



VATICAN - THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - Ecology, faith and atheism.

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - There was a considerable stir in public opinion and the media tam-tam with regard to the first issue tackled by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, on his arrival in Australia for the 23rd World Youth Day: the issue was protection of creation. However is always prudent to read Papal discourses as a whole rather than take it for granted that the "subject" identified by the reporter on duty was actually the focus of the intended message.

Nevertheless the interest shown by the Catholic Church and her visible head in creation protection and in the promotion of connected initiatives, should come as no surprise. Christians believe in God "the Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen". In the awareness that man "did not make the world" or "nor did he or does he make himself", any other attitude with regard to God's 'Handiwork' entrusted to the busy hands of the loftiest of all His creatures, would be inconceivable.

The ecological disaster towards which we are moving and its urgent call for intervention, is the fruit of an anthropological understanding of the world which sees man alone at the centre, and excludes God or attempts to exclude Him from the horizon of the meaning of everything. Certainly modernity and all its ties theoretic and non with secularisation and with a "certain interpretation" of Christianity, has had and still has its own role: the outdated, thanks to technology, all "cosmic fatigue", which forced man to have a physical relationship with the earth, in order to survive and therefore a "rightly compulsory" relationship with reality, has had no small role in this context. The hitherto unimaginable ease of moving around and the immediate nature of communication are gradually and relentlessly rewriting not only the concept of time and space, but even human anthropology itself.

In this context the subject of ecology is one of the areas in which it emerges most clearly that in his desire to eliminate God, man ends up destroying even himself.

Atheism has played no small role in the present day ecological situation! Not so much theoretical atheism, which indeed often, refusing to acknowledge God has elaborated an almost sacred neo-pagan concept of the earth, but instead "real practical atheism", which is lived "as if God did not exist", as if He were not the Creator of the Cosmos and, above all, as if man were the centre of time and space, an almost immortal being, and therefore with no responsibility for the rest of the human race or "its dwelling place".

It is urgent in this field to rediscover a healthy Theology of Creation in the context of a just as healthy Christian Anthropology. Carefully avoiding on the part of Christians, two opposite and equally harmful extremes: on the one hand total ignorance of the issue of Creation protection or indifference to it, on the other the levelling of present day ecologism, which excludes the Author of creation, and, prey to "naturism" totally ignorant of the Christian understanding of creation not rarely brings with it positions totally unacceptable from the moral point of view, especially on issues which touch on the beginning and the end of life.

A return with conviction and competence to the issue of Creation is urgent also in preaching and catechesis. Naïveté on the part of so many Christians who find themselves completely lost when faced with the most elementary objections of Darwinism and the big bang theory, is intolerable. "Catechesis on creation is of major importance. It concerns the very foundations of human and Christian life: for it makes explicit the response of the Christian faith to the basic question that men of all times have asked themselves: "Where do we come from?" "Where are we going?" "What is our origin?" "What is our end?" "Where does everything that exists come from and where is it going?" the two questions, the first about the origin and the second about the end, are inseparable. They are decisive for the meaning and orientation of our life and actions." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 282). (Agenzia Fides 17/7/2008)