



VATICAN - THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - The urgency of ethics, the silence of politics

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - In the most elementary of moral distinctions, the distinction between the acts of man and human acts, it is said that only human acts can be properly considered moral acts. Human acts are those in which the subject uses the three fundamental faculties of the 'I': intelligence, freedom and will.

In conscious human behaviour, intelligence "sees", freedom "chooses" and will "acts", putting into action what intelligence has seen and freedom has chosen. The person is freer, obviously, when the intelligence is able to discern good from evil, freedom able to choose good and the will able to do good.

Today's society unfortunately, as almost completely forgotten these fundamental elements of human behaviour, subject to any philosophical or religious confessional membership. We could call the epoch in which we live, the epoch of "silence of morals" which, all told, is none other than the "silence of reason"! Not by chance the Magisterium of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI repeatedly calls for the use of reason, the rediscovery of a new season in which to "broaden reason", not restricting it exclusively to its techno-scientist application, but instead living it for what it truly is: a window open wide on the totality of what is real.

This silence of reason and morals does not lead to the "superamento" of the moral question, instead, paradoxically, it renders it still more acute and relevant. It becomes ever clearer that "material wellbeing" is not enough for the human heart which is not content with a "little happiness", necessarily temporary and individualist.

The urgency of ethics, therefore, far from being a moralistic re-presentation of rules, is, in actual fact, a very real "educative urgency" or, as the Pope wrote in his Letter to the Diocese and the City of Rome on the urgent task of education, dated 21 January 2008, "Hence, there is talk of a great "educational emergency", confirmed by the failures we encounter all too often in our efforts to form sound people who can cooperate with others and give their own lives meaning. Thus, it is natural to think of laying the blame on the new generations, as though children born today were different from those born in the past. There is also talk of a "generation gap" which certainly exists and is making itself felt, but is the effect rather than the cause of the failure to transmit certainties and values".

There is a pressing need for the whole of society to begin once again to educate, in the dramatic awareness of the fact that a nation, incapable of educating its new generations, is a nation without a future.

The educative emergency, documented also in the urgency of ethics, is met with drowning silence on the part of politics. This is a short-sighted politics unable to perceive, precisely in education, and in freedom of education, and also in the human family and in human life, themes absolutely central in the social debate. No longer sufficient the panem et circensem of imperial memory! It is necessary for civil society and with it, politics, to rediscover the "direction" in which we must go and to have the courage to indicate it with explicit frankness.

In the now ineluctable twilight of "weak thought", phoney guarantee of democracy, there is the promise of a new dawning of reason and freedom. May this be grasped, welcomed, lived and indicated with the boldness of true prophets. Also in politics. (Agenzia Fides 3/4/2008; righe 41, parole 533)