

Miami October 31st, 2013

Dearest Pope Francesco,

I am an Italian artist living now in the Americas, exactly in Miami, for thirteen years. I am a musician, sculptor and architect. I wanted to write to you because I feel you close to my heart and because you are close to the Lord more than anyone else. I have an idea that no one better than you can appreciate.

Dearest Papa Francesco, Christ was a revolutionary for his world who was rigorously regulated by the Old Testament. "Love those who hate you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you ... who is without sin cast the first stone ... Turn the other cheek ... Ask and you shall receive ... Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors". That's why the most fervent Christians are also, each one at their own way, revolutionaries. Papa Francesco, you are revolutionary as Jesus and in your proclamations you spread words of heavenly simplicity and infinite depth at the same time. Revolutionary as all the most holy figures have been: sublime, deep and simple at the same time. In my attempt to be a Christian artist always trying to serve the Lord, I cannot and should not miss a sincere, spontaneous and inspired desire to be revolutionary in my way, in order to attempt to improve what I can. Inspiration is a beautiful word that the Saints know something about and, coincidentally, also the artists. Creating something is a divine Concept. The Creator par excellence is God. But God has delegated those to continue his work all the creative intelligences. That is why artists are important, as the Church has always underlined. The Church has acquired the greater part of the Italian masterpieces, so many that the world envies us. As well, most of churches are masterpieces themselves. But many times the Church has been accused of greed for riches and insensitive to poverty. Sure, the Church could sell some properties and give the proceeds to charities. But the greatest wealth of the Church lies in its incredible art collections. And the world knows it. The Church still owns so many of these masterpieces, that their total value is unfathomable, I think, compared to any wealth of the world, just speaking only of the Vatican Museums. How valuable is the "Laocoon Group" by Agesander, Athanadoros and Polydoros? And what is the value of the "Transfiguration" by Raphael? And what about the "Pietà" by Michelangelo?

You could do both good for the poor and for the image of the Church itself by selling some of these masterpieces and set an example to the rest of the world. My idea is to sell them all not just certain ones. Madness, you could say. Furthermore, apart from the immense value, these assets apparently belong not only to the Church but are actually available to the world and can be enjoyed by anyone. It would be a crime to disseminate them in private collections, separating them forever. This is very true.

Indeed, and here is the true revolutionary nature of the idea, if such a sale is done with an obligation to a perennial and essential loan of the artworks to the Church itself (or some similar legal figure, type bare or fractional ownership - normally applicable only to real estate and not to other goods - even creating new legal figures with the help of the legislature), all the works will remain where they are but in the meantime a number of people and institutions could boast the title of owner, while the Church, dispensing only the monetary value, however transformed into works of mercy, would make a giant step toward poverty which you always desired. I wonder how many would queue up to buy even under present conditions just to see their name alongside the work and the results obtained in works of mercy through them, as well as the name of the artwork among the assets owned! A lot of money would go into the coffers of the Church that would be immediately designate a specific amount to unambiguous works such

hospitals, schools, new churches (oh, what need is there) or, why not, to the commission of new artworks or to simple aids to contemporary artists who most often languish, and instead are so important, as history shows. The world would have a new perception of the Church and of the very notion of "ownership", a new concept of Christian possession that could be called "Subordinated Property". It would contain the canons of real and effective property (among other things the "owners " could also sell their own works, as is done with timeshare or fractional property). With these universal principals of culture and art that actually belong to all and the infinite possibilities for good that it would permit. Not to mention the new world's attention to the importance of art. Perhaps a New Renaissance, something really needed nowadays, would ensue. You always repeat St. Thomas Aquinas saying "Iustum, bonum, verum et pulchrum inter se converguntur". (The right, the good, the true and the fine-looking converge). So, the good can be done also by the fine arts sold with real deeds of sale but in the Custody of the Church, as it is also fair. After all, this maxim reveals the blessing of the Church Fathers.

As I privately informed you in advance, it is now time for me to send this message to the newspapers as an open letter.

A respectful and affectionate greeting from your

Emanuele Viscuso

Emanuele Viscuso , 8300 Hawthorne Ave Miami Beach, Florida 33141
Ph. +1 (305) 710-4593 emanuele@viscuso.com www.viscuso.com

Edited by Linda Sposato