



VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - An educative emergency

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - During his meeting with Italian Catholic Action, on May 4, the Holy Father Benedict XVI said: "In a missionary Church, placed before an educational emergency such as that which is found in Italy today, may you who love and serve her be tireless heralds and trained and generous educators". After his Letter to the diocese and city of Rome dated 21 January 2008, "On the urgent task of education", the Pontiff extended the field of reference of his analysis on the present situation of education, to the whole of Italy and this excursion can be expected to continue.

In fact, the task of education is absolutely central for the life of the Church and of the whole of society: a generation no longer capable of educating its children, a culture unable to hand its values on to its young people, is fatally destined to dissolve itself, to disappear. Such a lucid and clear indication of method, demands to be entirely and immediately welcomed by the totality of the Church body, and most especially by those who have received from Christ the "munus regendi", the lofty task of teaching, educating.

At the heart of education in general and Christian education to the faith, in particular, there are not structures or organisations, and certainly not pastoral plans; at the centre there is necessarily the person. The Holy Father recalls: "...authentic education. [...] needs first of all that closeness and trust which are born from love: I am thinking of the first and fundamental experience of love which children have, or at least should have, from their parents. Yet every true teacher knows that if he is to educate he must give a part of himself, and that it is only in this way that he can help his pupils overcome selfishness and become in their turn capable of authentic love." (ivi).

Education, as St John Bosco used to say, is a "matter of heart", citing indirectly Saint Thomas Aquinas, who in his theory on conscience recalls that the latter is an affective matter and, at the same time, that man consists in the affection by which he is principally determined. To respond to the educative emergency means therefore to overcome concerns with regard to organisation and management which too often occupy the minds of bishops, priests and even lay people; it means rediscovering the centrality of interpersonal relations, which on no account can be delegated, placing at the centre the person and dealing with organisation aspects only when these are the authentic expression of a free and conscious membership, a humble tool which ensures a common and shared management, expression of a being changed by the encounter with the educator and with the educative task itself.

On the contrary, the organisation will be, as it often happens, an empty shell, which only in appearance expresses effectiveness, but which, in actual fact, does not really "contain" what it promises. A shell capable at the most of filling public squares and fostering meetings, but not of affecting the behaviour of individuals and society.

In this sense, it must be admitted, despite their limits which can at times mark certain expressions, Church Movements constitute a prophecy for the whole Church: in Church Movements we see authentic education in action, and not only thanks to the strong sense of elective membership they foster. In Church Movements the faith is handed on with simplicity and joy, in a way which is in keeping and faithful to the Magisterium, vocations to virginity are numerous, families are generously open to life: these are the "creative minorities" from which much can be learned and thanks to which we can hope for a future for education. And in the whole of Europe. (Agenzia Fides 15/5/2008; righe 43, parole 562)