Tarbes, July 2, 2024

Mosaics by Marco Rupnik - Lourdes

Following the revelation of the numerous attacks for which Marco Rupnik was implicated, the question arose of the future of the mosaics that he created for the Sanctuary of Lourdes and which are attached to the entrance to the Basilica Our Lady of the Rosary. Many people who were victims of sexual violence and abuse at the hands of clerics have expressed their suffering and the violence that this exhibition now constitutes for them.

Between May and October 2023, with the Rector of the Sanctuary, we formed a commission to discern the answer to this difficult question. Among the members of this commission were victims (French and foreign nationals), but also experts specializing in sacred art, jurists, people engaged in the prevention and fight against abuse, and chaplains of Lourdes. The commission has worked since November 2023 until now. At the same time, I was also able to listen to and read the opinions of many people who wanted to send me their contribution: cardinals and bishops, artists, jurists, victims, pilgrims, etc...

Today, I see that opinions are very divided. Should we leave these mosaics where they are? Should they be destroyed? Should they be removed or displayed elsewhere? There is no consensus on any proposal. The positions taken are lively and passionate.

My personal opinion is now clear: this situation has nothing to do with other works of art whose author and victims have died, sometimes centuries ago. Here, the victims are alive and so is the perpetrator. Furthermore, I understood over the months that it was not my responsibility to reason based on the status of a work of art, its "morality" which should be distinguished from that of its author. . My role is to ensure that the Sanctuary welcomes everyone, especially those who suffer; among them people who are victims of abuse and sexual assault, children and adults. In Lourdes, care of the sick and injured people who need consolation and reparation must take first place. This is the specific grace of this Sanctuary: nothing should prevent them from responding to Our Lady's message inviting them to come there on pilgrimage. Because this has become impossible for many, my personal opinion is that it would be better to remove these mosaics.

This option does not appeal to everyone. It has encountered real opposition from some. The subject arouses passions. Today, the best decision to make is not yet ready, and my conviction become a decision, which would not be understood enough, would add even more division and violence.

I will therefore continue to work even more with victims, to discern what should be done, here in Lourdes, to honour the absolute requirement of consolation and reparation.

From now on, and in a concrete way, I have decided that these mosaics will no longer be highlighted as they have been until now by illumination during the Marian procession which brings together the pilgrims each evening. This is a first step. We will discern, with people of good will who agree to help us, the next steps.

It is up to me as 'Guardian of the Grotto' and beyond to decide the precise question of the future of these mosaics, to move forward concretely, again and again in welcoming victims and all injured, fragile and poor people. in Lourdes. This will be my work for the coming months, with those who agree to continue to help me.

I entrust this situation to the mercy of God and the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Bernadette.

Mgr Jean-Marc Micas