

TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Tradition and modernity: two words that have been seen as apparently opposite concepts. However, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, in today's context of uncontrolled, disoriented globalization - a time of fundamentalism of all stripes and a loss of the humanistic values that have characterized and guided peoples and the more culturally developed nations for centuries, I would say it is imperative and urgent that we find antidotes for the depersonalization that these realities so drastically cause us.

As a very well known journalist of my country said a few days ago, the new figure of the citizen is of the citizen that consumes, not the one of the citizen that chooses his liberty.

In all of mankind's activities - in industry, trade, arts, culture in general, services, even in agriculture - the primacy of money has come to supplant that of human beings as the center of all things, as the ultimate or even sole objective. And the civitas are sucked into this mercantilist vortex reminiscent of the old myths of classic antiquity. In this context, tradition, or an examination of traditions from a new perspective or focus without preconceptions, is of the utmost pertinence and timeliness. In architectural work, in "making city", as in many other activities, the benefits we can achieve from learning about traditional solutions and values is very significant.

The concept of tradition contains innovation within it, in the form of an evolutionary process that, while preserving the archetype, increases the value of the result by adjusting and adapting these sources of information and wisdom to the ways of life and the circumstances of a given era, constantly evolving, which engages us in a lively and inexorable process.

A dead tradition is no tradition at all, but rather a simple manifestation of nostalgia or memory.

Likewise, in the buildings we construct, in the cities we make, every day, we can help preserve local and regional identities if we pay attention to existing traditions, if we make an effort to understand the places and the people and their culture instead of pursuing other possibly more dramatic but profoundly devastating goals.

Tradition and modernity are, in the end, inseparable, complementary concepts. One cannot exist without the other.

In architectural work today (encompassing all its specialties - from conservation, restoration, rehabilitation and renovation to new works and urban design) the study of traditional forms and processes is imperative. It is no longer just a question of taste or stylistic preferences. It is because studying tradition and applying the knowledge we gather from it is the only responsible approach to take - from an ethical, economic and social point of view - if we wish to contribute toward a more sustainable world in which mankind can reencounter a balance with nature and thus live in a new world filled with peace and harmony.