



VATICAN - "The Church needs the two solid pillars of Missio ad Gentes and New Evangelization": Cardinal Filoni opens the Symposium on Evangelization in Owerri

Owerri (Agenzia Fides) - "Jesus Christ is the first and ultimate subject of all evangelization, be it evangelization as the Missio ad Gentes or the New Evangelization. The Church, as the Body of Christ, has received this mandate from the Lord himself: Go, baptize, bring salvation. The Church is a living body and needs two strong solid pillars of Missio ad Gentes and New Evangelization to continue to proclaim this mandate." These were the words spoken by Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, citing Benedict XVI's homily at the opening of the Year of Faith, in his speech at the Symposium on Evangelization, which was held today in Owerri (Nigeria), at the conclusion of the Centenary of evangelization, of this ecclesiastical Province (see Fides 05/11/2012; 06/11/2012; 07/11/2012).

"The Second Vatican Council was decisive regarding the development of so-called indigenous Churches - said the Cardinal -. In fact, the attention that the Council gave to these Churches made it possible that they were not only considered as 'places' in which missionary service may be exercised, but above all, they were considered as being themselves protagonists in missionary work." Cardinal Filoni therefore drew from the large post-conciliar Magisterium of the Church to recall the basic principles of the Missio ad Gentes, which "was not born of human initiative. It is the result of divine inspiration ... To evangelize and share with others the joy of the Gospel and the belief that Jesus is the risen Lord, who has overcome death and is seated at the right hand of the Father, is an act of love. The Christian cannot give to others something that he does not have. He can only give Jesus if he has already encountered Him and let himself be filled with His love. This intimate encounter of love with the Lord compels the believer to proclaim, with his words and with the example of his life, the beauty and goodness of God."

The fundamental importance of evangelization was reaffirmed by the recent Synod of Bishops, in continuity with the Synod on evangelization in the modern world of 1974, recalled the Prefect of the Congregation. Moreover, evangelization was also one of the main priorities of the pontificate of Blessed John Paul II, who coined the expression of "New Evangelization." "Jesus, sent by the Father also sends us too, his disciples - continued Cardinal Filoni -. The field of our mission is not enclosed in our Churches, but must be present in the squares and streets, in the places where men and women meet, live, work, suffer and enjoy themselves. We cannot be content to wait until they come. It is necessary for us to go out to meet men and women and to proclaim the Gospel with evangelical imagination and creativity, although this will not be without its difficulties." Evangelization is not optional for the Christian, but concerns all, one cannot be a Christian without evangelizing, because those who have encountered and experienced the risen Lord cannot keep it for himself, but feels the need to communicate it to others. "The New Evangelization speaks of an intense experience, involves the whole person - said the Prefect -. If one is passionate, then evangelization will be carried out with creativity and imagination, with total dedication and generosity "

In concluding his speech, Cardinal Filoni focused on dialogue as an integral part of evangelization: "At the present time of fractures and suffering, this essential process of dialogue coming from our faith makes us as believers in Jesus capable of seeing the sweetness of God in others, of affirming this goodness with joy, in a profound communion born of compassion, of working for reconciliation, justice and peace." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 08/11/2012)

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The Cardinal's text, in English: http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/CardFiloni_Owerri_AdG_e_NE_08112012.doc: