



VATICAN - THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev. Nicola Bux and Rev. Salvatore Vitiello - The primary duty: to proclaim the Gospel

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The philosopher Rémi Brague, in a recent essay, writes that certain slogans must be overcome, identifying them with: the three monotheisms, the three religions of Abraham, the three religions of the book, since “these expressions are false and dangerous. They are false because each contains a serious error with regard to the nature of the three religions which they want to lead back under the one tent. They are dangerous because they encourage intellectual laziness which dispenses from examining the reality close up” (Per smetterla con “i tre monoteismi”, *Communio* 213 [2007], 57-72). Naturally all this aside from noble intentions such as wanting to find a common ground to render coexistence less difficult.

The problem is - among Catholics - a widespread opinion that dialogue takes priority, almost as a “mandate to the Church” on the part of her Founder. Immediately we would hear the objection “the Council said” and “John Paul II did” and again there is the “spirit of Assisi” - lately we hear about another spirit, that of “Ravenna”, but apparently it only refers to separated Christians. In brief, a sort of competition to succeed in “putting religions together”, to get the Christian confessions to agree, perhaps overlooking the fact that, if differences and divisions took place and continue today, they were not due to marginal motives.

And then, what is the role of the word, in these conceptions, the key word which Jesus said at every turn: Convert and believe in the Gospel? If it concerns in primis those of us who are Christians and it is a journey which takes a whole life, it concerns also and above all those who are not yet Christians. Surely we are not among those who have become accustomed to think that it suffices to work for justice, freedom, peace, solidarity, in other words, the famous virtues? What would happen to the love which led Christ to the cross for the eternal salvation of mankind and the hope of living with him for all eternity?

If Jesus Christ had said to his apostles: Stay in your own communities of origin, dialogue with representatives of other religions, avoid communicating my Gospel or baptising, instead strive to become inculturated - the word would have been too difficult for those days - we Catholics of today would not exist.

However, even a superficial analysis, reveals that the ecclesial perception of no few lay men and women and even clerics, is limited to the local community, apostolic commitment of others focuses on organising interreligious meetings, no few financial resources are used to support “the three monotheisms”, perhaps with more ardour than is spent to diffuse the Gospel and make known Jesus, perhaps offering resolute support for Catholic schools.

This is all rightly echoed by a proliferation of 'worldist' symbols - such as the famous rainbow flag - which have taken the place of crucifixes and religious images, or marches for peace and candlelight walks (anti or for this and that) considered more effective for obtaining results, than *lectio divina* or an hour of adoration or a lovely popular procession with Our Lady and Saints.

I wonder if children at catechism are taught that to be Christians means to know and to announce Jesus, that the Apostles, moved by the Holy Spirit, spent their lives to call everyone to conversion and to receive baptism in order to be saved?

Christians must know above all that the Gospel has an effectiveness, a power which comes from God “for the salvation for anyone who believes” (Rom 1,16), because the Gospel is Jesus Christ himself: to receive it is the right of every person and to give it is the duty of every Christian, even at the cost of martyrdom. The Church was founded by Christ solely to make known the one true God and Father. And we can be absolutely sure that evangelisation does not violate freedom.

In the footsteps of Saint Paul, we want to be ambassadors of Christ and to travel the world calling people to reconciliation - not any kind of reconciliation - but reconciliation with God (cf 2Cor 5,20), because only from this comes stable reconciliation among men. Then dialogue inter-Christian, inter-religious, inter-person with non

believers, will start from or lead to “explaining our hope ” (1Pt 3,15), which is actually “the equivalent of faith” (Enciclica Spe salvi, n 2). For this we are Christians, for this we are the Church. This is the evangelisation and the mission of the Church and it can never fail because it flows, ever new and solely, from the Lord's unswerving presence. (Agenzia Fides 13/12/2007; righe 51, parole 741)