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VATICAN - "STONES, SOUNDS AND COLOURS OF GOD'S HOUSE" Ecclesiastic Archives (2) Bishop Mauro Piacenza

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The historical transmission in ecclesial continuity. The Ecclesiastic History Archive hands down ecclesial life from one generation to the next. It is in the logic of historical continuity since the ecclesiastical archive is a deposit of the memory of a community which exists in the today. It highlights its roots and hands on the different ecclesial structures, to legitimate the present and open to the future. Paraphrasing "a happy reflection of the 12th century School of Chartres, we can say we feel like giants if we are aware that although we are dwarfs [ordinary men], we stand on the shoulders of the generations which went before us under the banner of the one faith" (FPAC, Proem).

It is in the logic of Traditio Ecclesiae since, rather than a desire for self-celebration, documentary memory is an occasion to thank the Lord for the «great things» He works in his Church, despite the human fragility of its members. The material deposited in archives expresses the alternate events of fidelity and infidelity, charismatic power and institutional weakness, charitable effort and the lack of it which mark the life of every Christian community. The complex biblical account of the «chosen people», who often shunned the Lord's care, continues in the history of the Church. Archives document the slow process to recapitulate all things in Christ, inaugurated from one generation to the next, as well as in every individual person, until the end of time. Therefore «to care for […] archives means to care for Christ, to have a sense of Christ, to give ourselves and those to come after us the history of the passage of this stage of the transitus Domini in the world» (Paul VI, Address to ecclesiastic archivists, 26 September 1963).

Proclaiming herself an «expert humanity», the Church orders her action to the good of the person by means of commitment to cultural promotion and Christian evangelisation. Respectful preservation of the Church's pastoral activity in individual local realities (parish records, accounts etc.) indicates concern for the person and offers a glimpse «of the history of the sanctification of the Christian people and its institutional and pastoral dynamics » (FPAE 1.2.). What is recorded, what is omitted in local documents, describes the mindset of the clergy, the pastoral structures, the social incidence, the sensitivity of the faithful, and traces a lively image of the Christian community in continual mutation. + Bishop Mauro Piacenza, president Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church president of the Pontifical Commission for sacred Archaeology. (Agenzia Fides 28/11/2006 - Righe 33, parole 407)

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