine are one in Jesus Christ: From Him, however, the human being receives full light and sense. This is deep and joyful awareness.

However, it cannot be a justification to be imposed in the world, almost like a presumption "to own" Christ. First of all because this awareness must be for us always awakened and regenerated, looking Jesus in the faces of the brothers, especially the poor.

And also because the method that Jesus gave us in order to spread his salvation message is the witness, even taking into account our limits, but especially the light that we can let shine in us.

From here the "wonder believer" who, like Mary, let She infinitely cheer at the news that what is impossible with men is possible with God.

*With Jesus God meets the outskirts of the human*

We are therefore looking at the authentically human not in terms of ideas, which risk to remain abstract thing or, worse, may degenerate into ideologies, but in Jesus Christ, in his being a man.

In Him, God overcomes every distance, making himself visible in the common history of man. Jesus reveals the Father with parables, with friendly and prodigious gestures, with its new way of praying; He does it in the life of the men and women that He meets and turns its attention, even at the risk of breaking habits and taboos. For example, to a pharisee as Nicodemo asks to "born again", to start over again, meeting him not in the hall of the temple, but in the night: going towards him in the darkness of his doubts. Or the parable of the Good Samaritan that invites us to be able to live the way: as God himself befits, not locked up and still in temples of stone, but on the way with his people.

The meaningful law is one in which it is rooted when you feel loved and consequently is implemented in loving others. God first, as in the parable of the prodigal son (cf. Lc 15:20) - comes towards man, joins him there, where he is, even in the extreme distance of his sin. The man is the outskirts that God reaches through Jesus.

*The Verb made man is the ever fresh wonder of God*

God, the greatest, He is already everything, outdoes Himself bending down towards the man, lowering down to the ground, becoming a servant and embracing death. God in the human flesh of Jesus Christ, again becomes even more Himself. For this reason, St. Irenaeus can say that "The living man is the glory of God." A God whose power and goodness led him to empty out to marry the humanity. The *Kenosis*, the emptying of itself, the itself exit, then, it is then the first paradigm of a new humanism and "other" the paradoxical way of an authentic freedom, able to build fraternity.

*A new chance for a man to overcome himself to God and the brothers*

If God expresses himself going beyond towards the man, so the man realizes himself in response to this movement, and going beyond towards God and the brothers.

From here two expressions, and nourishment as well, for a new and ever humanism: the care and prayer. *Therapéuo*, which literally means cure, take care, is the verb used to say that Jesus healed those he met. The care practiced in the style of Jesus, is an expression of being indispensable man like Him: it means take care of, take charge, touch, bind up, pay attention. In prayer everything is translated as an invocation whether it's a cry for help or stress, even any apparent blasphemy, but certainly also each of our "thank you".

It is thanks to the prayers that the treatment does not result as a mere philanthropy. The same liturgy is a prayerful care and, at the same time, an effective prayer. And the same family life needs to be fed by this language of gratitude and custody, to regenerate and flourish ties among its members.

The care and prayer are the two ways that Jesus gave us to put ourselves in relationship with others and with the Other. To fully express our relationship to be, as children and as brothers.

## **THE PERSON IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ECCLESIA ACTION**

*The mystery of the Church, human and divine reality*

The Second Vatican Council taught that "in Christ," the Church is "a sacrament, or sign and instrument 'of' 'unity of all mankind", because it is of 'intimate union with God "(Lumen Gentium 1).

As stated by St. John Paul II in *Redemptor hominis* 14: "Man is the first path taken by the Church in fulfilling its mission."

This means that the reasons for human and ecclesial practice can and should meet, together engaged in a work of community discernment: read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel to grow every time the fullness of the human.

### *Like Jesus in everyday life*

How to make discernment our ecclesial style?

For this difficult, but more necessary task, we refer to the school of Jesus: "My food is to do the will of the Father" (Jn 4:34).

The typical day of Jesus always contains these gestures: engaging in prayer in intimate connection with the Father; not dispersing the primacy of the Kingdom; confirming with authorities this announcement, thanks to the care of people (forgiveness, healing, revelation of the merciful face of the Father); not to trap by ordinariness, but keep alive the urgency of the mission.

This style draws a path of new humanity, "flavored" by the Spirit.

A style also called by Pope Francis in *Evangelii gaudium*: a Church in output, which inhabits the daily life of people and, thanks to the poor style and solidarity, renews the history of each, give hope and reopens our death lives to the joy of the resurrection. A joyful Church, because always full of wonder to find that everyday life is visited by the mercy of God. "Here is our real strength, the leaven that leavens and the salt that gives taste to every human effort against the prevailing pessimism offered by the world" (Pope Francis, Homily for the beatification of Pope Paul VI).

### *Places, borders, suburbs*

In the Congress of Verona were identified some areas where the witness was significantly expressed and held hope alive in the light of the risen Jesus: the citizenship, the fragility, the affections, the work and celebration, education and transmission of the faith in the tradition.

These areas have always embodied in places, thus human spaces within which we learn to proclaim the Gospel: the family, the school, the church, the workplace, and many others.

With the growing complexity of the globalized world places have lost many rigidity, but also strength and unity, and have become more permeable, vulnerable, increasingly challenged and questioned. It can be said that the sites have become more and more borders today: meeting lines/clash of culture, and also between different worldviews within the same culture.

The borders can defend themselves, trying to build walls. But they can also be thresholds, meeting places and dialogue, without which risk becoming suburbs from which you flee: abandoned and forgotten.

The movement is not closing the defensive, but the exit. Without fear of losing their identity, rather making it a gift to others.

In this 'border' situation, complex but full of opportunities and not just critical, you can identify five ways for a community discernment: *exit, announce, live, educate, transfigure*.

Five verbs hardly be joined to each other, but they are intertwined with each other and walk across the environments that we live daily.

### *The five ways towards the new humanity*

#### **Exit**

The Church "in exit" is the community of disciples missionaries who take the initiative, which will involve each other, to take to, to fructify and celebrate. [...] So, the evangelizing community is getting ready to "accompany". [...] It finds a way to make the Word incarnate in a concrete situation

and give the fruits of new life, although apparently are imperfect or unfinished "(Evangelii gaudium 24).

What is the reason for which despite a prolonged insistence on the mission, our communities are struggling to get out of their own and open up to the people?

To free our accommodations by the weight of a future that we have already written, making them listen to the words of contemporaries that also resonate in our hearts: this is the task we would like to accomplish to Florence Conference.

Listen to the loss, enhance the many gestures of good humanity that even in such difficult contexts are present, offer instruments that give clarity but also peace of mind reading.

- *How can the changes faced by the Italian Church open new roads to welcome the good news of salvation in Jesus?*

### **Announce**

People need words and gestures that through us can address the look and desires to God. Faith generates an announced witness not less than a living witness.

We need a language that will appeal to life. Pope Francis shows us how to do it: images and metaphors from the Gospel, but also from everyday life, which respond to the search for meaning, make us think and start the self-criticism that leads to conversion, make a complaint that goes beyond violence, but allows us to understand the truth of things.

Our language has to be regenerated if we want to talk in a multicultural and multi religious context like the current one.

- *May the Christian communities be able to witness and generate a desire to "build and confess", expressing with humility but also with originality and firmness their faith in the public arena, without arrogance, fearless and false modesty?*

### **Living**

Catholicism has always been present in the territory with a presence in solidarity with all people, especially those most vulnerable. This peculiar "popular life" is recognized by all, even the non-believers.

In the current fast transformations, from which no one is immune, we run the risk of losing this widespread presence, this best proximity, able to get into the world the sign of the love that saves.

The commitment required is not to multiply actions or promotion programs and assistance, nor adding some gesture of attention to the brothers in need, but to rethink our models of living together, spending our free time, celebrating, and sharing.

Without the preferential option for the poor, which converts our lives, "the proclamation of the Gospel, which is the first charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words to which today's society of communication daily engulfs us "(Evangelii gaudium 199).

- *How to draw the future of Italian Catholicism, heir to a great charitable and missionary tradition, taking account of the challenges and the changes taking place?*
- *How to keep alive, today, the tradition of the Church rooted among the poor?*
- *How to keep faith to the mission of "Starting again from the last"?*

## **Educate**

Education is very important especially in the face of today's challenges.

It is also in the middle of the pastoral guidelines of the CEI for the current decade: "In a society characterized by the multiplicity of messages and the great supply of consumer goods, the most urgent task becomes, therefore, to educate with responsible choices. In front of Christian educators, as well as to all people of good will, is, therefore, the challenge to counter the passive assimilation of models widely disseminated and overcome the inconsistency, promoting the ability to think critically and exercise of reason "(Educare alla vita buona del Vangelo, 10)

The primacy of the relationship on the transmission, the recovery of the fundamental role of consciousness and interiority in the construction of the person, the need to rethink the pedagogical paths as well as the training of adults, today become unavoidable priorities.

It is true that the traditional educational agencies (family and school), feel weakened and in profound transformation. But it is also true that they are not only a problem, but also a valuable resource, and we already see initiatives to create new educational alliances, overcoming a fragmentation no longer sustainable while enabling to join forces in order to educate the unity of the person and the human family.

Educating is an art: it is necessary that each of us, in this context in processing, learns it again, seeking the wisdom that allows us to live in peace among ourselves and with the creation which is not just the absence of conflict, but weaving deep and free relationships.

- *As we may be able to, in a society with fragile relations, awaken the desire and the joy of free of charge, solid and durable, fed by the welcome and mutual forgiveness?*
- *How to live those frontiers where the sterility of solitude and the prevailing individualism flourish in new life and a culture of people generative?*

## **Transfigure**

Christian communities are fed and transformed by faith through liturgical and sacramental life, and through prayer. There is an intrinsic relationship between faith and charity, which expresses the mystery sense. Without prayer and the sacraments, charity would empty and reduced to philanthropy, unable to give meaning to fraternal communion.

It is the sacramental life and prayer that allows us to express the "more" of the human in which God has decided to embody.

To us, people of the Beatitudes - which are the commandments of love - is asked to operate in the world, under the gaze of the Father, projecting into the future as we live the present with its challenges and its promises, with the burden of sin and with the pressure of conversion.

- *Are our liturgies able to enhance the richness of their language to talk in today's culture?*
- *Are our Sunday celebrations able to bring the still numerous people that celebrates living the way of the transfiguration of their own lives and in the world?*
- *How to introduce and educate people to the faith now for the multiple origins, history, cultures?*
- *How can we quantify the style of the care of Jesus has become the main ingredient of our being men and women of this world?*



## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HIGHEST MEASURE

The Gospel will be widespread if the announcers will be converted. So we have to put ourselves in discussion: we have to test our ability on asking us by the fact of being a man of Jesus Christ, we have deal with our distance from him, we must open our eyes to our slowness in taking care of all and in particular of " children " of which the Gospel speaks (cf. Mt 25,40.45), wake up from spiritual numbness that loosens the pace of our dialogue with the Father, so precluding a fundamental filial experience which alone enables us to live a new fraternity with men and women everywhere in the world and to proclaim the beauty of the gospel.

Ask ourselves the question of Jesus: "Who do you say I am?".

We follow Peter's response, which includes the mission of Jesus in light of his filial identity: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Only then may be possible to pass, mandatory today, from the perspective of the *demonstration* to that of *interlocution*: we can know who Jesus really is not when we talk to Him in third-person, but if we accept to talk with him, in a direct comparison, declined in the first and second person.

Only by recognizing the face of God revealed in Jesus Christ, we can afford to fully understand our being men and women with all its potential and responsibility.

This certainly does not mean to be censors of humanity.

But in contrast, it means doing everything possible to dissolve any bond, use all our creativity to eliminate any problem and do not find peace until we have cut all the ties that slow down man, and before we had broken the chains that prevent it from reaching its highest goal.

## THE CONFERENCE RACCOMANDATIONS

The trace of reflection is a point of reference and preparation for the Ecclesial Convention. Local churches will make use of it to allow capillary action and depth to the process of preparation towards Florence.

*Capillarity*: the track is to be read and discussed in the pastoral councils of the parishes, groups and ecclesial movements.

*Depth*: track aims to grow the responsibility to which we are called: like being next to each man and woman together to build a good society for all, able to accept and rejoice in the desire for good that everyone carries in himself as a sign of God's love for each one.

Along the lines of the style "almost Synodal" that represents the path taken so far and would be the distinctive feature of Florence in 2015 we hope that in each ecclesiastical region are promoted meetings with delegates of the Dioceses and ecclesial realities to study the track and deepen the theme of Conference.

We also stress the valuable work of reflection that, in connection with the local ways for the preparation of the Convention, the Theological Faculties and Institutes of Religious Sciences (but also many Catholic Cultural Centers) schedule and develop, encouraging the Italian culture and scientific research.

It is also helpful that the diocesan weeklies and traditional media and digital (websites, blogs, forums) can think about forms of support stable and lasting (headings, insights, inserts), in order to prepare, support and implement the reflections and perspectives that Conference will produce in our communities.

We especially ask that digital media become the instrument to inform the young generations about the Conference, join them with a reflection on their wavelength, encourage them to question on themes that the event in Florence will put at the center of our reflection. But also, it is our hope, to try to reach those further away, those who do not come into a church, but could be attracted by a message in the digital media.