



VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE: "Jesus was not Spartacus" (Spe salvi 4), Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The second Encyclical by Pope Benedict XVI *Spe salvi*, contains various concise and effective judgements passages which facilitate the reader's comprehension. Even those who are less familiar with theological discipline can draw from these brief concise passages, a key to the whole document and identify a compass of clear orientation to assess other ambits and situations.

One of the passages is found in paragraph 4 of the Encyclical where we read: "Christianity did not bring a message of social revolution like that of the ill-fated Spartacus, whose struggle led to so much bloodshed. Jesus was not Spartacus, he was not engaged in a fight for political liberation like Barabbas or Bar-Kochba. Jesus, who himself died on the Cross, brought something totally different: an encounter with the Lord of all lords, an encounter with the living God and thus an encounter with a hope stronger than the sufferings of slavery, a hope which therefore transformed life and the world from within." (Cf. *Spe salvi* 4).

Jesus was not Spartacus. A concise judgement, obvious some might think, but necessary in an epoch in which there appear on many sides and in various ways almost as if orchestrated, "reductive interpretations of" Jesus Nazareth: from those who deny his historic authenticity, to those who spend their time inventing, from nothing, totally unfounded stories, to those who, while keeping to the story to the "letter" of faith in Jesus Christ, Gesù Cristo, highlight in a totally unilateral manner one specific dimension, but lose the essence of His person and His message.

"Jesus was not Spartacus" means that the Word made flesh, in human time and history, did not come to bring a political revolution made of 'social battles and justice', as the Pope said: Jesus "did not fight for political liberation". If he had brought that sought of liberation He would have brought too little to man. As Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said 'People who do not give God, give too little.'

Jesus gave mankind a totalising Hope, much greater and more radical than the solution of political-social issues. Jesus was not Spartacus. Jesus gave the world the Encounter with God himself, made man, he died and rose again for total, full and lasting salvation of mankind.

There resound in this important judgement of the Holy Father, the pages of the book by Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI "Jesus of Nazareth", when the author, when asking what novelty Jesus brought into the world, replies with immediate candour: "Jesus gave us God".

The Church, in her supernatural wisdom, illuminated by the Spirit, never ceded down through the centuries to various attempts to restrict the scope of Christianity, supporting the suggestions of the times and the dominating cultures. On the contrary, remaining faithful to her identity she progressively succeeded in fecundating the cultures encountered, valorising all that in them was positive, reasonable and in keeping with revelation and at the same time, continually encouraging the purification of aspects to affected by human limits and sin. Therefore Jesus was much more than Spartacus. And the Pope says this clearly. Christianity, faithful to its Lord Jesus Christ is the prolongation in time of Jesus' own 'claim': to be the presence of God in the world and therefore the presence of a lasting Hope. (Agenzia Fides 10/1/2008; righe 46, parole 557)