



## **VATICAN - THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev. Nicola Bux and Rev. Salvatore Vitello - Since Pentecost the universal Church precedes every particular Church**

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The three Persons act together according to what is proper to them: the Father manifests his power; the Son “takes again” the life which he freely offered (John 10:17), reuniting his soul and his body which the Spirit brings to life and glorifies. (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 130; cfr also CCC 648-650). Between the Resurrection and the Eucharist, there exists an analogical relationship. As a consequence, transubstantiation of the bread and the wine comes about through the power of Christ's word in the narration of the institution and the working of the Holy Spirit, (Comp.284; CCC 1376-1377; 1413). This is the Eucharist which the apostolic Church received from the Lord and which has come down to us. Around the Eucharist the Church gathers, one and catholic, everywhere.

It is famous verse in the Acts of the Apostles which describes briefly but effectively the life of the Lord's disciples: “These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.” (2,42). The description presents four characterising elements which could not have been used in the text without a precise reason; not even the order of characteristics mentioned is incidental: remaining faithful to «the teaching of the apostles» is the condition for «brotherhood», authentic *fractio panis* and unceasing prayer. There emerge three traits of the Church emerge: she is apostolic, she is one and she prays. However a fourth described in the Acts should also be mentioned (1,12-14; 2,1), the presence of the Holy Spirit: appearing with the gift of tongues “He reverses the events of Babylon; the new community, the new people of God, speaks all languages and therefore is presented from the first moment of her existence as ‘catholic’. The realisation of the dynamism present in this sign and which compels the Church to go to the ends of space and time, is the most profound of all the chapters of the Acts of the Apostles (...) In this sense Rome, or the reality which reunites all peoples, has a theological importance ...it should not be bracketed with regard to Luke's idea of Catholicity” (Joseph Ratzinger, *La comunione nella Chiesa*, Cinisello B., 2004, pp. 60-61). We speak of the “communion of the Holy Spirit”: indeed the Spirit is *communio* and He builds *communio*. If “the apostles' teaching is the concrete manner of their lasting presence in the Church,” which priests have the task of maintaining present (Ivi, p. 63). This is the meaning of tradition. We can say therefore that *communio* is received to be integrally handed on and continually intensified.

Pentecost shows that Jesus Christ always goes ahead of those to whom He sends his Spirit: he says “it was I who loved you first”. Therefore the Church testifies to the presence of God in the succession of men: “ With regard to community leaders, Clement clearly explains the doctrine of Apostolic Succession. The norms that regulate it derive ultimately from God himself. The Father sent Jesus Christ, who in turn sent the Apostles. They then sent the first heads of communities and established that they would be succeeded by other worthy men. Everything, therefore, was made “in an orderly way, according to the will of God” (42). With these words, these sentences, St Clement underlined that the Church's structure was sacramental and not political. The action of God who comes to meet us in the liturgy precedes our decisions and our ideas. The Church is above all a gift of God and not something we ourselves created; consequently, this sacramental structure does not only guarantee the common order but also this precedence of God's gift which we all need. ” (Pope Benedict XVI, Audience 7 March 2007). This is why the universal Church precedes and creates every particular Church (cfr Idem, Letter for the 50th anniversary of the diocese of Essen, 16 December 2007). (Agenzia Fides 9/5/2008; righ 43, parole 639)