



**The Special Presentation of the book:**

**“Communion - Reflections for an  
intraecclesial dialogue”**

**(by H.E. Mgrs. Agostino Marchetto  
and Prof. Angelo Federico Arcelli)**

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**abstract**

This short note summarizes the proceeds of the presentation of the book: “Communion - Reflections for an intraecclesial dialogue” (by H.E. Mgrs. Agostino Marchetto and Prof. Angelo Federico Arcelli) made on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 by Mgr Miroslaw Wachowski with Prof. Giovanni Tria as keynote discussant.

Whilst the part of Mgr Wachowski focuses mainly on commenting the Biblical aspects and reflects on a fundamental value that applies both to the Church and to our societies, that is, the importance of being united through the respectful process of dialogue, Prof. Tria part gives a more general economic and historical overview, particularly on a European angle, on the topics considered in the presented book.

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**(Mgr. Miroslaw Wachowski)**

**1. Introduction**

It is a great honor for me to introduce the book “Communion. Reflections for an intraecclesial dialogue”, recently published by His Excellency Msgr. Agostino Marchetto and Professor Angelo Federico Arcelli.

Their considerations help us to reflect on a fundamental value that applies both to the Church and to our societies, that is, the importance of being united through the respectful process of dialogue. In this regard, I would like to offer a few observations stemming from the classics, the Bible, and the teachings of the Church.

**2. Classics:**

In contrast to the manipulative rhetoric of the sophists that were used to serve the political and economic interests of the time, the Greek philosopher Plato proposed the democratic methodology, used by Socrates, to arrive at the truth and create communion: dialogue. Plato introduced this as new model of humanity. Here the concept of strength is no longer connected to military skills or economic superiority, but to the genuine pursue of the truth through the art of philosophical discussion. Listening, thinking and talking together in an honest way, welcoming others as essential interlocutors, recognizing the value of their opinion, and guaranteeing their freedom of expression were the birth of one of the first experiences of democracy in history. Unfortunately, many centuries after the sun has set on ancient Athens, our societies remain threatened by the

temptation of authoritarian methods employed to maintain power and maximize profit. As Prof. Arcelli reminds us, perhaps we are actually facing a “crisis of our personal identity” (pag. 7). If we rediscover from our common past the practice of creating communion through the respectful use of our words and dialogue, we can indeed turn violence into peace, anger into justice, poverty into prosperity.

A famous Latin writer and historian, Sallust, whilst considering the origin of the Romans, explained that distinct people became one community when they chose to live together in harmony, “*ita brevi multitudo dispersa atque vaga concordia civitas facta erat*” (Bellum Catilinae, 6).

### **3. The Bible:**

In the Old Testament, we know well that the people of Israel were freed from Pharaoh by Moses and that, before entering the Promised Land, had to roam and live in the desert for 40 years. Their time in the desert was challenging and uncomfortable, but it also was a school of dialogue to become a family of families, a truly united people in communion with God and one another. It is there that the Lord gave them the tablets of stone with the 10 Commandments. It is there that the Israelites talked to Moses and learned the importance of being a community.

This biblical story is an opportunity to rediscover the real meaning of the common good, to realize our obligation to protect the orphan and the widow, the poor, the migrant, and the sick, precisely because we are dependent on one another or, as the Holy Father would to say, *fratelli tutti*.

Dialogue implies the recognition of the dignity and the equality of the other. In this regard, the book of Deuteronomy explains that even the king of Israel was not a superior citizen (Deut. 17:14-20). The king was a brother among brothers, whose task was to serve the people. His royal role was not military nor economic, but moral.

King Solomon, for example, did not ask God to have wealth or a strong army; he asked for the gift of wisdom to guarantee justice among the Israelites.

When the prophets spoke during difficult times in the history of Israel, they often called for justice and solidarity in order to create a more equitable society. This is the reason why the most important place in Jerusalem was the Temple, where the tablets of law in the Ark of the Covenant were housed and kept safe. Here, the lesson we draw is that money, military security and business are not the cornerstone of society but, rather, it is the Word of God.

In the Prologue of his Gospel, St. John explains that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (St. John 1:1). God creates the world through his Word, and the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (St. John 1:14). God is communion and is in constant dialogue with us.

His Word, Jesus Christ, creates the world and “makes all things new” (Rev. 21:5). The incarnation of the Word of God allows humanity to enter into divinity and brings about communion through the eternal and loving dialogue of the Holy Spirit.

From this theological reflection, we understand that the Church is constantly discerning the signs of the times. Dialogue is not only a useful mechanism to solve problems during crises. It is also profoundly spiritual and a constant activity of the Church.

The mystery of Revelation is given once and for all in the fullness of time with the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the comprehension of Revelation endures through history and is expressed by the teaching of the Church. In this regard, as Msgr. Marchetto has explained, “in the Church there is ...the possibility of a development of the dogma, but it must be organic and homogeneous...” (pag. 53).

#### **4. The teaching of the Church:**

During the Holy Mass we hear the Word of the Lord, and we enter into Communion with God and one another. Over the centuries, the teaching of the Church has underlined this essential point of our faith: God is communion (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). Along the same line, the Apostles were 12, like the 12 tribes of Israel, and their successors, the Bishops, act to this day in collegiality and in communion with the Pope. This is part of the essential foundation of synodality which, through intraecclesial dialogue, aims “to achieve evangelization and the integral promotion of human beings” (pag. 42), as Msgr. Marchetto has shown.

The Church has always welcomed plurality of rites and traditions and, when divisions arise, has solved difficulties in different ways, including through the teaching of the Popes, Councils, Synods, etc... In this regard, I would like to quote the famous Latin sentence that inspired generations of Christians in their efforts to unravel any number of problems: “In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas” (unity in necessary things; freedom in doubtful things; love in all things).

In addition, the Second Vatican Council reminds us of the importance of communion through dialogue, within the Catholic Church and the “outside”, with Christian communities, other religions, and the modern world. To do that, as Msgr. Marchetto has pointed out, we have to ensure that every human being has the freedom to practice their religion and beliefs, and that we respect “each other in our words, attitudes and judgements” (pag. 68). Here, we are invited to interpret, once again, to welcome and realise the teaching of Vatican II, and to follow the prophetic roads indicated by the Council. Christianity has many contributions to offer to the contemporary world, beyond just liturgy, morality and charity. Ecumenism is a school of dialogue and fraternity that can improve our way of thinking, heal the injustices in our current political and

economic systems, and be a trustworthy guide toward the realization of the common good.

With each passing day, we discover, more and more, how the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly altered our society. We are mourning our losses, curing the sick, and trying hard to overcome both the virus itself and its effects. Covid-19 appeared on the world scene unexpectedly and we realized, even more than before, that we are truly “a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all”, as Pope Francis reminds us in the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (n. 32). The pandemic showed the structural limits of our international economic systems, and we continue to learn the importance of creating a new profound sense of community and the value of caring for one another.

In this respect, the words of Pope Francis in the Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’* point us in the right direction, and I quote, “Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, applying the principle of subsidiarity” (n. 157). Covid-19 worsened old inequalities and created new ones. However, inspired by the teaching of Vatican II, we are all called to be united in our common promotion of dialogue and reconciliation, as we bring communion, justice and solidarity in the world today.

The appeal for dialogue instead of war is essential also in the context of what is happening in Ukraine. Let us pray and do everything possible, in the hope that the logic of peace and dialogue will prevail over the logic of war.



**(Prof. Giovanni Trià)**

I have long been convinced that the future of the European Union depends on the extent to which European countries could avoid questioning themselves only about "*how* to be together", as they have done in the last decades, to return to the question of "*why*" they are and they must stay together.

But the question regarding "*how*", reflects the underlying issue of the rules, and, particularly, the architecture (the governance) which the European Union needs to give itself. And any answer to the "how" question actually depends on the answer to "why" Europeans need each other and need to stay united.

By the reading of Marchetto and Arcelli's essay, I actually realized that a possible answer to the question "why to be together" should be sought not only in the domain of economics, nor in the one of politics, maybe perceived as a mediation amongst different national (economic) interests, but on the need to recover what seems to be lacking today, a widely perceived common cultural identity, based on commonly shared values.

In fact, to answer to the question "why we need to be together", today and in the future, in Europe, implies both a look inside Europe and, notably, outside Europe: thinking to what happened Worldwide in the last decades, considering changes, demography, geopolitical issues and economy, one may easily note that Europe is quickly losing its historical "central" role, which rather risks to remain central (at least for a while yet) only on the geographical maps printed here.

But dealing with other cultures, other religions, other political systems, which are all far from the so-called "Western values", means to find a shared path to live and cooperate together, given the growing global integration and connection. Failing this will send us

back to a divided World, with all the consequences of such landscape. But to build something together means to be in condition to find common platforms, where also different backgrounds can cooperate and discuss in a dialogue. And, to do this, issues as identity will become relevant, as mutual respect comes from the reciprocal acknowledgement of identity and differences, and a shared identity and values are what makes credible any dialogue.

The European architecture has been strongly influenced by globalization. But the recent affirmation of new economic and geopolitical powers, has justified to the eyes of the Europeans the integration process, which seemed a way to gain the “right” weight in the international landscape, or at least a better situation than the one individual Member States could had reached alone.

This meant that the answer to the question about “why” was basically limited to economic and geopolitical considerations, whilst the idea about “how to be together”, which is how to design the governance of the Union, remained consistent with these objectives but lost the need for a common and shared vision about Europe.

The adoption of the single currency and the progressive unification of the European internal market posed two interconnected issues: the issue of “not harming” the individual member countries of the Union, and the need of harmonization, in the medium term, also of the national fiscal policies. This could also be said as the issue of “how” to fairly share risks and benefits of the single market and of the monetary union.

These two “internal” issues have dominated the debate about the build-up of the European union we know today, whilst the debate about the positioning of the European Union in the World, in terms of competitive capabilities and geopolitical role was somehow deprioritized in favour of national strategies (for the ones which had any).

But thinking to the inner issues, we could acknowledge that the European fiscal rules are essentially agreements aiming at preventing a kind of moral hazard, in the form of the fiscal free riding by one Member State on the others. In other words, our Europe was not built on mutual trust, but on mutual distrust. Member states seem to stay in the Union because somehow compelled by external reasons, such as competitive pressure from World big players which would were unbearable by single states.

In 1981 John Paul II spoke of the common Christian roots of Europe, namely of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. In his speech he also mentioned the sunset of the West of which Spengler spoke. It was certainly a strong political and perspective-oriented speech. But also a non-divisive one, rather very inclusive and oriented towards the outside of Europe in terms of dialogue and cooperation.

I recall this speech, not only, as one might think, because today we are witnessing a war between Christians within Europe. I recall this speech because we can realize that the current European Union is an incomplete process, still incapable to find an efficient governance of its economic issues, mainly because its own member countries seems unfit to look at Europe as a whole and not just as a group of divergent national economies, even competing amongst themselves on the basis of national interests.

As it is explained in the first part of Marchetto and Arcelli's essay, this is the crossroads in which Europe finds itself today. But an important consideration I could find in their "reflections" comes where they refer to the unity of Christians.

John Paul II spoke of Christian roots, not of individual churches, and I believe he spoke to the laity, perhaps even to atheists Europeans, who in any case also have values that come from common Christian roots.

The link between the idea of Christian unity in values which can be behind the future of Europe (and are for sure its past) reminds me about an episode in my recent experience as a minister. In a Eurogroup meeting, when I faced my Dutch colleague, who was constantly hurling himself against the danger that Italy's debt would fall on the more financially virtuous countries of the north Europe, I said that he remained stuck 500 years ago, when Martin Luther posted his thesis on the door of the church in Wittemberg, to challenge, *inter alia*, the payment of indulgences to the Church of Rome. Of course, there was more than that. But in this joke I felt I challenged an obsession which came from afar, and that has always fueled a distrust behind which there is much more than trade and economic conflicts.