TO DEMONSTRATE

the relevance

OF FAITH

From my first day of teaching, I always said, “I’m not here so that you can take my ideas as your own; I’m here to teach you a true method that you can use to judge the things I will tell you. And what I have to tell you is the result of a long experience, of a two-thousand-year-old history.” We have been careful to respect this method throughout our efforts to educate and tried to clearly explain the reason for the method: to demonstrate the relevance of faith to answer life’s needs. Through my education at home and formation in seminary, and later through my own meditation, I was thoroughly persuaded that a faith that could not be found or confirmed in present experience, that was not useful to its needs, would not be a faith capable of standing up in a world in which everything, everything, says the opposite. This opposition was so deep that, for a long time, even theology became a victim of the diluting of truth.

So when we say something is reasonable, we mean that it corresponds to the fundamental needs of the human heart, those needs that man—whether he wants to or not, or is aware or not—uses to judge everything, with varying degrees of success.

THE EFFECT THAT CHRIST’S PRESENCE HAS. Considering all we have said, to give the reasons for the faith means to constantly expand upon and deepen our description of the effect that Christ’s presence has on the world, through the life of the Church inasmuch as it is faithful, “guarded” by the Pope in Rome. This is the transformation of life that the faith proposes. I believe it is a crime to conceive, propose, and live one’s faith as if it were a premise that is not followed through, a premise that has nothing to do with life. By life I mean today, because yesterday’s life is gone, and tomorrow’s life does not yet exist. Life is the here and now.

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FAITH CORRESPONDS TO THE NEEDS OF EVERY HEART. Our goal is to show the relevance of faith to answer the needs of life, and therefore—this therefore is very important for me—to demonstrate the reasonableness of the faith, but we must give a precise definition to understand reason. To say that faith exalts our reason is to say that faith corresponds to the fundamental and original needs of every human heart, which are the same for everyone: the need for truth, beauty, goodness, justice, love, and one’s complete satisfaction, which—as I often emphasize with young people—refers to the same thing as one’s “perfection.” (In Latin, Satisfacere or satisfieri mean the same thing as perficere, or perfection. Perfection and satisfaction are the same thing, as are happiness and eternity).

Nothing is so incredible as the answer to a question that is not asked.

R. Niebuhr