



## VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Nicola Bux and Rev. Salvatore Vitiello

Vatican City (Fides Service) - «Adult» Faith. Various authors in recent decades have treated the question of faith and its internal dynamics, and in no few cases and not always to be truthful in a manner sufficiently critical they ended up by embracing a «concept» very widespread but not properly understood: the concept of a faith which is «adult». What is an «adult» faith and when can faith be defined such? Given that we consider indispensable all possible critical elaboration of the revealed facts, in the light of reason guided by the Holy Spirit and Grace, in a correct and balanced relationship of reciprocal enriching by reason and faith, the general impression is that at times there is a danger of mistaking a proper critical understanding of Revelation, with untiring criticism of the Magisterium, always and in any case, accusing all those positions which on the contrary recognise themselves fully in Church teaching of «fideism».

As the then Cardinal Ratzinger said admirably in his homily during the Mass Pro eligendo Romano Pontifice: «" An "adult" faith is not a faith that follows the trends of fashion and the latest novelty; a mature adult faith is deeply rooted in friendship with Christ. It is this friendship that opens us up to all that is good and gives us a criterion by which to distinguish the true from the false, and deceit from truth.»). How many times the mask of an «adult» faith hides errors, compromises with the world, unbelief if not actual counter-positions to the Magisterium and its guidelines. And this behaviour by no few Catholics involves mainly the moral teaching of the Church always however due to inadequate understanding of the Mystery she represents and in ultimate analysis of the Truth of the Incarnation of the Word.

In the same homily Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger reached this affirmation through a precise and clarifying illustration of the present situation of “storm” caused by no few winds of doctrine. He said: « How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves - flung from one extreme to another: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth. Every day new sects spring up, and what St Paul says about human deception and the trickery that strives to entice people into error (cf. Eph 4: 14) comes true.

These winds even swayed some Christian theologians and thinkers, or pseudo-founders of new communities claiming to be the ‘true modern church’ up to date with the world, whereas in actual fact they are «gulled down» by the world which «like a roaring lion goes around looking for someone to devour » (1Pt 5,8-9). The only alternative is to «remain firm in the faith». In fact in the same homily the today feliciter reigning Pope Benedict XVI concluded: « Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labelled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be "tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine", seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognise anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires. ». If «adult» faith means «relativism» of the faith and «non-faith», we are unequivocally faced with a concept to be rejected, to eliminate from our vocabulary because of its intrinsic equivocality. If instead our faith is adult because in full adhesion to the Magisterium its only «measure» is Christ «author and perfecter of the faith» (Heb 12,2b), then continues Ratzinger, « We must develop this adult faith; we must guide the flock of Christ to this faith. And it is this faith - only faith - that creates unity and is fulfilled in love.. [...] Truth and charity coincide in Christ. [...] Love without truth would be blind; truth without love would be like "a clanging cymbal" " (1 Cor 13, 1)». Adult, ultimately, is faith which believes, truly believes, as that giant of Charity Saint Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo said urging people to have boundless faith in Divine Providence: «Faith! But this sort of faith!». (Agenzia Fides 10/3/2006 - righe 47, parole 764)