

Centesimus Annus Foundation
Rome - 15 May 2025

A NEW CAMALDOLI FOR EUROPE AND THE WORLD

1. From where the theme and the title...

In July 2023, at the Camaldoli Monastery, a conference was held on the 80th anniversary of the Code of Camaldoli, entitled "The Code of Camaldoli. Between myth and history an affair filled with the future eighty years after the July 1943 conference."

We know how the work that started in Camaldoli, among other things precisely in the days when the tragic bombing of Rome took place, later developed, also through the work of others who have taken up its legacy, within the Italian Constitution and then prepared the ground for the advent of the Republic.

It should be noted how the work on the Code of Camaldoli, which was then not really a Code, was promoted and led in a particular way by young people who were living the challenge and vertigo of the future and of the construction of a new country and a renewed civil coexistence that was being born out of the rubble of World War II.

The celebratory meeting in July two years ago was attended by President Sergio Mattarella and IEC President Card. Matteo Zuppi, and then brought to a close by a Mass celebrated by Card. Pietro Parolin. It is therefore clear that the event was intended to have a high level perspective, and not only because of the authoritative institutions present, but also because of the professionalism of the various speakers.

The topics traced the themes of what the Code of Camaldoli will be: the theme of democracy and the idea of the state, the question of education and the formation of society, the social commitment of Catholics in Italy, the economy, and the international outlook.

The abundant material elaborated and proposed in the July 2023 event is collected in the volume edited by Tiziano Torresi, "The Camaldoli Code," ed. Studium.

The topic is back in the limelight, and with a look no longer just at Italy, but at Europe, thanks to the words of the president of the IEC, Card. Zuppi, in his proslution to the Permanent Council of the Italian Bishops' Conference on March 12, 2024, where the cardinal referred to the need for a new Camaldoli for Europe. The reflection started from looking at the socio-political and geo-political situation marked by the current wars which design a third world war in pieces and the substantial weakness or absence of Europe as a political and valorial subject. A substantial political disunity and perspective of Europe was and is grasped, moving ahead according to the particular interests of individual countries and the difficulty of having real instruments of a common and shared policy and strategy.

It should also be recalled, when reasoning more than two decades ago about a hypothetical European constitution, how insistent and unheeded were the calls of St. John Paul II not to lose and expressly highlight the Christian roots of Europe that would perhaps have guaranteed the setting out and protection of a true identity of our Continent. A perspective unfortunately rejected with consequences that still affect European architecture now and which are to be considered among the factors that determine its fragility and sometimes inconsistency today.

So, here is the reminder of the Cardinal of Bologna: we need to resume and start what was the adventure of Camaldoli and the Code of Camaldoli, almost making ourselves actors and promoters of a restart of that experience, of that methodology and sensibility, of that outlook, but no longer only for Italy, but primarily for Europe. And we might add today, perhaps with a question mark, for the entire world order, today so in flux and in search of new balances.

This call by Zuppi was followed by some initial initiatives.

The President of Italian Catholic Action, Giuseppe Notarstefano, intervened on this issue on March 11, 2025, stating that "we need a new Camaldoli, in which Christians take the

responsibility to connect different worlds. We need to dream together" and goes on to say that strengthening Europe means taking a decisive and creative step forward in building the peace that the world awaits today. He goes on to say: the task of peace is the foundational objective of politics when it is thought out and articulated to the service of justice and the common good. And the duty of good politics is dialogue.

How can we not think, I would add, of St. John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963) and the *Ecclesiam suam* (August 6, 1964) of St. Paul VI.

Also born in this wake is a "New Camaldoli Association" which in recent months has produced a document entitled "Toward a European Camaldoli: First Reflections," which collects, after a brief introduction, the response of various figures from the public forum to some questions about the new Europe that one would wish.

So, it is a journey set off, which has ancient roots, those of the adventure of the Code of Camaldoli and the Italian Constitution, but which now looks to the European horizon and perhaps, one would expect, to the world.

It is a work in progress ...

And in this work in progress lies and understands the title of this speech of mine.

It is a horizon today on a world chessboard that sees unstable balances: ongoing wars and the real or less real search for peace in Ukraine and the Middle East; trade wars and tariffs; uncoordinated and non-unified initiatives by various European actors; the new pope Leo XIV of North American origin and with 20 years of South American experience. Certainly ... new scenarios and great movement. I would say fascinating difficult times....

2. A work in progress that requires a "vision"

Talking about a new Camaldoli for Europe and broadening our gaze to the world requires having a vision. It means that we do not simply have particular issues on the table to be addressed and resolved, but that there is an overall order and new balances to be rethought, and this requires foresight and vision, looking at broad horizons and needing to understand the future. And this also requires not just politicians, but statesmen dedicated to the true common good. If the new Camaldoli became a hothouse of true statesmen for Europe and also for the world, it would have fulfilled a great task.

So, we need a vision, we need people capable of vision, of an open and far-sighted gaze and great horizons. And this is what a new Camaldoli can serve for, especially if it will be able to involve and give protagonism to young people.

It would be interesting for Centesimus Annus, especially with the contribution of its younger generation, to be an active part of this process.

I would like to recall the theme of having a vision with some biblical references that I consider exemplary and possibly foundational.

We find the first one in Joel (3:1): "...I will pour out my spirit upon every man, and your sons and your daughters shall become prophets, and your elders shall have dreams, and your young men shall have visions." Note the ability of young people to have visions, but they need the elders who guard upon dreams, their lives and everything is enlightened and guided by the gift of the Spirit.

Another text is offered to us from Hebrews (11:27) which tells us about Moses of his being a guide and prophet and it is said, "by faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's wrath; for he stood firm, as seeing the invisible". Moses..., the one who is the interpreter and protagonist of the foundational event of faith and being the people of Israel and is such because he is able to see the invisible, able to see God's work and where He leads his people. And it is this that enables him to stand firm, that is, to be able to lead, to have trust, to look to the future.

Finally, one last text I would like to recall, drawing from apocalyptic texts, as we find in Daniel, and then in some of Jesus' speeches reported in the Gospel and finally in Revelation. The apocalyptic texts are all texts that give us a vision. I recall only the beginning of Revelation (1:1-3): "Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to make known to his servants the things that must soon take place, and which he manifested by sending his angel to his servant John. The latter attests to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, reporting what he saw. Blessed are those who read and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and put into practice the things written therein. For the

time is at hand." And he emphasizes the word "Revelation" which precisely refers to God's gaze. To have visions is to have God's gaze. And it is the ability to grasp that the time is near. Jesus had already said this (Mark 1:15), "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; be converted and believe in the Gospel."

I cannot fail to mention here another text that tells us about this ability to have visions and we find it not in a sacred page, but in the adventure of literature and it is Saint Exupery's Little Prince. In the dialogue between the Little Prince and the fox, this message of vision and perspective is essentially summarized: "Here is my secret. It is very simple: one can only see with the heart. The essential is invisible to the eyes."

3. Some steps of a path full of "vision" in the recent pontifical Magisterium

The principles of the Church's social doctrine in general, beginning with Leo XIII with *Rerum novarum* and the entire social doctrine are documents capable of offering a "vision." This dimension is given to pontifical documents because of an ability to read the situation and understand emerging issues that demand a word and a presence, which need guidance. And they are capable of vision because the reading of the present and future needs is illuminated by the biblical word and the Tradition that accompanies us.

I would like not with exclusive intent, but only as an example, to collect some main insights that I seem to glean from the most recent pontifical Magisterium that are capable of providing vision and in this way can illuminate the experience of a Camaldoli for the future.

Some documents of Pope Francis.

The first reference is in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (Nov. 24, 2013) in which the guiding element that illuminates the whole reflection and offers a glimpse of perspective concerns ecclesiology and the Church's mission in the world, which is in evangelization and in a new propulsive thrust of proclaiming the Gospel. Suffice it to read #1: "The joy of the Gospel fills the heart and the whole life of those who encounter Jesus. Those who allow themselves to be saved by Him are liberated from sin, sadness, inner emptiness, and isolation. With Jesus Christ joy is always born and reborn." And then in nos. 52-75 the reading of the main challenges of today's world.

A second step in the Magisterium of Pope Francis is given to us in the encyclical *Laudato sii* (May 24, 2015) in which the pope advanced the theme of caring for the common home, in the face of a worrisome situation of climate destruction and danger for planet Earth, a theme later taken up by the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate deum* of Oct. 4, 2023. And this look at the future of our Planet is also a look that offers a vision.

We can turn then to the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (Oct. 3, 2020) in which the pope's vision is addressed to all humanity and a reminder of the urgency of building a new fraternity that is based on a universal brotherhood due to the fact of being part of the one human family, even before any distinction of belonging is made. A view that has since proved to be highly topical at the juncture of the bloody wars that have broken out. It is in this light then that the very numerous interventions, up to the last Easter, of recalling the urgency of peace and reconciliation, of dialogue and diplomacy, are placed. This understanding of humanity also offers a great insight.

Then we add the attention of the papal magisterium, starting with Pope Francis, for example in the messages for the day of social communication, to the theme of social and in particular artificial intelligence. A theme also taken up by Pope Leo XIV in his address to the first meeting with the cardinals: "In our day, the Church offers to all the treasure of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defense of human dignity, justice and labor."

We complete this look at the papal magisterium with regard to the insights that are offered by referring, as a summary of the journey for this pontificate, to the very first speech of Leo XIV in the first greeting in St. Peter's Square after his election. There the themes of peace, universal brotherhood, from walking together emerge

Here are just a few hints of a rich pontifical Magisterium capable of leading the Church, but also of being a beacon for peoples, in search of a vision, in the light of which to interpret the present and to think about the future and shared life.

The journey has begun, it is hoped for, it is expected, it is to be built. The new Camaldoli awaits us.