



VATICAN - THE WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - Wisdom and pastorality. Even in homilies.

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The Synod on "The Word of God in the Life and the Mission of the Church", now at the final words, raised, even at the level of the media not only in the Fathers' discussions and study group activity, the sensitive issue of preaching, the preaching of the Church and preaching in church, in particular with regard to the homily.

Given that the charisma of preaching is not given to everyone, and that "Chrysostoms" are not improvised (and would appear to be scarce), homily preaching is of fundamental importance as part of the missionary activity of the Church and the exercising of "munus docendi", the task of teaching. The homily (reserved exclusively to ordained ministers), together with the broader Liturgy, in which it is given, is one of the Church's points of 'maximum visibility', hence the need to assure its quality, so as not to present the people with a partial, distorted or disfigured image of Christ and of His Bride.

The homilist, humbly aware that thanks to supernatural grace he is the bearer of the 'real truth', the truth about the world, which saves the world and fulfils the longings of humanity of all times. Personal faith in the Risen Christ, experience of real and visible human fulfilment, trust in the mysterious working of the Spirit in human hearts and in the power of the Word of God, are characteristics of every preacher, who is 'wise and pastoral', in other words who is the bearer of a truth which responds to man. In this sense the "wisdom" to be preached, is not human wisdom, changeable, hesitant, feeble, instead it is divine wisdom, whose power comes not from men but from God himself; and "pastorality" is not cowardly condescendence towards the tastes and modes of the day, the various sensitivities, and even failings or sins!

A homily is "pastoral", if it "leads the sheep", rather than disperse them; when it succeeds in revealing all the reasonableness of the act of faith and the correspondence to the deepest longings of the human heart, alien to all spiritualism, while being profoundly spiritual, and alien to all immanentist rationalism, while being profoundly reasonable.

As the Holy Father recalled in his Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, in paragraph. 6, "the Gospel brings the truth that itinerant philosophers had searched for in vain [...] Christ: he tells us who man truly is and what a man must do in order to be truly human. He shows us the way, and this way is the truth. He himself is both the way and the truth, and therefore he is also the life which all of us are seeking. He also shows us the way beyond death; only someone able to do this is a true teacher of life.". This "wisdom", this certainty, must move every Catholic homily!

Being pastoral means demonstrating the relation faith has with life, showing just how life is illuminated, breathes more deeply, becoming "more life", thanks to faith. "Faith is not merely a personal reaching out towards things to come that are still totally absent: it gives us something. It gives us even now something of the reality we are waiting for, and this present reality constitutes for us a "proof" of the things that are still unseen. Faith draws the future into the present, so that it is no longer simply a "not yet". The fact that this future exists changes the present; the present is touched by the future reality, and thus the things of the future spill over into those of the present and those of the present into those of the future." (*Spe salvi* n. 7). (Agenzia Fides 23/10/2008)