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Message from Archbishop Dominique Mamberti during the X Cuban Catholic Social Week

VATICAN CITY, JUNE 18, 2010 (VIS) - Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, secretary for Relations with States, spoke on June 16 at the opening of the X Cuban Catholic Social Week, with a speech entitled: "Secularism of the State: some considerations".

"It should be noted that, although the term" secularism "in both the past and the present refers above all to the reality of the State and often assumes a nuance or meaning as opposed to the Church and Christianity, there would be no if it were not for Christianity itself", said the archbishop.

"Indeed, without the Gospel of Christ, the fundamental distinction between what men owe to God and what he owes to Caesar, that is, to civil society, would not have entered into the history of humanity. (...) Still the same term "secularism", derived from the word "lay", has its first origin in the ecclesial sphere (...) The laic person is (...) that "who is not a cleric (...) This is the first meaning, which is intra-ecclesial, of the term "secularism".

In the Middle Ages, the prelate continued, "the sovereigns, who claimed not to be subject to the Pope, did not consider themselves outside the Church, but the more they wished to exercise a role of control and organization of the Church, but there was no will to separate from her or society. It is from the Enlightenment and then dramatically during the French Revolution that the term "secularism" comes to designate its opposite: a complete otherness, moreover, a net opposition between the field of civil life and that of religious and ecclesial life".

"Although secularism is invoked today and rarely used to obstruct the life and activity of the Church," the Secretary for Relations with States pointed out, "in its profound and positive reality it would not have even been given without Christianity. This is what has also happened with other values that today are considered typical of modernity and are frequently invoked to criticize the Church or, in general, religion, as respect for the dignity of the person, the right to freedom, equality, etc.: which are largely the fruit of the profound influence of the

Gospel in different cultures, even when they were later separated and even opposed to their Christian origins ".

"In many state legislations," he observed, "it is affirmed that secularism is one of its fundamental principles, obviously, especially as regards the relationship of the State with the religious dimension of man. (...) In this regard, we can forget that, in the name of this conception, decisions are sometimes taken or rules issued that objectively affect the personal and community exercise of the fundamental right to religious freedom ".

"We can notice that the lack of a logical and ontological subordination of secularism concerning full religious freedom constitutes a possible and also a real threat to the latter (...) In this case, paradoxically, the State becomes a Confessional and no more authentically secular, because it would make secularism its supreme value, the determining ideology, just a kind of religion, even with its rites and civil liturgies ".

"The full conception of the right to religious freedom must be reaffirmed, since respecting it does not simply mean not exercising coercion or allowing personal and interior adherence to the faith, although respect for the personal act of faith is fundamental, it does not exhaust attitude of the State in relation to the religious dimension, because it - like the human person - needs to externalize itself in the world and to be lived not only personally, but also communally ".

Referring finally to the mission of the laic, Archbishop Mamberti emphasized that "the Magisterium has a different role" from the one that corresponds to them. "While it is up to the Pastors of the Church to enlighten consciences with teaching," the immediate duty to act in favor of a just order in society "-as Benedict XVI states in his encyclical on charity-" is ... proper to the lay faithful ", who carry it out" cooperating with the other citizens ".