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VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev. Nicola Bux and Rev. Salvatore Vitiello - All Saints and All Souls

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Recollection and prayer in these days devoted to the solemnity of All Saints, inseparably connected with the commemoration, often sad and mournful, of the souls of the departed, are violently interrupted, at times even cancelled, because of 'carnival celebrations, to mark halloween, an authentic pagan mistruth violently imposed by our so-called "modern culture" (which reveals itself to be terribly pre-rational) fir merely consumerist ends.

In the face of the question of the ultimate meaning of human existence, and consequently of the destiny of our life after death, there are alternatives: either faith in the Risen Christ, or nothingness. But man cannot accept nothingness, because, not created for he senses that it is not corresponding to him and so, not having faith, he feels the need to "disguise himself as death ", to exorcise something which he inevitably fears.

It is amazing that our societies, so anxious to be hyper technological refusing any sort of authority of truth and giving way to the wildest relativism, should then demonstrate their great fragility, cultural, human, affective, and of judgement, precisely in the face of the ultimate questions of human life. As the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, recalled in his Encyclical Spe salvi: "So now we must ask explicitly: is the Christian faith also for us today a life-changing and life-sustaining hope? Is it "performative" for us—is it a message which shapes our life in a new way, or is it just "information" which, in the meantime, we have set aside and which now seems to us to have been superseded by more recent information? " (n. 10).

Christians simply cannot give way to this sort of cultural and consumerist blackmail. It is senseless to spend the night in a disco, "dancing to honour halloween witches" , and then (perhaps) commemorate the dead at Mass, without experiencing the intrinsic contradiction of all this. It is not so much because to enjoy dancing is a sin in itself (although the Cure d'Ars was of a different opinion), but more because of the cultural consequences which this 'carnival' custom expresses and promotes.

Parishes for example, cannot organise Oratory parties for halloween! Not even to reassure moralist parents who think halloween at the parish is better than halloween at a disco! (not better, actually, only even more depressing). On the eve of All Saints Day let the faithful, including our young people, pray in parishes and in homes for the repose of the faithful departed who have gone before us to the destiny which awaits us all when the secrets of all hearts are revealed and each of us goes to live either in eternal joy or in eternal pain.

The Pope continues: "Perhaps many people reject the faith today simply because they do not find the prospect of eternal life attractive. What they desire is not eternal life at all, but this present life, for which faith in eternal life seems something of an impediment. To continue living for ever —endlessly—appears more like a curse than a gift. Death, admittedly, one would wish to postpone for as long as possible. But to live always, without end—this, all things considered, can only be monotonous and ultimately unbearable." (Ibidem) "So what do we really want? Our paradoxical attitude gives rise to a deeper question: what in fact is "life"? And what does "eternity" really mean? There are moments when it suddenly seems clear to us: yes, this is what true "life" is—this is what it should be like. In comparison, what we call "life" in our everyday language is not real "life" at all." (Spe salvi n. 11).

Avoiding a question does not lead to an answer, in any field of knowledge, and least of all in this most important area, regarding human existence. In these days of meditation and recollection may we heed the authentic queries of our heart and beg for a truthful, reasonable and incarnate answer from the very Mystery of life. (Agenzia Fides 31/10/2008)

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