**ECCLESIAL SENSITIVITY**

Pope Francis

My questions and concerns arise from a global view — not only of Italy, but global — and especially from the countless meetings I have had in these two years with Bishops’ Conferences, where I have noted the importance of what might be defined as ecclesial sensitivity: that is, embracing the very sentiments of Christ, of humility, compassion, mercy, concreteness — the charity of Christ is concrete — and, most of all, wisdom.

Ecclesial sensitivity … entails not being timid or retreating, but in denouncing and defeating a widespread mentality of public and private corruption which has shamelessly managed to impoverish families, retired people, honest workers, Christian communities, discarding young people, systematically deprived of every hope for their future and, most of all, marginalizing the weak and the needy. Ecclesial sensitivity … helps us go out toward the People of God to defend them from ideological colonization which takes away identity and human dignity.

Ecclesial sensitivity is also shown in pastoral choices and in the drawing up of Documents — our own — in which the abstract theoretical-doctrinal aspect must not prevail, as though our directions were not meant for our People or our country — but only for some scholars and specialists. Instead we must endeavour to translate them into concrete and easily understood recommendations.

Ecclesial and pastoral sensitivity are also expressed by strengthening the essential role of lay people willing to take on their proper responsibilities. In reality, lay people who have an authentic Christian formation should not need a helmsman-Bishop, or pilot-monsignor, or the input of clergy in order to take on their proper responsibilities at all levels, from the political to the social, from the economic to the legislative! They have, rather, the need of a Pastor Bishop!

Lastly, ecclesial sensitivity is revealed concretely in the collegiality and communion between the Bishops and their Priests; in the communion among the Bishops themselves; between the Dioceses that are materially and spiritually wealthy and those in difficulty; between the peripheries and the centre; among the bishops’ conferences, and the Bishops with the Successor of Peter.

In certain parts of the world, a diffuse weakening of collegiality is noted, shown both in the absence of determination in pastoral planning, and the sharing of programmatic economic and financial commitment….

Another example of the absence of ecclesial sensitivity: why do we let so many religious institutes, monasteries, congregations grow old, almost to the point of no longer being Gospel witnesses, faithful to their founding charism? Why do we not arrange to consolidate them before it is too late from so many perspectives? This is a worldwide problem.

I shall stop here, as I only wished to offer a few examples of ecclesial sensitivity, which has been weakened by the continuous confrontation with the enormous worldwide problems and by the crisis which does not even spare the very Christian and ecclesial identity.

Excerpt from “Address to the Italian Episcopal Conference” (2015).