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VATICAN - "STONES, SOUNDS, COLOURS OF GOD'S HOUSE" Ecclesiastic Archives (3)
Bishop Mauro Piacenza

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Archives promote growth of sensus ecclesiae. The use of an ecclesiastic history archive fosters growth of sensus ecclesiae. First place in the life of the Church is given to the Christifideles, or «the people of God». The faithful are members of the «mystical body», of which Christ is the head and they constitute the Church of «living stones» in Christ, «stone rejected, which becomes the corner stone». Therefore also their history is «consecrated» and consequently worthy of being remembered.

In this context the archive is an ecclesial place. It bears witness to the labour of the Church in the past, recorded in documentary material which survives the vicissitudes of history. It is a sign of becoming historical, cultural change, contingent caducity. It narrates the history of the Christian community, the multiple forms of devotion, social conjunctures, specific environmental situations. It is part of the invincible complexity of the Church's labour in time and therefore a «living reality».

Archives therefore offer the community of the faithful in the present the historical perception which fosters ecclesial development. In fact « perspective knowledge of ecclesial action gleaned from archives offers the possibility for congruous adaptation of ecclesiastical institutions to the needs of the faithful and the men and women of our day» (FPAE 1.3.). They determine the work of the inculturation of the faith in the local context, so it is opportune to «give value archives […] to grow in the sense of belonging to a certain territory » (Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, circular letter at the conclusion 2 Plenary Assembly, 10 November 1997). They also indicate the generational connecting tissue of each Christian community, and so it is opportune, for example, «to help the faithful discover parish archives containing testimony of the various families and the life of the community » (ibid.).

Archives are projected towards the future. On the basis of knowledge of its past the Christian community lives the today of its ecclesial commitment aware of the duty to consign a heritage to tomorrow, guaranteeing in this way an original moment of Traditio. The present period must be re-visited in the urgency of «new evangelisation», collecting the treasures of history and news, which express the unrest and the ecstasy of many generations who strove to live the Gospel message.

+ Mauro Piacenza, president Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, president of the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology. (Agenzia Fides 5/12/2006 - Righe 30, parole 382)

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