agenzia fides
Organo di informazione delle Pontificie Opere Missionarie
http://www.fides.org
Fondata nel 1927

VATICAN -WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello - Hope is not individualistic, but it does depend on personal conversion

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - In his Encyclical on hope, Pope Benedict XVI poses the question whether or not Christian hope is individualistic (cfr n 13-15). He starts from the images of "heaven" with which the early Christians portrayed hope, offering many "the incentive to live by faith and hence also to abandon their hyparchonta, the material substance for their lives"(n 13). Then he admits "This type of hope has been subjected to an increasingly harsh critique in modern times: it is dismissed as pure individualism, a way of abandoning the world to its misery and taking refuge in a private form of eternal salvation" (ivi).
However the answer to this criticism was given by Henri de Lubac, in the introduction of his fundamental work "Catholicisme. Aspects sociaux du dogme". "Drawing upon the vast range of patristic theology, de Lubac demonstrated that salvation has always been considered a "social" reality. Indeed, the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of a "city" (cf. 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14) and therefore of communal salvation. Consistently with this view, sin is understood by the Fathers as the destruction of the unity of the human race, as fragmentation and division. Babel, the place where languages were confused, the place of separation, is seen to be an expression of what sin fundamentally is. Hence "redemption" appears as the reestablishment of unity, in which we come together once more in a union that begins to take shape in the world community of believers. " (n 14).
Then drawing from the testimony of St Augustine in the Letter to Proba, the Pope demonstrates that "This real life, towards which we try to reach out again and again, is linked to a lived union with a "people", and for each individual it can only be attained within this "we". It presupposes that we escape from the prison of our "I", because only in the openness of this universal subject does our gaze open out to the source of joy, to love itself—to God. "(ivi).
It should be noted that the Christian "we", as St Jerome said, is the Church. To be a member of the Church and to help her expand throughout the world, means spreading theological hope among all peoples, the same hope which appeared on Easter morning and enabled Mary of Magdalene to say: "Christ, my hope is risen". This is why the Pope observes "this community-oriented vision of the "blessed life" is certainly directed beyond the present world, as such it also has to do with the building up of this world—in very different ways, according to the historical context and the possibilities offered or excluded thereby. At the time of Augustine, the incursions of new peoples were threatening the cohesion of the world, where hitherto there had been a certain guarantee of law and of living in a juridically ordered society; at that time, then, it was a matter of strengthening the basic foundations of this peaceful societal existence, in order to survive in a changed world "(n 15). A proof of this is the example of the monasteries. According to the vision of Bernard of Clairvaux, "monks perform a task for the whole Church and hence also for the world. He uses many images to illustrate the responsibility that monks have towards the entire body of the Church, and indeed towards humanity […].The human race lives thanks to a few; were it not for them, the world would perish ...". In this way Paradise is prepared.
Therefore the Holy Father adds by way of conclusion: "A wild plot of forest land is rendered fertile—and in the process, the trees of pride are felled, whatever weeds may be growing inside souls are pulled up, and the ground is thereby prepared so that bread for body and soul can flourish[13]. Are we not perhaps seeing once again, in the light of current history, that no positive world order can prosper where souls are overgrown?" (n.15).
Therefore hope, which is not individualistic but community-oriented, depends nevertheless paradoxically on the conversion of the person, to change the world, to prepare not a utopia of "paradise on earth ", but instead as St Peter says " a new heaven and a new earth where justice will have a stable dwelling". (Agenzia Fides 7/11/2008)

I contenuti del sito sono pubblicati sotto Licenza Creative Common - http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.it