

TESTIMONI E TESTIMONIANZE

COLLANA DI STORIA DEL CRISTIANESIMO E DELLE CHIESE

6

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Vetera novaque

Un fatto, una persona, uno scritto del passato storico, di tempi così diversi dal nostro, nei modi di pensare, di amare, di vivere possono mai dirsi del tutto estranei alla mentalità postmoderna, o privi di significato per le nostre generazioni? Con non minore urgenza dovremmo chiederci su quali fondamenti sia possibile costruire nell'oggi prospettive di speranza per il futuro. Le domande chiamano in causa i valori umani immessi nella storia dal cristianesimo attraverso i secoli, dall'antichità ai nostri giorni. Ha scritto Jean-Marie Tillard: « Un gruppo trova la sua salute quando sa essere, simultaneamente, testimone di un passato che risale all'origine stessa e testimone di un'incarnazione nell'oggi che fa la sua felicità. Non si può vivere *in verità* senza ancoraggio, senza retaggio, senza 'tradizione', senza memoria. Come non si può vivere *in verità* rifiutando gli imperativi dell'oggi con i loro appelli a una riattualizzazione coraggiosa, sempre attuale e nuova, del contenuto della *memoria* ».

Rivolta al passato storico di persone e di fatti attraverso le più diverse tracce presenti, ma non esclusive, in diari memorie epistolari, questa collana si propone di interrogare le motivazioni ideali capaci di ispirare sia nella *ecclesia* sia nella *polis*, ivi inclusa l'esperienza politica, un vissuto di speranza per le future generazioni.



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Benito Picascia

New and eternal covenant

Jesus Christ the redeemer and the supreme high priest





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*To my parents: Salvatore – Filomena,
all the parents of priests and
the young couples who at least desire one.*

That every tongue should acknowledge
Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God
the Father.

(Ph 2,11)

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Preface

Vito del Prete
Benito Picascia

Essay of Father Benito on “the Paschal Mystery” is the result of a short period of teaching for the students at St. Joseph’s Theological Major Seminary, Yangon, that was permitted by the Government Authorities of Myanmar. That time the Government’s Military Dictatorship made, even as a tourist, the entry visa very difficult to obtain, yet Fr. Benito fortunately got it.

The Professors of that Seminary were cut off from Rome’s theological universities and so they didn’t have the opportunity of any “aggiornamento”, that is, the new ideas, brought forth by Vat II. It was necessary for the Staff and mainly for the students to have a new approach to the above issues, which were felt very important for those who were called by God to become priests of the Catholic Church in Myanmar. The Government’s Authorities kindly considered the petition of the Bishops and allowed them to invite some visiting professors and to get “the entry visa” for them, only for four weeks.

For the visiting professors, the task was to bring a fresh air and an approach to God’s revelation, especially on the Eucharistic Mystery, very much vital for the liturgical life of the Catholic Church.

I feel happy to say that Fr. Benito, with the essay on *New and eternal covenant*, has almost achieved the purpose. He proposed the most great Christian Eucharist Mystery in biblical terms, with a simple and thoughtful language.

The future priests of Myanmar, coming from villages and simple families, who had not even come to know about west-

ern scholastic and philosophical terms of theological teachings, were open to receive, understand and even to savor the spiritual truth of God's revealed Word, his Son, Jesus Christ.

So the students of the theology of that Major Seminary had the opportunity to attend the full course on the Biblical Covenant and they really were fortunate to listen daily the Word of God on the issue.

The Essay doesn't bring forward great or pretty insights about the fundamental and wonderful Eucharistic Mystery, but surely it is an outcome expression of an intelligent Christian believer about the invisible spiritual realities of the risen Lord, who commanded to do it as his memorial in order to be *the essence and the kernel* of the divine worship of the Church of Christ and the pivotal of a Christian and priestly life.

When the Author of this work built the Minor and the Major Seminary in India for the P.I.M.E. Seminarians, he had a very peculiar taste to unveil the biblical figures and types of the Eucharistic Mystery and put them before their eyes of the students as symbols in order to deep and nourish their faith in the risen Lord, present in their midst. He had a special design in building the altar: he did it like a globe, symbol of the world, that Jesus Christ as High Priest saved and glorified in his body at the right hand of the Father.

The *New and eternal covenant* is the main and the unique liturgical Act of Cult of the Church, the Body of Jesus Christ, where He is the Head and his disciples the members. Therefore the priestly spiritual formation ought to be rooted in this Paschal Mystery, that they had to re-present daily in the *person* of Christ and to be what they are celebrating as memorial of Him.

In Italy from the last decade of years, father Benito, even in the chapel, where he has been put in charge, has made more meaningful the altar's picture of the Annunciation of our Lady, Jesus Christ's Mother, with the rainbow to Noah and a biblical panel of covenants, as it is brought on the front page of his book.

I am grateful to the Author for the simple approach and the explanation of the biblical categories, whose God took the initiatives to attract a sinful man to be close in love and friendship to him. First, at beginning, he entered into man's history like a very active partner, then in the fullness of time by giving his own Son, who was "obedient unto death" to Him in order to fulfill his will with love.

God, the Father and Jesus Christ sending the Paraclete to the Apostles, gathered with Mary, the Mother of the risen Lord, has bound man to himself for ever. The Holy Spirit brings us to do communion between God and man.

The years he spent in India as missionary of P.I.M.E. were meant mainly for evangelization and for bringing many people to the faith in Jesus Christ.

Father Benito's Essay has brought forth some new insights and inputs important for the future of the Christian faith, hope and love. In fact, the vital and central issue of his essay: *New and eternal covenant*, points out on God's love for man, which in the Bible is expressed and realized in categories of covenant, communion and agape.

God so loved the world that he gave his Son for its salvation and its glory. We believe that God is love, he creates the Universe out of love, and he takes the initiative to rescue the sinful man out of love, which is plainly revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ, as for his redemption's economy.

St. Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, says: « when the completion of the time came, God sent his Son, born by a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law » (Ga. 4,4–6). In Him, God the Father, realized the new and eternal covenant.

By coming from one covenant to another, we come to know the perfect One. In fact, the Word of God, made flesh, being true God and true man, could offer *the grateful sacrifice* of communion to the praise and glory of God on behalf of the sinful mankind. Therefore he is the worthy heart of a single man, as well as of the whole world, the worthy voice that sings the

wonders, that God has done and always does, at all the times and places of the earth. That is the perfect Covenant.

The words, that St. Paul writes to the Church at Colossae, addressed to the Christian community, certainly are to be received and accomplished by all the Churches and, of course, by each one of us: « we give thanks for you to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, continually in our prayers, ever since we heard about your faith in Christ Jesus and the love that you show towards God's holy people. Because of the hope which is stored up for you in heaven » (1,3-5). Then, he continues saying:

He is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation. . . He exist before all things and in him all things hold together. . . He is the Beginning, the first-born from the dead: so that He should be supreme in every way: because God wanted all fullness to be found in him and through him to reconcile all things to him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, by making peace through his death on the cross. (1,15-20)

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ as supreme High Priest turns man to keep in his heart the invisible saving realities, which we sing at the liturgical celebration of the Holy Mass, which the Christians never call Pascal Mystery or Covenant. Nevertheless, at the end of the sacrifice, there is the *doxology*, which the priest, together with the assembly of the faithful, recites or sings the necessary words of the *covenant* with Jesus Christ, the High Priest and the Head of the Church, his Body. It is important the liturgical locus of the *doxology*, as conclusion of the sacrifice and it is before the prayer of our Father, when begins the preparation for the banquet of the Holy Communion (Cf. every "Eucharistic Prayer").

The Covenant, as such, more than the words of the Paschal Mystery or the holy Mass, is a category used to bind in faithful obedience and commitment both the people and the Church as one body in Christ to God, otherwise our *doxology* are empty words.

From Jesus Christ, the High Priest, commanded the Apostles and gave the power: *do this* in memory of me.

On from that “hour” until the end of time, that Covenant with God will be done once for all, in the body and blood by the unique High Priest, the Savior, the Son of God and the Son of man, the supreme Pontiff of mankind, Jesus Christ.

There is no need to refer to the Letter to the Hebrews, which reveals the *uniqueness of the priesthood* of Jesus Christ. He is the faithful, merciful and compassionate High Priest whom man needs.

The Essay of Fr. Benito deals with the main covenants of the Bible that God have been stipulating with chosen people: Noah, Abraham, and Moses and of course the everlasting one in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of man, the risen Lord, whom the Apostles recognized after his resurrection.

The Apostles, the women, and his disciples, even St. Paul, the last of the Apostles, realized his victory upon death and sin, the identity of his glorified crucified body, his immortality, in one word, they fully realized that their Jesus Christ was alive, fully alive, though in different manner, and death had no power on him anymore, then they dared everything to die for him and really died giving witness up to death.

Nobody dies for a lie. They realized the real and immortal existence of the Kingdom of God, that the risen Lord had revealed in his life and resurrection. He is really the resurrection and life.

Before God, out of the three divine Persons, He is our Advocate, the High Priest, who intercedes for the sinful man.

We need to profess the Lord in better manner. *New and eternal covenant* should be celebrated liturgically more meaningfully by the believers of Jesus in our modern days. The Holy Mass nowadays, so many times repeated, and celebrated mechanically as a usual prayer, has lost any impact on the faithful. There is a necessary need of a turn over.

Christian faith, much influenced by Judaic culture of blood, is in absolute need of a radical change in the manner of the

liturgical celebration of the Paschal Mystery, or better to say of the *new and eternal covenant*, which brings personal friendship and real Communion with God.

Each Christian is in need to be deeply involved in Jesus Christ, the Lord. If you have been baptized in Jesus Christ, you are buried with him, and then you are risen with him. So you are at the right hand of the Father, where in Jesus Christ our humanity has been glorified.

Therefore you also search the invisible realities. . . the liturgical celebration of the new and eternal covenant.

It is suggested to celebrate the Paschal Mystery as Covenant once a month at every Region level or District in order to make the faithful realizing better the necessity and importance of the new and eternal covenant into the Liturgical Cult, due to God, our Father.

The introduction to the first Letter of John, the evangelist, clearly states: « our life is shared with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ » (1,3b).