



## **VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello**

### **Pius XII, fifty years after his death: no discontinuity with the Church of the Council**

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - "A Church which is silent, when she should speak; a Church which waters down the law of God, adapting it to the taste of human desires, when she should nobly proclaim and defend it; a Church which detaches herself from the irremovable foundation upon which Christ founded her, in order to settle comfortably on the quick-sands of the opinion of the day, or to follow a passing current; a Church which does not resist oppression of consciences, which does not safeguard the legitimate rights and freedoms of the people; a Church which, with indecorous servility, remains closed within the four walls of the temple, forgetful of the divine mandate received from Christ: 'Go out to the main crossroads (Mt 22,9), teach all nations (Mt 29,19)'. Beloved sons and daughters! Spiritual heirs of innumerable host of confessors and martyrs, is this the Church whom you venerate and love? Do you recognise in such a Church the facial features of your Mother? Can you imagine a successor of the first Peter, bending to similar exigencies?"

From a crowded St Peter's Square, there came a choral cry of 'no!' to these questions. The one speaking was Pope Pius XII, who had been informed of the arrest of the Primate of Hungary, the Archbishop of Budapest, Cardinal Josef Mindszenty. How can certain historians, obviously ideologised, continue to support the theory of the "the Pope of silence"?

Those words express knowledge of the martyrological structure of the Roman primate. How pertinent they are today, not so much for the facts of persecution happening in various parts of the world, as for the truth of what Jesus foretold: "They persecuted me, and they will persecute you"! They are the test to verify if, on the truth of martyrdom, which is the fundamental martyrdom, that of Christ, the Church after the Council, is still the same. One example: when Benedict XVI speaks of a "dictatorship of desires", is he not echoing Pius XII who spoke of the "taste of human desires"? Where then lies the presumed "discontinuity" between the Church "before the Council" and the Church today? Those who denigrate Pius XII, in actual fact, are afraid of this truth: afraid of the ecclesial Body's invincible continuity.

If we were to read "Gaudium et Spes" against the light, with this teaching, we would see that there is a world to be saved and a world from which to distance ourselves because it persecutes the Church and Christians— "they are not of the world" said Jesus about his disciples.

Is it imaginable that this truth was forgotten by the Council Fathers in 1962, only just five years after the Hungarian events, which saw other tribulations for the Church of silence, millions persecuted for the faith and martyred? To presume this would be truly anti-historic! What in today's language, not always precise, are termed "challenges" posed by the world to the Church, are in fact those vicissitudes which Saint Paul calls "tribulations", or painful thorns: but only through tribulations can we be reached by God's consolation.

Pius XII was not spared such "tribulations", neither when alive, nor after his death. Among the many it suffices to mention a "theatre piece", orchestrated by Hochuth, a bad player in search of notoriety, who started, in 1960, the black legend about the presumed "Pope of silence". He succeeded thanks to the complicity of certain persons anxious for revenge against Pius XII for a Sant'Uffizio Decree on being a Communist, and thanks to support from areas of Catholic progressivism and modernism which could not forgive the Pope for the canonisation of Pius X. A recent congress a few weeks ago, of Jewish cultural area, provided still more evidence of this falsity, testifying in favour of the great Pontiff.

However already Montini in 1963, while still Archbishop of Milan, wrote a letter to the London based Catholic magazine The Tablet, to defend Pius XII and, having been his close collaborator, to paint his portrait: "The fragile and gentle aspect of Pius XII, his quiet, refined word hid, - or rather - revealed - a noble and virile character,

capable of making firm decisions and fearlessly taking positions which might put him at considerable risk ...he desire to penetrate to the bottom the history of his tormented epoch. Deeply aware that he was himself a part of this history, he wished to participate fully, sharing the suffering in his heart and in his soul ”.

On 9 October 2008, the 50th anniversary of the death of the servant of God, Pius XII, may this too be meditated upon and may prayers be said for his glorification. (Agenzia Fides 9/10/2008)