



VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE: Rev. Nicola Bux and Rev. Salvatore Vitiello - Anyone who does not know God is without hope

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - In these times of the “politically correct”, the statement: “anyone who does not know God... is ultimately without hope”, might sound strange, especially to the ears of those most accustomed to confusion between “dialogue” understood as a means and “dialogue” mis-understood as an end. However the statement was made by Benedict XVI in his Encyclical, *Spe salvi*, at paragraph 27.

How does one reach such a conclusion, in the philosophical rather than the moralistic sense of the word? The point of departure is the universal observation of man's structural insufficiency for himself. All the true and good of which man is capable, cannot satisfy his heart, it cannot meet his demand for the “infinite”. In this sense “ those who followed in the intellectual current of modernity... were wrong to believe that man would be redeemed through science. Such an expectation asks too much of science; this kind of hope is deceptive. Science can contribute greatly to making the world and mankind more human. Yet it can also destroy mankind and the world unless it is steered by forces that lie outside it.” (*Spe salvi*, n. 25). Hope, by nature, to be true hope, able to surpass human structural limits, demands totality and fullness, a demand open to the infinite Mystery, to God.

Any other hope, which is not God, is radically insufficient! And not for any moral or ethical reasons but simply because the heart wants more, it wants everything! The reality of which we are part and of which we are the point of “excellence” , is ready for Hope, indeed it yearns and begs, for infinite Hope.

This need, if adequately heeded and thematised, generates mysterious and powerful solidarity among persons who, sharing the same need, together can “beg for hope”. The basis of respect for human rights must be, even before religious values, knowledge of a correct anthropology, that is, real and not ideological anthropology. Only awareness of the “mystery” of man can forge an authentic relationship with another person. Only the rediscovery of authentic anthropology, never detached from the self-awareness of each individual, will allow a new flourishing of that integral humanism so often invoked by the servant of God, John Paul II.

In this sense, anyone who does not know God is without hope: without the great hope which, precisely because infinite – and paradoxically – historically revealed as love, is the only one “suited” to the human heart, although surpassing its needs and its limited capacity to receive, to know and to imitate. “ God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. ” (n. 31). Anyone who does not know God, therefore, if he is without hope, in actual fact does not know love either. But this is the logical (and existential) opposite to that a-thematic knowledge of God, which for some should happen through love and existing-for-another. There exists a logical and chronological priority of knowledge of Love who is God over the practice of love, of faith over practice, of ontology over ethics, of dogma over experience. “ His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which nevertheless, in our deepest self, we await: a life that is “truly” life. ” (ivi). (Agenzia Fides 11/12/2008)