



VATICAN - THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - Catholic identity and democracy

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Today a strange “philosophical alliance” appears to be spreading in every democratic country, and especially in the West: between democracy and relativism. It would seem that the only way to guarantee the survival of democracy is to renounce the truth, any possible shared truth, and to wed the most radical relativism: the latter then renounces even the search for possible truth, relegating most decisions, including those of vast social relevance, to the so-called personal sphere.

This erroneous conviction is concretised, both culturally, as well as socially and politically, in an attempt to marginalise Catholics, in every way possible, to exclude them from the public scene and above all, to neutralise their effective weight in the cultural and social debate.

Christianity, on the contrary, rather than a threat to democracy is its indispensable cultural presupposition. A real democracy, which cannot be confused with the many oligarchies present in the world today, is based essentially on “shared values”, a common cultural conception, which should recognise that the inescapable centre of society is the person, not the State.

Systematic attacks on Christianity and on its great culture and tradition, is in danger, and perhaps not even its advocates realise this, of becoming an attack on democracy itself. In this way, the elimination of a shared culture, capable thanks to its history and identity, to democratically welcome all the good which exists in other cultures, coincides with the loss of the cultural presuppositions essential for the survival of democracy.

Not by chance modern democracies were born and developed in countries of long Christian tradition. Democracy and relativism are not co-essentials, on the contrary, relativism suffocates democracy which, left without references, risks collapsing inwards on itself.

Only the rediscovery of the centrality and the truth of the person, radically overcoming materialism (which was unfortunately, historically concretised both in Marxism and in unchecked liberalism), can guarantee the survival of democracy.

In this sense problematic and in fact unexplainable would appear the positions of Catholics who prefer to swell the ranks of champions of the secular state, - which is, for the greater part, laicism under false guise - rather than strive for unity with other brothers and sisters in the faith. What comes first, unity with Party companions or unity with the other members of the ecclesial body? In this way, the faith is reduced to a “religious choice” and the Catholic identity is dissolved.

The phenomenon of the marginalisation of Catholics in public life and politics, concerns a growing number of countries and would appear to be a “stable order”, philosophically founded and well defined.

Relativism is no guarantee either for democracy or for a possible good social life. Let us hope this is clear for Catholic politicians at least, since they are the first to be “marginalised”.

Unfortunately the political diaspora of Catholics is a consequence of the cultural diaspora. On this matter a series of reflections would be necessary. Also because “the cultural achievements and mature experience of Catholics in political life in various countries, especially since the Second World War, do not permit any kind of ‘inferiority complex’ in comparison with political programs which recent history has revealed to be weak or totally ruinous” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life., Vatican City, 2002, n 7). (Agenzia Fides 10/4/2008; righe 44, parole 572)