

THE HISTORY OF FRIULI
AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE POPE'S IMMINENT VISIT TO AQUILEIA
AS SEEN BY A FRIULIAN-SPEAKING FRIULIAN

by Luca Campanotto

Translated by Dr. Viola G. Miglio
Associate Professor of Linguistics/
Barandiarán Chair of Basque Studies
Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese
University of California, Santa Barbara

1.

Pope Benedict XVI's upcoming visit to Aquileia seems rather fleeting, and much more centered on Venice, hardly comparable to the longer, Friuli-centered visits by predecessors Paul VI and John Paul II. Even if the pedantic insistence on the ambiguous and somewhat dangerous concept of "Triveneto" has a fascist-like after-taste, I think that the significance of his visit is anything but negligible, and as we eagerly await the swiftly approaching Saturday, May 7, 2011, we can certainly ponder the ecclesiastical, as well as the political implications – especially since those two dimensions always go hand in hand, in this strange country called Italy.

I therefore encourage also atheists, agnostics or otherwise lapsed Catholics to read through my notes, since these are of a historical, political, cultural and linguistic nature, as well as religious, with implications for the future of the whole Friuli region and beyond.

We seem to be witnessing a not-so-veiled attempt, to compare the current and spurious Venetian Patriarchate to the much more ancient and prestigious of one associated with Aquileia. This latter was and always will be the only one to properly represent the most authentic originality of our region, in addition to ensuring the dignity of the foundation of Friuli – not even the pope can re-write history.

To forestall any act of serious historical *revisionism*, let's summarize, hopefully concisely enough, some very important dates in the history of our Friuli:

181 a. C.: the Romans occupied the region and founded (or rather re-founded) the City of Aquileia.

It has been historically proven (even if it is perhaps politically incorrect to underline it) that romanization does not typically take root in areas where the natives still live in primitive conditions, but settles rather on previous socio-cultural layers, in this case characterized

by prior Celtic settlements (the odd un-Roman ending of the city's name clearly points to its Celtic origin).

Indeed, contrary to what classical Italian historiography maintains, the Roman town of Aquileia was not created out of thin air by settlers sent by Rome, but rather re-founded on an earlier Celtic town, whose pre-existence is beyond dispute. It was the colonization of an extant Celtic settlement, and not the foundation of a Roman city from scratch. Livy hints at these facts, and so do recent archeological findings. Maybe this is why archeologists don't dig much in Aquileia, lest some politically inconvenient facts turn up. In fact, a verse by Silius Italicus, a Latin poet who was also a Roman Consul seems to corroborate the hypothesis that the pre-Roman city of Aquileia had sent some troops to aid the Romans during the Second Punic War: once Hannibal and the Carthaginians were defeated, the Romans showed their gratitude to Celtic Aquileia by... occupying it! (with friends like these, who needs enemies indeed!).

In fact, romanization was certainly a compromise, opposed by the brave resistance of the Carnian Celts, only subdued with difficulty by the Roman troops;

This led to a heavy militarization of the region, strategically crucial, even as a commercial route towards the north and the east (Illegio di Tolmezzo takes its name from the Tenth Legion, which was permanently stationed there. It is hardly a coincidence that Friuli is still a militarized region.

Concessions to the local population were made and the foundations for a coexistence were laid, which was not always peaceful. Here there were populations of different origin (Celtic and Roman, to which many others were added over the centuries, since Friuli has always been, historically, the door for all invasions and migrations.

Here – in the region Ippolito Nievo defined as "small compendium of the universe" were the geographical, historical and cultural foundations laid out for the future birth of a 'compromise language', in many ways unique, being "a Romance language with a Germanic soul," as linguists in Germanic areas are wont to call it.

You have no doubt understood I am referring to Friulian, a geopolitically always inconvenient language, developed at the crossroads between three major language families (Romance, Germanic and Slavic). It developed in what could be seen as the plurilingual 'Switzerland' of the Eastern Alps, to which Italy granted a special statute (but did not always respect it), fraught with many limitations and defects. The reasons for the statute are still current, and well captured by the existing art. 3 of Const. Law 1 / 63. This is the result of the historical contribution, among others, by the founding father of the Autonomous Region, a great supporter of the individuality and of the particular nature of Friuli, Senator Tiziano Tessitori, and of other great constitutionalists, such as Prof. Livio Paladin.

Back to the Aquileia of classical antiquity: it was one of the major cities throughout the Roman Empire and, thanks to its port and close association with Alexandria in Egypt, it

was converted to Christianity early, probably already in apostolic times. Many clues point to a Judeo-Christian and Petrine source of evangelization. The ancient tradition that depicts Mark the Evangelist as bringing evangelization to this region is perhaps not so far-fetched. He was supposedly sent to Aquileia on behalf of the Apostle Peter himself (i.e., at the latest, at the same time of Peter's preaching in Rome). It is not so unlikely then, that the Church of Aquileia was a true Apostolic Church, sister to the Church of Rome (one should also consider the fact that, before becoming Bishop of Rome, Peter was also Bishop of Antioch). This is corroborated by the very interesting studies by the brilliant Mons. Gilberto Pressacco collected in the extremely intriguing book *Viaggio nella notte della Chiesa di Aquileia* ('Journey into the night of the Church of Aquileia', published by Gaspari – a most inconvenient book that is very hard to find, whereas its diffusion should instead be encouraged in every way). These elements are in some ways shocking to the current balances of power, ecclesiastical and otherwise, and would explain why St. Paul the Apostle did not reach as far as the traditional territories of Aquileia, because these were in fact already evangelized, or even *evangelizing* at that time: Paul, in *Romans*, said he reached up the Balkan Peninsula to the border with Illyria, but then he stopped. Pressacco reveals a telling detail: an ancient title of the Bishop of Aquileia was 'Bishop of the Illyrians', again a historically inconvenient fact. In *Romans*, St. Paul explains that he would not evangelize areas that had already been evangelized by other Apostles: in the case of Aquileia and Friuli, by St. Mark, hardly a Venetian tradition, or by the above-mentioned Judeo-Christian missionaries from Alexandria, or both.

All this, moreover, would also demonstrate how the ancient Catholic Church had a policy of respect and protection for the peculiarities of the particular Churches, united by a bond to ensure the Catholic communion, but on a footing of equality between them (not unlike within the current Eastern Orthodox tradition).

This also shows how, in the early Christian period, to some extent, there was some guarantee of theological pluralism: Peter and his disciple Mark were in fact supporters of the current Jewish-evangelical Christian tradition that aligned with Judaic tradition, keeping its customs, but opening up to a universal outlook and preaching the Gospel to all nations. Paul, on the other hand, argued instead for a total break with Judaism: this diversity of theological and ecclesiological visions created much friction between Peter and Paul. This is underlined by Pressacco. One example is the controversial disagreement between Paul and Mark. What interests us here, however, is the fact that since Apostolic times there coexisted at least two different visions of the Church itself, both acknowledged by the Council of Jerusalem, which opened itself to universal preaching, but it did not deprive Christians of Jewish origin of their Jewish traditions, resulting in the recognition of the legitimacy and viability of theological and ecclesiological pluralism. Peter and Paul are thus united by the fact that they were two different souls within the one Catholic Church (i.e. Universal), but certainly not –as the tamed version would have us believe –that the two apostles were an inseparable duo, promoters of a single, monolithic centralized ecclesiastical reality.

I will leave it at that, partly to avoid disrespect to the Pope, since anyone can guess what devastating implications this might have for Petrine primacy, or at least for the forms in which it is actually practiced today, in our pro-Roman Church environment. This inconvenient research highlights also many historical additions, which really have little to do with dogma, and a lot more with power.

2.

42 a. C: Julia Concordia was founded as an outpost to keep watch on the road to Aquileia, hereafter referred to as Sagittaria (because of the arrows produced there for the Roman army, just to keep in line with the militarization of our region), also evangelized in ancient times by missionaries from Aquileia, and soon enriched by a good local martyrological tradition. Towards the end of the fourth century A.D., around 388 or 389, St. Chromatius, the great Bishop of Aquileia and still venerated in that diocese, consecrated the first cathedral with the title of "Basilica Apostolorum" (the historical fact is well documented, even the homily written by St. Chromatius for the occasion is preserved. He also consecrated the first bishop of the city on the river Lemene. The first Cathedral of Concordia will then be destroyed by the Huns and later rededicated to St. Stephen the Protomartyr, whose relics were found in those years. This irrefutable historical fact clearly demonstrates Aquileian jurisdiction over what is now West Friuli. The pro-Veneto legends, which are currently circulating in those parts, are clearly unsubstantiated, literally invented to justify the supposed early submission of those territories to Venice: this is in fact proven only from about the mid-1800 (after the transfer of the Diocese of Concordia to Venice and the transfer of Portogruaro to the administration of the Veneto Provinces.

The most important bishops of Aquileia are:

St. Ermacora (or Ermagora) Martyr (remembered with his deacon, Fortunatus)

Patron of the town of Udine, of the Archdiocese of Udine, and patron of the whole autonomous region, the Cathedral of Ljubljana is devoted to him, and many other churches and towns even in today's Carinthia, such as Hermagor for example, the counterpart of our Pontebba etc. He was 'vir christianissimus et elegans persona'. According to tradition he was chosen by St. Mark to be the first bishop of the city of Aquileia and taken to Rome to be ordained by S. Peter himself (see the frescoes in the Crypt of the Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia). He is famous for the miracles worked during his first preaching of the Gospel in our land, including healing the sick and exorcising a possessed woman. Aquileia was impressed by the extraordinary and mysterious force that supported him beyond all human possibility during the public torture that preceded his martyrdom by beheading, which was then kept secret for reasons of public safety.

St. Hilarius Martyr (remembered with his Deacon Tatian)

He is the second in the first part of the incomplete Aquileian chronotaxis, saint patron of Gorizia, in all probability martyred under Numerian.

St. Chrysogonus Martyr

Emperor Diocletian, who came to Aquileia, was amazed by the greatness of his person, but sentenced him to death when he realized that the holy bishop was not really open to compromises with political power.

St. Valerian, Father of the Council of Aquileia

His prestige was such that he organized and presided over Councils attended by a Father of the Church of the caliber of St. Ambrose of Milan. The most important product of the anti-Arian Council of Churches, the Council of Aquileia of 381 A.D., is the Creed of Aquileia, an original formula of profession of faith, according to the particular liturgical tradition of Aquileia, which is still preserved (though unfortunately not practiced, even locally). Among the more important Aquileian features are the emphasis on the Resurrection of the human person as a whole, including the flesh, and the clear reference to the ecclesial communion linking Aquileia not only to Rome, but also to all major Eastern Christian metropolises, characterized by a common Judeo-Petrine origin, such as Jerusalem or Alexandria in Egypt. It is certainly not by chance that both are expressly mentioned, as if to create a bridge linking East and West;

San Chromatius, the Pope of Aquileia

Valerian's successor, but already active at the Council at Aquileia chaired by Valerian, Chromatius behaved very similarly to the young priest and theologian Joseph Ratzinger during the Second Vatican Council. Chromatius later became Bishop of Aquileia, and is celebrated as a great 'pope' (literally in the text) by the Church Father St. Jerome, author of the Vulgate (the historical translation of the Scriptures in Latin inspired and financed by the same Chromatius). A source about Jerome no less inconvenient than the one in which the Dalmatian Jerome, raised in the Aquileian tradition, points out that, in his time, "Aquileia choirs sing like angels, while in Rome, choirs bark like dogs," - this last quotation by Jerome is not surprisingly often censored. What I wish to emphasize most is that, in the famous and most learned circle founded and encouraged by the same Chromatius in Aquileia, where theological discussions were held by well-respected religious scholars, religious pluralism and dialectics were tolerated and indeed perhaps even encouraged. As a proof, St. Jerome and Rufinus of Concord (the latter was oddly never canonized), were perpetually in conflict with each other even on ecclesiological issues of utmost importance, but they both looked to St. Chromatius as a common spiritual father. The Holy Pope from Aquileia also contributed to the development of a rich and profound sacred liturgy, keeping many Eastern influences, in an equally dialectical effort. This liturgy is constantly based on the dialogue between the Choir and Assembly, and in this regard, our recent sacred author Mons. Perosa is indeed a follower of St. Chromatius. Moreover, Chromatius was always

greatly devoted to the Virgin Mary and had the Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia consecrated to her. Aquileian tradition has always venerated the Virgin Mother, to whom it devoted a special liturgical color, the Patriarchal light blue, as well as proclaiming the truth of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary many centuries before its recent acceptance as a dogma. In this Marian devotion, the Aquileian Church has been supported by all the Friulian people. St. Chromatius, in short, deserves at least a formal proclamation as Father of the Universal Church (even St. John Chrysostom looked up to Chromatius because his Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew and his sermons, which have not been studied in depth yet, are undoubtedly among the patristic masterpieces of his time). If this does not happen, it is because of the balance of power – yet again – in view of the fact, for instance, that at the time of Chromatius, the relationship between clergy and laity in the Church of Aquileia, was very different than it is at present. After all, the priest was then nothing more than a layman that could say Mass.

St. Nicetas, the Bishop who rebuilt Aquileia

Aquileia was destroyed in 452 C. E. by the terrible fire kindled by Attila, King of the Huns, in retaliation for the brave resistance that our ancestors undertook to oppose the invaders. As Bishop of Aquileia, he led the material but especially the spiritual reconstruction of his city and people, not unlike Alfredo Battisti, Archbishop of Udine, after the tragic earthquake in Friuli in 1976. Battisti supported the legitimate demands of the Friulian people, whose 125,000 signatures requested the establishment of the University of Udine (why don't we rename it University of Friuli and have it speak a little more Friulian?), which established the ideal continuation of the Patriarchal Studium established in Cividale by his predecessor the Blessed Bertrand, Patriarch of Aquileia, and then dismantled by Venice, as usual, so that it would not compete with the University of Padua. You may have noticed that history on a small and larger scale moves in cycles and *re-cycles*, nowadays one could notice a parallel with the University of Trieste and some extremely one-sided collaborations...

3.

Paulinus I, the Patriarch of Aquileia, who proclaimed the schism from Rome

He was the first Archbishop of Aquileia also to take the title of Patriarch. It is certainly not by chance that he was never canonized and even ridiculed in sources close to the then Roman Popes, Virgil and Pelagius: what a weed envy is! What was Paulinus's only 'crime'? Why was Paulinus I of Aquileia not canonized, as his namesake in the Carolingian period, whose evident advantage was merely that of being more pro-Roman? In 557 A. D. during a Provincial Synod of the immense Aquileian jurisdiction for the election of the new Metropolitan Bishop, Paulinus I, successor of Macedonius, attended by all Bishops of all dioceses (including Concordia), it was decided not to acknowledge the conclusions of the Second Council of Constantinople and proclaim the Ecclesiastical Province of Aquileia and its Church as independent from Rome.

This will go down in history (a very censored and inconvenient chapter of history indeed) as the Schism of the Three Chapters, that is, in essence, as a challenge to the policy of Justinian, who in order to curry Monophysite favors¹, condemned the writings of three of the leading theologians of the Council of Chalcedon (which were in fact absolutely orthodox to the Catholic faith) and, moreover, compelled the Pope of Rome to do the same! While Rome and Peter reneged Christ, the Sister Apostolic Church of Aquileia (at least initially, flanked by the Church of Milan, to which it has always been close) found in its prestige the strength to remain faithful to the truth, while Rome and the Pope bowed to the deal with political power, Aquileia and its Archbishop Paulinus I the Patriarch, a worthy predecessor of St. Paulinus II (it just so happened that Rome canonized only the second one since the first one risked to tower over him) resisted in the profession of the True Faith, even if it meant defying Emperor Justinian ... since then, while Rome is necessarily described by the ambiguous term of the *chaste whore* as Augustine described it, Aquileia embodies the myth of an absolutely orthodox Catholic Church firm in its faith, and far from politics and its ugly sides... the Church of Rome, even today, would really need that Aquileia! On the other hand, Rome has always tried to contain Aquileian prestige and reduce Aquileia to blind submission to Rome. Pope Pelagius I, for instance, asked the Byzantine general Narses to resolve the schism by force – thankfully the General did not feel like attacking Aquileia. In response, the successors of Patriarch Paulinus I, like Elijah, they were all convinced supporters of the Three Chapters, supported in this by all their people, who at the time fought passionately to preserve their faith. The people of Aquileia were firmly convinced that the Pope had no authority to negotiate with the Emperor on matters of faith and was determined not to give in to the Pope's weakness. The successor of Elijah, Patriarch Severus, having been brought by force to Ravenna by the Byzantine Exarch of Ravenna to renounce faith in the Three Chapters, was disavowed by his people until he denied that recantation, and summoned another synod in 590 defending the Three Chapters' brand of theology, in Marano Lagunare. This was in open defiance of the Roman and Byzantine theological positions, since the Orthodox Synod solemnly reiterated the Profession of Faith of the Church of Aquileia, denouncing that Patriarch Severus's recantation in Ravenna had been extorted by force and was therefore null and void. It is possible that Rome remembered the slight and got her revenge a few centuries later.

Meanwhile, in 568 the Lombards had invaded Italy and had founded their first Duchy, established in Cividale (Forum Iulii, the Roman city after which the whole region is named) and claimed jurisdiction over all Aquileian and Concordian territories. The only exception were very limited and basically coastal areas under Byzantine sovereignty. This political division will lay the groundwork for the first painful ecclesiastical division of the Patriarchate of Aquileia, divided for the first time, but not obliterated. It is strange that Rome made little of this historic precedent at the time of the second division of the Patriarchate, and of its still current suppression dating from 1751!

¹ The Monophysites were heretics who considered Christ only as a divine being, while according to the true faith he was both God and man, just as the Virgin Mary is the true mother of God.

The excuse for the division was the death of Patriarch Severus in 606: Aquileia, with the support of the Lombards and the Duke of Friuli appointed John as Patriarch, who was a Three Chapters Catholic, while in Grado (Aquileia Nova) Candidianus was appointed Patriarch, a Catholic bishop dominated by the Pope and the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna. Venice would then exploit these common disagreements within Friuli. (I would finally add a touch of local color: the visceral rivalry between the existing centers of Aquileia and Grado dates back to these medieval vicissitudes). The Schism of the Three Chapters, was central to the history of Aquileia (and therefore completely censored or its importance minimized). It persisted for more than a century as a true thorn in the side of important popes such as St. Gregory the Great, and was gradually resolved only through skillful diplomacy and the political influence of the Roman Papacy on Lombard sovereigns, such as Teodolinda and Cunipert, well outside of the Metropolitan area of Aquileia. When, even Milan was brought back in line with the Roman Church, one of its dioceses, Como, wishing to remain within the Three Chapters' faith, severed all relations with Milan and took refuge in Aquileia, even adopting its ritual. In fact, many liturgical books from Aquileia were saved from Venetian destruction only via Como. Little by little, Aquileia found herself isolated, and during the Synod of Pavia in 698, the Lombard king Cunipert, who owed the Pope support against his rivals, obtained from the Patriarch of Aquileia, the Lombard Peter I a statement of ecclesiastical reconciliation with the See of Rome. Nonetheless, Aquileia was still successful, as a condition for submitting to Rome, in securing the inclusion of solemn declarations on the importance of the disputed Council of Chalcedon in synodal proceedings. In short, Rome cannot forgive Aquileia for her rebellion in order to save the true faith, while the Roman Pope was too busy wheeling and dealing with the dominant political power ...

St. Paulinus II, the Patriarch of Aquileia closest to the Pope and Charlemagne

He was from Premariacco, and a member of Charlemagne's court - and even among his tutors, since the Emperor was illiterate. He was a great poet and scholar, evangelized the Slovenes (who still revere him greatly) and he was a great reformer of the ancient and rich liturgy of the Church of Aquileia. He was the first Patriarch to have the Aquileian rites approach Gallican and Roman ones, while retaining their specificity. He defended the autonomy of the Church of Aquileia, obtaining a Carolingian privilege so that the local Church could freely elect the Patriarch's successor. His reforms, however, perhaps his most concrete achievement in the context of the Holy Roman Empire, caused considerable internal opposition. This is usually censored by the pseudo-historical information about the Church of Aquileia, just as censored are the conflicts with the other great Latin scholar Paul the Deacon from Cividale, the author of the *Historia Langobardorum*. Paul the Deacon could not forgive Paulinus II because of a clear hostility towards the Lombard minority of his people, whom he meant to assimilate culturally. After all, the pro-Carolingian St. Paulinus II, however, was far better than his successors, the Venetians: it is enough to mention one of them, nicknamed the Barbarian (the name says it all): they did everything possible to literally obliterate the liturgical books of Aquileia from Friuli, in a gigantic cultural genocide, such as the recently re-published Missale

Aquileiensis Ecclesiae of 1517. They thus forcibly converted the Church of Aquileia to the current Roman Rite - contrary to what St. Carlo Borromeo chose for the Ambrosian rite in Milan - and despite the fact that the Council of Trent and St. Pius V granted to the regional Churches the right to preserve their rites provided that they could boast a centuries-old tradition. The last straw was the fact that that same patriarchal rite, erased from Friuli by Venice, was stolen, transferred, and kept alive in St. Mark's Cathedral, until in 1807, the Church was transferred from the Doge's Palace to the Patriarchate of Venice, and finally converted to the Roman Rite.

4.

Blessed Bertrand, Patriarch of Aquileia, who still fascinates Friulian experts.

He was a leading member of the Papal Curia in Avignon, canonized by popular acclaim by the Udinese people and buried in the Metropolitan Church of Udine after his violent death (which occurred for political reasons at the hands of conspirators, on June 6, 1350, near the Tagliamento river, in the area of Richinvelda, during his return with bodyguards from his strongholds on the Livenza river). He still represents an important reference for political and civil liberties in Friuli. Those who stigmatize the Patriarchal state of Aquileia as one of many medieval ecclesiastical principalities of a theocratic nature, usually hide the fact that immediately after the historic concessions by the Germanic Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, dated April 3, 1077, the Patriarch of Aquileia, usually a Ghibelline and of Teutonic origin, established a parliament representing the whole Friulian *patria* or fatherland (*patria* derives from Patriarchate), which was also open to Local Authorities - attended by representatives from all over the Friuli region, including the areas of Portogruaro and Monfalcone. The Parliamentary meetings in Udine are irrefutably documented in writing from about a decade before the more famous English Magna Charta Libertatum of 1215. The Friulian Parliament had general legislative powers, not only fiscal ones and the Patriarch delegate the daily management of the administrative affairs to the first of his vassals, the powerful Count of Gorizia, his representative for civil matters, who, as a good Friulian, often disagreed with the Patriarch. Was the Aquileian state really backward, in a context when Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed himself supreme ruler of all the earth and demanded idolatrous devotion from his Cardinals? Can the slap of Anagni perhaps be explained via certain theocratic provocations? He who humbles himself will be exalted and he who exalts himself will be humbled.

The liturgical calendars of the Aquileian Church are also full of secular saints, who usually died as martyrs:

San Proto Martyr, believed to have been the teacher of the three Canziani brothers, also martyrs (San Canzian d'Isonzo obviously derives its name from them...)

Aquileia has also many others, some known by name and others are anonymous: they all died as martyrs, and are celebrated together on November 5.

Among distinguished Aquileians, I would also cite:

St. Pius I, Pope of Rome in the second half of the second century C. E., that even Roman chronotaxis admits to being of Aquileian origin, and he was greatly revered in Aquileia from early Christian antiquity. This is interesting historical evidence, since it means that as of the beginning, the relations between Rome and Aquileia were basically on the same level, since the latter provided the former with one of her bishops.

Fortunatianus, Bishop of Aquileia in the first half of the fourth century. A. D., also curiously not canonized, maybe not only for its acceptance of Arianism, but also because he was "guilty" of being the author of a text in ancient proto-Friulian, with a commentary on the Scriptures (and perhaps even a translation of the Holy Scriptures, or at least of some Gospel passages) in the ancient language of post-Latin Aquileia, a forerunner of the catechism in the Friulian language approved by the Archdiocese of Gorizia in the eighteenth century and by the Archdiocese of Udine in the nineteenth century, and especially the most recent precursor of the Friulian language translation of the Bible canonically approved in 1996 (and then officially adopted for more than a decade now, though, in fact it is not being used in actual practice). The credit for this historic translation must go to some Friulian priests who only recently passed away (among whom Father Checo Placereani and Father Toni Bellina). Their huge accomplishment has been met with indifference or even hostility, even by the local church. The Association of Glesie Furlane is isolated and branded as though it were a Protestant branch, only because it insists on what was indicated by the Second Vatican Council, namely to ensure the translation of the Sacred Scriptures and the liturgical books into all modern languages. This, of course, means *all* the languages of our Friulian region, even those, like Friulian, which do not have a state that supports them. These attitudes are still deeply rooted and widespread in Italy, betraying an intolerant nationalism, of a Jacobin or fascistic nature and upholding monolingualism. One must not forget the systematic connection in Italy between Church and State, which easily explains the anti-Friulian hostility, even within some sections of our own local church. If the seed that fell on our land did not die, it still bore no fruit. My work aims to precisely collect the baton from those who preceded me, in this holy battle, to continue the race, maintaining the Catholic faith, especially in its specific Aquileian variety, within our Friulian lands.

St. Anselm of Nonantola, the Lombard Duke of Friuli, once he retired from political life, he adopted the rule of St. Benedict and became Abbot, subsequently using all his influence to secure peace during the difficult period following the Franco-Lombard war.

In short, dear readers, this was, is and will be Aquileia, whose territory was the largest Archdiocese in Europe, whose Ecclesiastical Province extended from Como to Lake Balaton in what is now Hungary, one of world's most prestigious Churches in history. She acted as a bridge between North and South, and especially between East and West, being able to evangelize and harmonize different peoples and different languages within the one true Catholic Church, in a great and everlasting Pentecost ... this is Aquileia!

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the modern European spirit, tending to overcome all nationalism and the resulting conflicts (which in Europe have only ever caused massive damage, such as two world wars that killed millions and millions of people), was in fact born in Aquileia and is based on multilingualism!

The current European Union was born in Aquileia, like it or not, and it has deep and undeniable Christian roots!

5.

Well, dear readers, after having briefly examined Aquileia, it is now time to ask what is Venice, and especially if it can really boast the titles and the glorious past needed to be legitimately considered almost a parallel to Aquileia ... actually, on closer inspection, one can anticipate from the start that Venice has no credentials to match even the Diocese of Concordia, which at least has a good tradition of local martyrs. Concordia was in fact subjected for several centuries to Venice, although in spirit it was always closer to the Aquileian ecclesiastical tradition.

774: the dioceses of Castello was created out of thin air – this is the first nucleus of what today would be the so-called "Patriarchate of Venice", i.e. an entity founded surreptitiously, without martyrs, without traditions, without devotion, without a proper rite, without producing any Father of the Church, which will expand along the lines of the progressive growth of commercial, political and military power of the Republic of the Doges. It gradually incorporated the neighboring dioceses and absorbed titles and relics, to the point that it is no exaggeration to say that, on closer inspection, this ecclesiastical institution was born of purely political needs and cannot assert to have anything truly its own: almost all its current glories are actually spoils of war, as it happened, for example, when, in 1204, Venetian merchants hijacked a crusade without any qualms, which ended eventually in the sacking of Constantinople, which was then a Christian city. This shows incidentally that all the crusades were not only unacceptable, but also animated by very un-religious interests. Moreover, while Aquileia, from the early Christian era, was already making history alongside the Pope, Venice was little more than a swamp.

1420: Venice conquers the Friulian fatherland (although, thank God, only in part)

When, in 1420, some Friulian nobles had the bright idea to call on Venice in the usual internal Friulian feuds, Venice took advantage of it to wage war and extend her dominions over the mainland, depriving Friuli of its traditional political autonomy (dating back at least to 568 and the first Lombard Duchy in Italy) and the Patriarchs of Aquileia of their temporal power (exercised first by Patriarch Sigeward over the regions of Aquileia and Concordia, through the famous imperial bull granted by Henry IV to the Patriarch and all its successors on April 3, 1077). All the old patriarchal institutions - including Parliament - were thus deprived of any real power, through the Venetian Lieutenant in Udine. The so-called "old border" lasted virtually unchanged until 1915-1918 in Pontebba (an interesting

town, which was then divided into two parts), and near Sella Nevea, between what are now Cervignano and Palmanova. Some enclaves were mutually exchanged between Venice and Austria, centuries after 1420, even after many bloody border disputes: a few decades later, the powerful Count of Gorizia, who died without an heir, preferred to leave his possessions scattered all over Friuli to the Austrians, rather than see them transferred also under the yoke of Venice. Trieste had already done the same thing: Trieste, where they spoke Friulian until 1800, was a free city that faced the risk of being absorbed by Venice, and rather than give in to Venetian expansionism and colonialism, it chose to pay allegiance to the Habsburgs, under which it subsequently thrived. Central and Western Friuli then passed from the imperial, Germanic and Ghibelline influence, under the Italian one, represented by the Venetian Republic, when it became a kind of Venetian colony. Eastern Friuli (with some locations in northern Friuli) instead was first part of the Empire and then of Austria, until the First World War. From this tangible division of Friuli (one wonders why History only remembers the division of Poland) further divisions were born: not just "Friûl di cà e di là de Aghe" or "Friûl de Alte e de Basse," but also "Friûl di cà e di là dal clap". That part of Friuli had remained subject to the Empire, however, has important implications, in political and cultural terms: the Central European atmosphere encouraged multilingualism: in Imperial Friuli, the Friulian-Ladin language performed the important function of a neutral buffer between the Italian and Slovenian component. In this regard, one should mention that the first Archbishop of Gorizia, Carlo Michele d'Attems, was multilingual, and preached to his people in the Friulian language, and so did his successors. As early as 1773, the Archdiocese of Gorizia published a catechism in the Friulian language. Another great Archbishop of Gorizia, the Slovene-speaking Francesco Borgia Sedej - who, among other things, bestowed particular value on Aquileia, and especially its Cathedral, also from an archaeological point of view -, inevitably came into conflict with Mussolini's men, and not just because he had been appointed at the beginning of the twentieth century by Emperor Franz Joseph, but also because he maintained that it was important and indispensable to maintain and develop Aquileian multilingualism as the basis of equality, especially avoiding the domination of a linguistic group over others. Those are the same abuses that, after his forced removal urgently sought by the fascists - and mysteriously obtained by the Vatican, cleverly disguised as a resignation, around the time of the Concordat between Mussolini and the Church. The same abuses only a few years later, for example, forced the *Italianization* of the so-called "unredeemed" territories, to the Italian military occupation and the annihilation of the so-called Province of Ljubljana, the Italian concentration camps of Gonars and Visco, the massacres of the Foibe and the Istrian exodus.

From the ecclesiastical point of view, we must point out the inconvenient fact that, among the abundant plunder that the Venetians took from Friuli after its conquest in 1420, was the popular Gospel of St. Mark, traditionally considered as having been written by Mark himself. Even if it has been proven that the manuscript is of a later date, its symbolic value remains very high. It was the most important relic preserved by the Patriarchate of Aquileia: attributing the devotion to St. Mark's to Venice, is in fact totally inappropriate, since it was Aquileia, and not Venice, that was evangelized by St. Mark. The devotion to St. Mark spread to Venice after her appropriation of the part of the Aquileian Patriarchate

in Grado, as a result of the Lombard invasion.

1457: Venice creates its Patriarchate, suppressing the one in Grado, and absorbing and transferring the title to its local Diocese of Castello. Until 1800, in fact, the Patriarchal see was at Castello, while the current Basilica of St. Mark was simply the Palace of the Doge's chapel. The Cathedral was originally dedicated to two Byzantine saints: Sergius and Bacchus; only later was it re-consecrated to the more prestigious Saint Peter. A high seat supposedly belonging to the first Pope of Rome is preserved therein, which was in fact sculpted from an ancient Islamic tombstone. As for Grado, once deprived of its Patriarchal title, Venice abandoned it to the Archdiocese of Gorizia, under which it remains.

Carnival of 1511: one of the largest peasant uprisings in Europe, at least in the Italian context, is precisely that of Friuli. In 2011 we celebrate the five hundredth anniversary of a little studied and little-known (and politically very inconvenient) fact, that bloodied Udine first and then the whole of Friuli, in the first century of the Venetian occupation. These tragic events, rooted in complex and varied political and socio-economic problems, were analyzed in two recent publications. I would like to mention these specifically, because the bloody Carnival in Friuli is not only the context that gave rise to the Shakespearean drama of Romeo and Juliet (who were Friulian, there is also a site www.giuliettaeromeoinfriuli.it devoted to this), but it is a much more significant fact in our history, certainly triggered in part by the progressive deterioration of living conditions of the country following the Venetian conquest of Friuli. The Serenissima, in fact, not only did not abolish serfdom in the least, but the new Friulian colony was immediately made to bear all its fiscal weight, in addition to recognizing more and more privileges to local landlords, whose support was decisive in the conquest of new territory and continued to be in order for Venice to retain its colonial power. Venice, having at first sent an army to crush the revolt in the blood of the peasants against their nobles, however, was forced to grant the *Istituzione della Contadinanza*, an organ of peasant representation, which makes it clear that the people of Friuli were never faithful to Venice, despite what the new conquerors and their worthy successors maintained. These are the two recent titles I could find on the market about the 1511 revolt: Edward Muir, *Il sangue s'infuria e ribolle. La vendetta nel Friuli del Rinascimento*, Cierre Edizioni - Circle Menocchio; Furio Bianco, 1511 - *La "crudel zobia grassa"*, Libreria Editrice Goriziana. Other cultural initiatives on this topic are led by Comitato 482, with their www.com482.org site, as well as by Comitato Associazione 1511, which recently opened the following site: [http:// associazione1511.blogspot.com](http://associazione1511.blogspot.com).

6.

1751: The darkest year of all the history of Friuli, namely the terrible year of the second division, and of the abolition of the Patriarchate of Aquileia.

The political division of the Patriarchate would inevitably lead, sooner or later, to an ecclesiastical division of the Patriarchate of Aquileia. In 1751, the Austrian claims became the pretext for suppressing the Patriarchate of Aquileia, beyond all expectations. The

Patriarchate is divided into two Archdioceses, namely the Archdiocese of Udine on Venetian territory (with the following suffragan dioceses: Belluno, Koper, Ceneda, Novigrad, Concordia, Padua, Pola, Treviso, Verona and Vicenza) and the Archdiocese of Gorizia for the Habsburg territory (with the following suffragan dioceses: Como, Pedena, Trento and Trieste). One should point out that the then Archdiocese of Udine, which maintained the dioceses of the Ladin area, Belluno and Concordia, as suffragan - was more than enough, even from the territorial point of view, for the hypothetical conservation of the Patriarchal Title (the Patriarchal title was preserved only *ad personam* by Patriarch Daniel Delfino, until his death that occurred once the Patriarchate had already been suppressed. Interestingly enough, the newly formed Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Udine was also greater than the current Venetian Patriarchate, both in terms of territory and in terms of its suffragan dioceses. Another really strange element in the dark history of the abolition of the Patriarchate of Aquileia - which, not surprisingly, caused quite a stir at the time, both locally and across Europe - is the incredible (and totally inappropriate) formula "forever" in the papal bull *Injuncta nobis*, since it is almost impossible, for the Pope, to use formulas that are typical of divine canon law (unchangeable) for an act which would bring about a mere change of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, i.e. of Church canon law, which can be by definition always be repealed. Why not apply the general rule expressed by the famous maxim *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, just when it comes to the abolition of the Patriarchate of Aquileia? It seems that the objective of the papacy was precisely to remove an inconvenient Patriarchate by redefining the boundaries of the dioceses, but also through an absolutely exaggerated suppression, with an almost punitive character, especially if the event is reconsidered in the light of the precedent set by the first division of the Patriarchate of Aquileia, which took place in 606 AD C.

It is true that the most pressing insistence, in the mid eighteenth century, came to Rome from Austria. However, if we take into account the context in which Maria Theresa was acting, one understands why yet another disaster for Friuli had, in fact, Venetian origins.

The Serenissima, in fact, controlled only a fraction of the immense territory of the ecclesiastical patriarchate, but it did control the Patriarchal See that was moved from the ancient one in Cividale to the more central Udine in 1238. Thanks to this, Venice meted out all appointments to the Patriarchal See subsequent to 1420 to the Venetian nobility. The Venetian patriarchs did support the two Tiepolos, but they also caused untold damage, such as the abolition of the ancient Aquileian rite - contrary to what St. Carlo Borromeo did in Milan with the Ambrosian rite. Venetian Patriarchs were closer to Rome than the Roman St. Pius V. Venice refused an agreement with Austria on the appointment of the patriarchs and on establishing a patriarchal diocese for the territories of the patriarchate under imperial jurisdiction, which it, however, neglected spiritually. Some Venetian Patriarchs never got to Udine, but remained among the luxuries of the lagoon, being far more interested in infiltrating the territories beyond the old border politically, exploiting the Church as a Trojan horse.

The Habsburgs simply reacted to Venetian abuse, a few years before the arrival of a certain Bonaparte, who finally settled the score with the Republic of Venice, which in Friuli

is remembered only for its frontier wars, its taxes and its robbery. Hard to define otherwise the widespread expropriation of common lands without compensation, which were then sold back by Venice to her "loyal Friulian subjects", just to make more money out of them.

Of course, Pope Lambertini², accepted the Austrian request. Officially, history speaks of a mere pastoral problem on the border, solved by creating the Archdiocese in Udine for the Patriarchate's Venetian territories, and another in Gorizia, for the Patriarchate's imperial lands; personally, however, I believe that the Vatican's decision to suppress the Aquileian see, was excessive (as explained fully above), and hides many other unmentionable reasons.

For Maria Theresa it was enough, in fact, to have a diocese in Gorizia, she did not ask for anything more for the Empire, seeing that Venice wanted to preserve the exclusive right on the appointment of the Patriarch. And yet the Pope did not just adapt the ecclesiastical boundaries to the civil ones, but he also suppressed the Aquileian Patriarchal See in Udine (even if at first, Aquileia had become a neutral zone under the temporal sovereignty of the Holy See). The Patriarchal See in Udine could have been preserved in hindsight, although with a much more limited (and still quite extensive) area, if only there had been a real political will to do so. A simple border problem was in reality used as a pretext for punitive measures with far broader implications.

Why did the Pope suppress the Patriarchal See in Udine, when he could have simply limited its boundaries?

The answer is simple: Venice had had for a few centuries a competing Patriarchate, originally also derived from Aquileia. Venice would also have benefited from a reduction of the prestige of its Friulian colony. Moreover we also note that the usual Venetian turmoil, in the mid nineteenth century (as explained below), put into question the very legitimacy of the Archbishopric of Udine, which was deprived of all its suffragan dioceses of the Ladin area, including Concordia. This was only resolved by Pius IX, possibly to appease the local clergy, when he created one of the world's very few Archdioceses with no suffragan dioceses. In Rome, Aquileia was even more inconvenient, given its history, when in the heyday of the early Christian times St. Chromatius organized councils on a par with Milan and Constantinople, and boasted of scholars such as St. Jerome (a student of Chromatius, who inspired and financed his famous Latin translation of the Bible). The Dalmatian scholar was not a fleeting guest in Aquileia, which was his stable cultural and spiritual reference – so much so that he testifies in one of his Epistles that "the faithful in Aquileia sing like angels, while in Rome, they bark like dogs" (the second part is usually censored, for obvious reasons of prestige and power). It is not difficult to understand why Aquileia, and the greatness of its history, were a very serious thorn in Rome's side, considering also that during the period of its greatest expansion, Aquileia's ecclesiastic jurisdiction

² This was Benedict XIV: I can only hope that sharing the name with the current Pope Benedict XVI does not inspire Ratzinger also to share his policy on Aquileia.

stretched from Como to the Hungarian Lake Balaton, and from Bavaria to the whole of the northern Adriatic sea.

This is why, perhaps, Rome took the opportunity to reduce to a simple border Archdiocese an Ecclesiastical See that had historically threatened to become a real competitor: one so powerful, in fact, to proclaim itself as independent from Rome itself (see the above mentioned Schism of the Three Chapters).

I hereby wish to remind everyone that the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical sees is not a matter of faith and anyone can have his or her own opinion on this matter.

Aquileia's soul is immortal and always will be. No Pope will ever be able to suppress it, no bishop will ever cause it to die: it has in fact lived on in the two Roman Catholic Archdioceses of Udine and Gorizia. Udine has preserved the Patriarchal See and the Palace is still called the Patriarchal Palace – graced by the beautiful frescoes by Tiepolo, and disgraced by many other negative events). The Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia, and above all the Church's great spirit still live on in Gorizia. It should be noted that while Udine has also preserved the liturgical privileges attesting the continuity with the original Archdiocese of Aquileia, Gorizia has instead distinguished itself by the moral superiority of its clergy, and especially its Archbishops. While the former Archbishops of Udine were all pro-Venetian and were kept in line by Venice, Carlo Michele d'Attems, first Archbishop of Gorizia, with the support of Maria Theresa, was winning back to Christianity his immense new archdiocese from the paganism into which it had fallen due to the neglect of the Venetian patriarchs. Gorizia became a major metropolitan see throughout the Empire, to which the best theologians of the Emperor were regularly sent. Immediately after the Concordat of 1929, while the then Archbishop of Udine Bishop Giuseppe Nogara, to ingratiate himself with Mussolini, the so-called "man sent by divine providence", did not hesitate to take shameful measures prohibiting the use of any language in the Church other than Italian (more successful in comparison to similar restrictions imposed by his predecessor Bishop Rossi, also a keen anti-Friulian - but he had less luck with a recalcitrant clergy hesitant to 'kill' the languages of his people – he was also the Archbishop who abandoned his people in the difficult years after the Caporetto defeat). His counterpart from Gorizia, Francesco Borgia Sedej, who throughout his ministry had prioritized the rediscovery of Aquileia and the promotion of multilingualism as its greatest legacy, endured to the very end and had to give up his office, rather than yield to the fascist regime and betray his people. He always stood for civility and tolerance, and was strongly opposed to any desire for superiority or contrasts on the basis of nationalism, even Slovenian nationalism, although he was himself a Slovene. Bishop von Galen fought against the Nazis, and was known as the Lion of Münster, for the way in which he stood up to Hitler. Our beloved –if inconvenient for the ecclesiastical establishment- Archbishop of Gorizia, Francesco Borgia Sedej fought against fascism in a land that only a few years after his masked removal was devastated by unprecedented violence, which started with the forced denationalization of the Slovenes, and the military occupation and annihilation of the Province of Ljubljana, whose population filled the fascist concentration camps that are still preserved in Friuli, even if well hidden, in Gonars and Visco.

7.

1818: Venice looking for the ultimate heist (which - thank God - it carried out only partially).

The Archdiocese of Udine is incredibly reduced to a simple suffragan of Venice. The abolition of the Aquileian patriarchal insignia, i.e. the last signs of the formal dignity of Aquileia, who had managed to survive the aforementioned suppression of the Patriarchate - this were the pallium and Patriarchal red as a liturgical color). The traditionally Aquileian suffragan dioceses of Belluno and Concordia were transferred to the Metropolitan See of Venice, along with the Diocese of Udine.

In Udine the local reaction was such that, in 1847, after nearly three decades of struggles (which were of course hushed and kept underground, as only churchmen are able to do) Pope Pius IX was forced to return the title and insignia to the restored Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Udine, but he did not return the suffragan dioceses, not even the Friulian one of Concordia, which remained under Venice's jurisdiction since 1818, as a consolation prize for a partially successful robbery.

It is only thanks to the compromise adopted by Pius IX in the mid nineteenth century that the Archdiocese of Udine could maintain its (mostly formal) independence from the Patriarch of Venice, visually symbolized by the archbishop's pallium (a crossed lambswool yoke worn over the sacred vestments by all Metropolitans, during the Eucharistic celebrations) and the patriarchal red (the liturgical dark red color, unlike the purple that other bishops wear, closer to cardinal red, and reserved only for the Patriarch of Aquileia, as part of the ancient Aquileian rite).

Venice failed to dent, at least formally, the ecclesiastical autonomy of the Church of Aquileia at the provincial level (only through the intervention of Pius IX, to whom Udine devoted a large bust in the left nave of the Metropolitan Church in 1847). However, it succeeded to influence Church decisions in Udine, at least at the regional level, because since the late nineteenth century, Venice managed to incorporate Aquileia into her immense ecclesiastical territory, which is still called "Triveneto". In my opinion, this ecclesiastical region should simply be abolished, if only to break the tradition of a concentration of power and a name that has an all too fascistic ring to it...

8.

This historical overview, developed through the previous instalments, was absolutely necessary in order to provide all our people with appropriate interpretations, and a clear

understanding of the difficult moment in which our Church of Aquileia finds itself currently – also considering that for centuries the history of Friuli was written by antifriulian or collaborationist writers (with the exception, perhaps, of Father Giuseppe Marchetti). Particularly problematic is the situation of the Archdiocese of Udine, since Gorizia still has a priest for every parish, as well as one parish for each town.

Why are there no priests in Udine? Yet God continues to call, even in Udine ... The problem is that the Church leaders in Udine only accept and promote subservient people. In the turbulent years around 1968, many candidates for the priesthood were literally purged for purely political reasons without taking into any consideration that people that are willing to embrace alternatives are usually provided with better brains (among other things). Father Toni Bellina exposed the situation in his famous autobiography "The Factory of Priests" (*La fabbrica dei preti*), as nine out of ten candidates were eliminated, leaving only the least independent, the most 'grey' and indistinct characters. Udine is paying for this policy now, while the Archdiocese of Gorizia is in much better shape, simply because, the seminary did not purge candidates in the same way, as well as boasting the legendary and prolific Priest of Grado (Bishop Fain, from Cormona, famous for his yearly priest ordinations). In Udine, but surely also elsewhere, certain so-called weaknesses and escapades are tolerated, even unjustifiable liturgical abuses are tolerated: there is a prevailing policy of general laxity, counterpointed by the one absolute prohibition, namely the impossibility to criticize dominant church politics. The result is that not only the number but also the average level of our priests, all things considered, is literally plummeting ... and I vouchsafe this through personal experience.

The situation of the Church in Udine is very complex, and therefore comprised not only of negative sides. Our clergy, however, needs to shoulder part of the responsibility for the negative sides, not only our people.

Archbishop Alfredo Battisti, originally from Padua but a naturalized Friulian, enriched our Udine bishopric by a gradual rediscovery of its origins, the greatness of its past and prestige, overshadowing Venice's arrogance and haughtiness. Our Church could hold its own on a par with Rome itself (as St. Chromatius showed, in his day). The tenure of Archbishop Battisti, usually remembered only as the Archbishop of the post-earthquake period and of the University of Friuli (as the University of Udine should rightfully be called), was a rich and fruitful period from an ecclesiastical point of view. Especially with regard to the Aquileian tradition, this period was second only to the Archbishop of Gorizia Francesco Borgia Sedej's tenure in the early twentieth century, who rediscovered Aquileia.

It was the same Mons. Battisti who promoted the use of the Aquileian liturgical books for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours of Saints typical of the Archdiocese of Udine, in parallel with the sister Archdiocese of Gorizia. They had been renovated in accordance with the last Council's liturgical reform and well-kept from a historical point of view. They are very inconvenient liturgical books, hardly tolerated by some of our most "Roman" clergy, which

treats them as if they were a kind of inopportune relative, as the last remnants of Aquileian tradition in our Church in Udine.

It was precisely during Battisti's tenure that the long-awaited translation of the Bible into Friulian was finally approved, even from the standpoint of canon law, in 1996. During the Solemn Mass for the patron saints Ermacora and Fortunato in Aquileia in July 1976, only a few months after the historic earthquake of May 1976 had awakened a desire to rebuild Friuli according to its most authentic sources of our faith and of our cultural roots, Rome threatened to lock the Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia, had the Mass been celebrated in the Friulian language. This was recently revealed by the monthly journal *La Patrie dal Friûl* (November 2010, essay on pg. 15). Obviously, the Aquileian rebirth was not very welcome in Rome, also because it reminds us of an inconvenient truth, which is considered dangerous to the current balance of powers. The Catholic Church, however, has many different levels in Rome, in fact, on *La Vita Cattolica* (November 20, 2010, on page 47), Bishop Corgnali, the Director of the Commission for the translation of liturgical books in the Friulian language (does it still exist?), maintains that the problems that the Church and its liturgy are facing today towards Friulian are not rooted in the Holy See, but in the CEI³, which has always privileged a direct relationship with the central government (just think of the fact that, when they meet, the Italian Bishops, despite all the problems that we find in the Church in Italy today, they seem to speak only of national politics). Why was the celebration of the Verbum Domini abolished, which was celebrated throughout the Archdiocese only once? Why was it forbidden to Friulian-speaking Friulians to celebrate the anniversary of the complete translation of the Holy Scriptures into their language? This occasion was meant to celebrate the ecclesiastical significance of the translation of the Bible into Friulian, and that of an alleged Protestant tendency feels like a mere pretext, because this celebration was not intended to replace the Corpus Domini, which it in fact echoed on the basis of evident solemn declarations of the documents from the Second Vatican Council on the importance of the Sacred Scriptures. Even the current Archbishop of Udine, Mons. Mazzocato, recently issued a pastoral letter focused entirely on the reading of the Bible (which is almost entirely devoid of significant eucharistic references), but no one dreamt of accusing him of Protestantism.

Moreover, the Friulian language, even in the Church of Udine (not to mention, for example, the Aquileian Diocese of Concordia, currently within the metropolitan territory of Venice), is hardly surrounded by great favor: it is not clear, for example, why the use of the Missal in Friulian, which was canonically approved already in 2001 (it is rumored due to the direct, personal intervention of Pope John Paul II) is, in fact, a rare exception, in our local church practice, when it should be the exact opposite instead.

All of these symptoms are a very real proof of hostility - Prof. Daniele Bonamore has not hesitated to call it a language genocide: over the generations and in any public or prestigious context, Friulians have been taught to despise themselves, their history, their

³ CEI – *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana*, i.e. Italian Bishops' Council (translator's note).

identity and even their language ... so that even the Catholic Church has often participated in the forcible language assimilation implemented by the Italian government. Suffice it to mention – as supporting this undeniable historical fact - the ambiguous attitude of the Archbishop of Udine, Mons. Nogara, against fascism, as well as his disgraceful prohibitions against the ecclesiastical or liturgical use - for example in the homilies - of all the regional languages other than Italian.

In this context, it is of the utmost gravity that in a press release on the upcoming visit of the Pope to Aquileia issued by the Bishops of the Friulian Autonomous Region, and published on *Vita Cattolica* (October 16th, 2010, page 7), Aquileia and Venice, the two channels of evangelization – the Patriarchates – are mentioned as joined by a dash. We do agree of course that Aquileia was undoubtedly a channel for apostolic tradition, but what is Venice, if not the channel for the political collusion between Church and Secular Power through systematic plunder and pillaging?

Are we witnessing an attempt, after the failed visit of the Pope just to Aquileia in the year of St. Chromatius (the Pope was clearly invited as per a statement in *La Vita Cattolica* December 8, 2007), to use the next visit to Aquileia-Venice to try and obtain the Pope's consecration of Venice's ridiculous attempt at presenting itself as a continuation of Aquileia? That is presenting itself as successor of a Church against which it literally waged war, first to rob Friuli of its political autonomy and then to seize its suffragan dioceses, destroying the Patriarchate of Aquileia's rite, bringing about its abolition, and persecuting its authentic tradition - since St. Mark was not from Venice, but from Aquileia.

We believe that the historical background I gave you first is more than enough to debunk any myth or doubt and brand the Venetian Patriarchate as a fraud.

We can then simply consider the decision of the Pope to visit both competing Patriarchal Sees an infelicitous one to say the least. Especially because it privileges the secondary See of Venice, while the visit to Aquileia will be rather fleeting and not even including a celebration of the Eucharist (program distributed by *La Vita Cattolica*, October 16, 2010, page 7). No one knows who has advised the Pope to do so, although there is some suspicion that the idea is Venetian, since the interested party, the current Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Angelo Scola, is pulling all the strings of the preparations for the Pope's visit, as shown for example in an article published on p. 13 of *La Vita Cattolica*, dated October 23, 2010. Such a decision simply sends the message that even in the Church, the strongest, the richest, the most arrogant, the most cunning always prevails...

9.

We hope at least that the upcoming visit of the Pope to Aquileia may announce (as was the case with the Bible) the long expected approval of the translation of the Roman Missal into the Friulian language, since the Missal of the Church of Aquileia (recently reissued for

the delight of fans and scholars based on its latest edition of 1517) was abolished and even physically erased by the Patriarchs of Venice at the first opportunity they got in a real pogrom of inconvenient liturgical books. The astute Venice, however, had secretly continued to use it until 1800 (it figures, for a diocese that had never had anything and is in fact based on nothing - except on the force of power, weapons and money – having a separate rite was invaluable).

The Roman Missal in the Friulian language had been insistently remembered by Mons. Brollo, Archbishop of Udine, until the end of his administration, then it fell mysteriously into oblivion, and it was recently revived by grass-roots movements: Bishop Corgnali has masterfully shown that these vicissitudes (*La Vita Cattolica*, November 20, 2010, page. 47), were caused by the CEI, as the sworn enemy of the Friulian language. The CEI did approve the translation of the Bible at the time of more tolerant Cardinal Ruini, but today with CEI's director, 'Supreme General' Cardinal Bagnasco, suffers from a more fascist-like penchant. It has finally come to light that the CEI is responsible for the absolutely capricious and unreasonable, incredible decision that the translation of the Roman Missal into Friulian is to come after the new translation into Italian of the Roman Missal (the translation of the third Latin edition into Italian, still being worked on at a slow pace). The Friulian translation of the same Latin third edition has been ready for a long time, many years now. We were finally able to read about the rather crestfallen reaction at the Offices of the infamous CEI, when they saw that they had been resoundingly beaten not only on time, but also in the quality of the preparation of the liturgical books in Friulian, by the Aquileian Church to boot!

How can this unbelievable delay not be defined as an abuse that has lasted for years, or rather an offense... The rationale is perhaps that CEI wants people to think that the Friulian version of the Roman Missal WAS TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN ONE (IN REALITY NOT YET COMPLETED) and not from Latin, as is the case for all versions of liturgical books in modern languages.

And, of course, this is yet another gesture of contempt for the Friulian people, who are no bootlickers, but also not evil, and for a Church that has always been hated and dreaded, because it has always been a symbol of collegiality and pluralism at odds with hierarchical tendencies of the so-called "Roman" clergy. Aquileia has paid heavily for its coherence - it was even erased with the unusual formula "forever"! - and now it continues to pay: for instance when it is coupled with Venice as an evangelical channel. These claims are solely designed to revise and erase the history of Aquileia, against the Friulian people. They are claims that our bishops think they can just pour out with impunity because, nowadays, in Italy, we must be very good self-taught historians if we want to know anything in depth about the history of local territories.

10.

Some recent statements in *La Vita Cattolica* also deserve a few words.

First of all, we must start by saying that the appointment of the new Episcopal Delegate for Culture (published on page 11 on *La Vita Cattolica* dated August 28, 2010) preceded almost symptomatically the subsequent replacement of the historical editor of the weekly Catholic magazine (this replacement was announced on September 25, 2010, in the last issue directed by the legendary Ezio Gosgnach). The primary effect of this makeover was to provoke (first issue under new management dated October 2, 2010) a systematic censorship of all the sections previously written in Friulian, with the sole exception of the page dedicated specifically to the Friulian language. Some editorialists agreed to change from Friulian to Italian, such as a Pre Vigji Glovaz that, after a week, magically became Father "Luigi Gloazzo" (page 8 of *La Vita Cattolica* dated October 2, 2010). Even if it was just one instance, which was reversed possibly due to internal resistance, it did send a very clear signal. Beyond any superficial statements that were issued, it seems clear that the new diocesan delegate for culture don Geretti does not follow the same line of his predecessor, Mons. Corgnali, judging from Geretti's statements about the upcoming reading of the Bible in Friulian (an initiative that was NOT launched by the Archdiocese) and the above-mentioned translation into Friulian of the Missal. Don Alessio Geretti is undoubtedly very good at organizing international exhibitions of religious art and to interface with the powers that be, but perhaps not too fond of the most typical, grass-roots products from Friuli, he is perhaps mostly concerned for his career. With possibly considerable effort, in his interview on *La Vita Cattolica*, October 16, 2010, 'Pagine Furlane' – he did offer some very interesting comments, which we can all share. The fact that the interview was published in Friulian, just goes to show that the first enemies of Friuli are often the Friulians themselves.

WHAT DID THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF CULTURE MEAN, HOWEVER, CITED IN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED INTERVIEW, REFERRING TO THE UPCOMING APPROVAL OF THE NEXT MISSAL, BY STATING THAT, at the diocesan level, SUGGESTIONS AND RULES FOR USAGE WOULD BE PROVIDED?

Is it not enough, to prohibit surreptitiously the actual use of the Friulian version of the Missal, even after its approval that was possibly due to the intervention of pope John Paul II himself?

THEY EVEN WISH TO IMPOSE LIMITS ON THE USE OF THE FUTURE MISSAL! These theoretical limits would in fact translate into a total prohibition of the use of the Missal in actual practice.

Udine is the only Archdiocese in the world who lives with embarrassment or even displeasure the anniversary of its patron saints. The last Aquileian celebration of the Patron Saints was not devoted a single word on the diocesan weekly magazine – drowned in the propaganda of a grandiose manifesto of the new Archbishop (I'm referring to the front page of *La Vita Cattolica*, July 10, 2010).

The same new Archbishop of Udine was instead overshadowed, as was his Gorizian counterpart Gorizia, when the Bishop of Trieste, only Archbishop *ad personam* since Trieste is a mere suffragan diocese to the Archdiocese of Gorizia, presided over the very important Eucharistic Celebration of the Bishops of the Autonomous Community of Friuli, held on July 12 every year in the Patriarchal Basilica of Aquileia (*La Vita Cattolica*, July 17, 2010). In the past it has been presided over, taking turns - a year each, by the holders of the two sister heirs of the Patriarchate – Udine and Gorizia. The eccentricity and protagonism of Trieste are evidently expanding from the political administration into Church matters: this happens of course at the expense of the whole of Friuli.

All this happens because Saint Ermacora (with his deacon Fortunatus), probably appointed by St. Mark when Venice was still a swamp, gave rise to a Church and a tradition whose prestige is still an inconvenient truth for those in power, that have tried to erase, diminish or simply pillage it for several centuries.

11.

The new Archbishop of Udine, Mons. Andrea Bruno Mazzocato, beyond lip service as to the alleged continuity with the pastoral direction followed by his immediate predecessors, Bishops Battisti and Brollo, has explained some very questionable guidelines, starting from his problematic relationship of coexistence with his direct predecessor, Archbishop Emeritus Mons. Pietro Brollo. Those who, like me, follow the major diocesan liturgical celebrations, know that *La Vita Cattolica* on this point tends to embellish the real relationship between these two characters.

It is possible that one of the reasons of friction lies in the fact that Bishop Brollo was well aware that Friulian Christianity is based on the Friulian countryside reality, often comprised of very small villages, with a few hundred inhabitants. Mons. Pressacco, in his research mentioned above shows that it was in the countryside and not in major cities, that the ancient Judeo-Christian Aquileian traditions persevered despite the prohibitions of the usual Patriarchs of Venice, such as that of the *Sante Sabide*, namely the festive Sabbath day on Saturday, clearly deriving from the Hebrew tradition. Mons. Brollo did not abolish a single parish, despite the shortage of priests, and allowed the village churches to be opened at least once a week for the people of the village to meet there, even without the presence of a priest. *Campanilismo* (chauvinism⁴) does not need to be used only in a negative sense, since in Friuli it is the single village, however small, that has represented the foundation not only of church and parish, but also of a cultural and sociological nature. The clergy does not want to work hard, but they do accept the 8/00 of our taxes!

⁴ In Italian the word derives from *campanile* i.e. the 'bell-tower' of a church (translator's note).

To ensure coverage even in small centers, given the numerically insufficient clergy, the Diocese in Udine is forced to use deacons (often underestimated today, although many Aquileian saints were in fact deacons) and lay ministers. Despite the need and feasibility of these canonical solutions in an emergency, some clergy in Udine hardly tolerate them, for fear that the lay ministers may, in fact, overshadow the figure of the priest. For some of our clergy, the lay minister or the faithful cannot even lead the recitation of the rosary, if there is not a priest around ... on closer inspection, it is, once again, only a mere matter of prestige and power. The clerical caste is more and more spoiled and lazy, willing to accept everything, including the end of Friulian faith based on the village nucleus, rather than yield even a little to the role of lay people involved in our church. Our clergy would sacrifice the Church, abandoning the smallest hamlets to their fate rather than question its role.

The new Archbishop Mazzocato started to send letters suggesting changes to a diocese in Udine that he admits himself he has never visited. His predecessor Mons. Brollo took three years of familiarizing himself with the dioceses before implementing his pastoral views. Mons. Mazzocato, on the other hand, without even concluding his thorough and positive visit to all of his Archdiocese, a few months after his recent appointment (October 18, 2009) has already stated that there may be considerable changes to the administration of the Archdiocese in the near future (*La Vita Cattolica* June 26, 2010, at the beginning of the article published at the bottom of page 11 – he is probably referring to the usual suppression of parishes and districts, carried out with the excuse that there are no priests, only to serve questions of power, namely to avoid having to yield some power to lay people).

Moreover, in the recent editorial of the new episcopal delegate for culture, the aforementioned Don Alessio Geretti, he clearly states that the laity should not be interested in questions of church government and administration, but rather carry out the ecclesiastical interests according to the directives from the clergy. I thus invite you, dear readers, to keep in mind that the said Don Geretti is a well connected chap, for example with the Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Bertone (he is systematically involved in his famous and highly appreciated exhibitions of religious art). Instead of being interested in the culture of our region and our church, Don Geretti talks a lot about politics, instead of reviving Aquileian traditions. He is also ready to wage war, and literally call to arms all Catholics, against more or less imaginary enemies of the Church (or, perhaps, just of the clergy, which is not necessarily the same as the Church). In a tragicomic turn, Geretti has recently done this, I think with complete sincerity, in an editorial in the diocesan weekly (published on the first page of *La Vita Cattolica*, dated October 9, 2010, just under the photo of the Pope and the news of his upcoming visit we are discussing here). His editorial attracted the protest of two of the most illustrious members of our diocesan clergy (published in the next issue of *La Vita Cattolica*, on October 16, 2010, at the opening of the section devoted to readers' letters): this shows the emergence of an apparent conflict within the clergy in Udine (it is not difficult to imagine that, for simplicity, the two factions are, once again, that of Aquileia and that of Rome). And poor Geretti has tried to patch up the conflict, to save his image, not quite succeeding in doing so.

All these elements clearly come together to upset the age-old relationship that existed between Friuli, its church and its territory. As the Gospel says that where even just two or three are gathered in my name, there I will be among them, even the smallest parishes have a reason to exist, as if the parishes, like all Christian communities, were born to serve the priest, and not vice versa. Excuse the banal comparison, but in this case the chicken came clearly first (the community) and then the egg (the priest), and the priest's role is administering effectively some of the sacraments: the liturgical service, which by its very nature is public, can be officiated also by the laity, if only by virtue of baptism.

If for the new Archbishop a parish without a resident pastor makes no sense, then an archdiocese with few priests also loses its meaning, and perhaps it is no coincidence that Bishop Mazzocato appears reluctant to use the traditional archiepiscopal pallium, a symbol of the autonomy of the Archdiocese of Udine from Venetian assimilation, to the point that he has issued statements about the meaning of the imposition of the crossed lambswool yoke that he should always wear when celebrating Mass in the metropolitan church. In such statements, the new Archbishop of Udine has omitted any reference to the greatness of the Church of Aquileia, speaking only of that of Rome (I'm referring to the statements published in *La Vita Cattolica* dated June 26, 2010, details about Aquileia, clearly later and cosmetic in nature, were only published in the next issue dated July 3, 2010).

Many clues suggest that the failed Venetian coup of 1818-1847 may succeed yet...
historia magistra vitae.

In a country like Italy, where church and state, typically go hand in hand, are we sure that similar upheavals in the church will not involve any consequences also on the political and administrative level?

And at the same time, if we re-established the ancient Patriarchate of Aquileia, by joining the two suffragan dioceses of the Ladin area, consisting of Concordia-Pordenone and Belluno (why is the latter united to Feltre?), would one not get political and administrative consequences too?

Or is a mere coincidence that the chronotaxis of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone has always recorded bishops of local origin?

CHURCH AND STATE, can physiologically only be TWO SEPARATE BODIES: in fact, one is the representative of a supernatural power of a religious nature, while the other's character is that of a public authority of an earthly nature, they can thus NOT converge beyond a certain safety limit, unless one wants to dismantle the fundamental principle of equality. For instance equality between a Catholic citizen and one that isn't Catholic, or between a believer who is actually more congenial to the state because he speaks only Italian, or another one who is inconvenient for the Italian State, for example because s/he

insists on wanting to preserve and pass on the regional languages of our region Friuli. Or some other fundamental principles of democracy and the sovereignty of the people - with the risk of a theocratic drift, or even just of excessive political influence of ecclesiastical authority: the latter is not democratically elected and therefore it is not even theoretically subject to political responsibilities, while it can in fact influence the electorate or the political class. As an example, it is said that Pius XII (the same that some clergy would want to canonize), granted audience to De Gasperi, who had just won the historic elections of 1948, and requested him to take advantage of the victory of the Catholics in order to definitively ban the Communists, just because they were communists. Of course, the Father of the Constitution De Gasperi said no to the Pontiff, and asked His Holiness to remember that Italy, on the basis of their fundamental constitutional principles, was democratic and pluralistic. It is possible that Pius XII experienced it as a second slap of Anagni, but what seems certain is that De Gasperi (one of the few Italian politicians who died with no money) would be canonized much later, if ever, than that same Pius XII, who was questionable also for other reasons.

THE CHURCH IS NOT ONLY THE CLERGY, but it includes all those who have been baptized.

The Laity, which is also PART OF THE CHURCH AND HAS THE RIGHT AND DUTY TO ENFORCE ITS POSITION IN the doctrinal and pastoral context, and call to order the Ministers and the Clergy, dedicated to its service, IF IT IS NECESSARY. And lately it certainly is, because the average cultural level of the clergy is simply abysmal.

All of this should happen in a context of pluralism and collegiality, in the most exquisite and inconvenient Aquileian tradition.

AS FOR CHARITY, PLEASE DO NOT confuse this principle with the feel-good "let's love one another, that all else will be fine" one.

It is better to meet in an open and frank disagreement, than put up with the hypocrisy of false manifestations of peace.

It seems to me, in summary, that it is time to awaken consciences, because what matters most, in fact, is not so much power in and of itself, but rather, the values that power can serve.

12.

Let me conclude these brief remarks that I owed to my own conscience, even before than to Friuli, and to historical truth. Since no one talks about these facts - or rather, no one speaks about them decently - I'll take this unto myself to do so, even if I will pay for it in

person, as it has happened on numerous occasions before. I will conclude with a thought that is not mine, but has recently been posted on this web journal by Marco de Agostini, about pedophilia among the clergy: I want to continue to be a convinced Christian and a Catholic, despite the actions of some clergy.

Let us bring to Aquileia, to the visit of Pope Benedict XVI, the Friulian flags, i.e. the flags of the Patriarchate of Aquileia, the ones that his namesake predecessor abolished! The flags with the Friulian patriarchal eagle will surely be very annoying to many! If we must succumb to the tyranny of the strongest, I insist that we should at least sell our skin dearly!

The last remark I would like to dedicate to the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Angelo Scola, the author of this unprecedented visit to Aquileia-Venice. The cardinal, in order to remind everyone who's boss in the CET⁵, has recently made a public visit even to Udine, on October 18, 2009, at the inauguration of his pupil in the Aquileian bishopric, that is the current Archbishop of Udine Mons. Mazzocato. Let us remember that the only true Patriarchate is the Aquileian one. Since the old border is gone, we demand that the Patriarchate of Aquileia be immediately reconstituted, at least with the return of the stolen suffragan Dioceses of Concordia-Pordenone, and if they so agree locally, including that of Cadore, with the abolition of the Triveneto Episcopal Conference. Let us go beyond the current national character of the metropolitan churches and restore the multinational nature of the ancient jurisdiction of Aquileia. Let the Gospel of St. Mark that was stolen during the war of 1420 and currently kept at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice be returned to Aquileia with abundant apologies....

Aquileia lives on!

You will never be able to eliminate or to tame us!

We will always be the thorn in your side!

We need to write our own history, we cannot tolerate that others write it as they please!

THE END – at least for now.

⁵ *Conferenza Episcopale Triveneta* – Tri-venetian Bishops' Council – *Triveneto* is an expression including a territory that is nowadays spread over three regions: Friuli, Veneto, and Trentino-Alto Adige (translator's note).