
Brazil, assault on institutions. Msgr. Oliveira de Azevedo (bishops): "Unconstitutional acts that offend democracy, the Church should teach citizenship"

Twenty-four hours after the debacle, Brazil is questioning itself with unease. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has convened the governors and issued decrees to ensure security. Images of government, parliament and Supreme Court offices set on fire have been making the rounds around the world. The uprising of far-right militants, a "Capitol Hill" on steroids, was quelled by the "feds," with more than 1,200 arrests. The ease with which thousands of militants have concentrated in the country's institutional heartland is disturbing, however, and in no small part. Speculations about the alleged "complicity" of parts of state power are flourishing, from the "local" one in the Federal District (the governor was "removed" by the Supreme Court) to some probable "infiltrators" in the stormed buildings, from Police delays to the role of the Army. Concerns about the climate in the country, which is struggling to unwind after the very bitter electoral contest between the victorious Lula and the loser Bolsonaro, who has distanced himself from the assailants, after, however, having "let them do it" for weeks, a period in which roadblocks and occupations never ceased. Anxieties and concerns are also addressed by the president of Brazil's National Conference of Bishops, **Dom Walmor Oliveira de Azevedo**, archbishop of Belo Horizonte. **Your Excellency, how do you assess Sunday's events and the institutions' response?** The invasion of the offices of the three powers of the Republic greatly saddens all those who defend democracy and the Magna Carta-the citizens' Constitution-which, if fully respected, could take the country to another level of civilization. These demonstrations are unconstitutional acts which offend Brazilian democracy and, as a result, go against the rights of everyone, including those who promote chaos and disorder while wanting to assert their own beliefs. The reaction of democratic institutions could have been swifter, preemptive, considering that these radical groups organize through social networks, openly, without any shame. Preventive measures could have avoided the plundering of public property, especially those that constitute the national artistic heritage and were kept in the overrun buildings. We hope, now, that the powers of the Republic can act swiftly to dispel the ongoing anti-democratic acts and punish those responsible. At this time, broad unity, especially involving the governors of the states, regardless of ideological beliefs, is very important. It is time to reaffirm that there is a consensus on the essentiality of democratic institutions. **Are you concerned about the possibility of similar events or riots occurring in other cities?** Brazilian society has long suffered from polarization, which creates a context conducive to anti-democratic demonstrations marked by violence. In a very brief definition, the context of polarization refers precisely to a reality in which people do not see and recognize themselves as similar, perceiving themselves as enemies of those with whom they disagree. This distorted view is a trigger for real insanity within families, churches and, most importantly, in the streets, during demonstrations. Demonstrating is a legitimate act related to freedom of expression. But when the demonstration is tainted by violence and takes place outside the law, it becomes a criminal act. The current context is conducive to criminal acts and, for this very reason, requires special attention from the authorities. **In any case, do you think Brazilian democracy is solid enough?** Brazil's democracy is young and has yet to progress, but it has already established itself in the culture of the people, who no longer accept totalitarianism or impositions. The immediate reactions to the acts against the offices of the Republic's powers show that democracy can inspire consensus, even among those with divergent political views. Authorities who do not share the same view unite to defend constitutional principles. Likewise, many citizens with similar ideological beliefs to those who committed unconstitutional acts have already expressed their disapproval of what happened in the Federal District. It is clear, then, that the undemocratic acts are promoted by a minority. It is necessary to overcome them, to always reaffirm democracy as an untouchable principle, and thus advance in the maturation of the exercise of citizenship in Brazilian society. **Is the**

prevailing climate of hatred in the country really worrying? What is your hope in this regard?

Polarizations sow seeds of irrationality and therefore cause concern. These protests in which people do not recognize the dignity of those with whom they disagree can become breeding grounds for various expressions of violence. The consequences are the deplorable scenes seen in Brasilia, of looting of public property, of attacks on workers, with special reference to security officers, who try to curb vandalism. It is hoped that the trail of destruction left in the Federal District, with the deplorable and shameful scenes of disrespect for the three powers that guarantee the existence of the democratic rule of law, will touch the hearts of Brazilians, who must strongly reject undemocratic acts. Only then will society be able to mature and react appropriately within the parameters of civilization.

What is the role of the Catholic Church and Christian churches in this situation? What can Christian communities do? The Christian faith plays an essential role in education for the exercise of citizenship because, when lived authentically, it requires an inalienable commitment to peace. The Christian's heart is a heart of peace. And democracy becomes stronger, richer, when it is imbued with peace. A context in which citizens, even with their differences, recognize themselves as fellow citizens with the right to express themselves. The Christian faith educates in selflessness: what counts is not personal conviction or self-interest, but what is collectively defined through dialogue and voting. Christian churches have first and foremost the duty to be schools of authentic faith, founded on the Gospel of Jesus. To inspire peace, the experience of fraternity, even among those who do not profess the same faith.

Unfortunately, there are many expressions of a "distorted Christianity," the cradle of fundamentalism and opportunism.

It is a type of living religion in the service of power projects, beliefs and self-interest. Thus they go against the discipleship and authentic following of Jesus Christ, Savior and Redeemer, the one who, equal to us in everything but sin, gave everything, his life, as a ransom for all, showing the only way of the victory of life over death, of love over hate. Starting from the source of the Gospel, the Church has an essential educational offer, with a view to a "full life" through education for peace and love. All this has consequences for the urgent needs of Brazilian society.

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