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Papal frontrunner says he won't be muzzled on marriage

John L. Allen Jr. | May. 5, 2012 NCR Today

ROME -- Cardinal Angelo Scola of Milan, widely considered a leading candidate to be the next pope, said May 4 that if he believes ?the family must be founded on a union between a man and a woman, and open to life,? then he has a duty to proclaim those beliefs publicly rather than avoiding contentious social debates.

tFor believers to keep their convictions out of politics, Scola said, would reflect an unacceptably ?limited concept of secularism.?

tScola made the remarks at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, during a lecture delivered before a conference on ?Institutions, Societies and Markets,? sponsored by the Centesimus Annus Pontifical Foundation, devoted to Catholic social teaching.

tScola quoted French philosopher Paul Ricouer to the effect that a healthy civil society is based not on a ?bland secularism,? in which opposing points of view are squelched, but on ?mutual recognition? of differing perspectives on the good life.

t?I can propose my beliefs, you can propose yours, and from there a dialectic is born,? Scola said. ?Then we find out what the prevalent opinion is.?

tScola?s comments were part of a broader argument that recovery from the global economic crisis that erupted in late 2007 requires not merely technical solutions, but ?rethinking the paradigms that have regulated economic life by framing them in a more adequate anthropology.?

t Scola acknowledged the enormous human and social costs of the crisis, saying, ?Just think of all those who have lost their jobs and eventually committed suicide.?

tYet he said that to frame the crisis in purely economic terms is ?reductive,? arguing that underneath the financial tumult is a deeper ?cultural paralysis? ? one measure of which, he said, is that the concept of ?freedom? has been reduced entirely to ?freedom of choice,? as opposed to ?freedom in relationship.?

tScola said that while Pope Benedict XVI?s 2009 social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* played to widely positive reviews, ?it?s still not been understood in most relevant and innovative aspects.?

tAt bottom, Scola insisted, the pope's case is that society requires a ?transcendent view of the human person,? rooted in faith in God as creator, which is capable of thinking beyond ?short-term gains and consumption.?

tOnly that way of seeing life, Scola said, can get beyond ?vague rhetorical appeals and cosmetic actions? in order to ?unmask the distortions of an unjust economic system.?

tA cultural project rooted in transcendence, Scola said, carries two other advantages.

tFirst, it can overcome ?the strange obsession with the economy as if it?s an immutable natural fact,? he said,

arguing that the economy is instead a ?cultural product?.

tSecond, he said, a culture rooted in a transcendent view of life would also generate economic growth by fostering the ?energy, enthusiasm and drive? that lead to innovation and entrepreneurial hustle.

tWhat?s needed, Scola argued, is not an ?impossible return to the past? but a ?cultural renewal, also for politics and the economy.?

tScola, 70, was born in the Lombardy region of Italy and was an early follower of Fr. Luigi Giussani, the founder of the Communion and Liberation movement. Later Scola was drawn to the famed Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, and became a co-founder of the theological journal *Communio* along with the future Pope Benedict XVI. In the 1990s Scola led the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Rome and also spent time as a visiting professor at a counterpart institute of the same name in Washington, D.C.

tScola was named Patriarch of Venice in 2002, where among other initiatives he launched the Oasis project, intended to foster dialogue with Islam and support the Christian churches of the Middle East. Benedict named him Archbishop of Milan in 2011, a position widely seen in ecclesiastical circles as a possible launching pad to the papacy.

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