



VATICAN - THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - Liturgy, the source of mission

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The Church is well aware that she has no other source from which to draw strength for her mission, except the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The proper valuation and autonomy of the human sciences from history to philosophy, from psychology to sociology, etc., should never take the place of the supernatural criteria of spiritual discernment.

Christ, with his proposal to the heart of man, is the one and indispensable reference for the Church's mission. The source of this mission is then adoration of the Lord which is expressed principally in the Divine Liturgy.

Too many liturgies have been reduced to the "anthropocentric self-contemplation" of man about man, almost impeding, through the verbosity of the celebrant, the convulsive rhythm of the music and the frenzy of movement, contact with the Mystery. The Church's Liturgy is essentially adoration of the Lord and, through the celebration of the divine mysteries the Church carries out her primary missionary activity.

It is necessary to rediscover awareness regarding the sole acting subject in the Liturgy: the Lord. The Holy people of God, and the celebrant, enter into the Liturgy, but they do not create it: the people and the celebrant are hosted by the Mystery and only awareness of this hospitality renders us capable of becoming, in turn, hospitable towards others.

When the Church prays to the Lord and intercedes for all mankind, through the sacred Liturgy, she engages in her first mission: the celebration of the Sacraments in itself is effective for salvation.

In so much organisation of pastoral activity today, missionary commitment would appear to be interrupted by liturgies, of which perhaps the proper significance is not sufficiently known. To baptise, to forgive sins, to celebrate the Eucharist, are actions which are far more powerfully salvific and missionary than any catechesis, meeting, academic lecture or ecclesial document. We must rediscover this awareness and with it, the indisposition of the Liturgy towards the subject caprice of liturgical creativity and the modern myth, democratically understood, of participation of the people.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church recalls: "The liturgy is also a participation in Christ's own prayer addressed to the Father in the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, all Christian prayer finds its source and goal. Through the liturgy the inner man is rooted and grounded in "the great love with which [the Father] loved us" in his beloved Son. It is the same "marvellous work of God" that is lived and internalised by all prayer, "at all times in the Spirit." (CCC 1073). (Agenzia Fides 25/09/2008)