



VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE by Nicola Bux and don Salvatore Vitello - "Unity"

Vatican City (Fides Service) - "Unity". Reflection on God "One" and "Only One" leads us to dwell on the value and interpretation of the term unity and its proper use in the different ecclesial environments. First of all unity is one of the four characteristics of the Church (One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic), as we say in the Nicean-Constantinopolitan creed. And in the creed unity is the first feature from which the others derive at the logical and theo-logical level. In the certainty of its effectiveness Christ's own prayer "Ut Unum sint" (that all may be one) is the foundation of unity and it postulates an indissoluble bond with Christian witness which from Church unity draws its effectiveness, indeed its only condition for possibility.

The first task of Christians therefore is not to "build" human sociologically important unity, also fruit of incessant dialogue and compromise with the truth, but rather to 'recognise' the unity which Christ himself gives to the Church. It is Christ who gives unity to the Church and to Christians, therefore unity is a given fact, it already exists in the Church since she is the Mystical Body of the Risen Christ which is not broken and never will be. This unity, although given by Christ in a certain and infallible way to the Church, does not appear visibly in all its fullness. This situation is due not to "absence of unity" (which is given), but rather to "defect of freedom" of sinful men whose lives fail to manifest the unity given by the Lord. Unity therefore is not the result of human efforts, however difficult and tiring, it is an ineffable and guaranteed gift of the Lord to his Church.

As St John Chrysostom recalls the first duty of every Christian is that of unity: unity of faith, unity in profession of the faith, unity with those to whom Christ entrusts the task of "presiding in charity". The first unity of which we should be aware is that among ourselves, among Christians and among members of the same Catholic confession of the faith. Anomalous would appear the attitude of people constantly concerned about "making unity with the world" and apparently mindless of the unity given by Christ which is unity of opinion with the Church and in particular with Papal Teaching.

The condition for unity to shine in all its splendour and be a motive of conversion for the world, "that the world may believe that You sent me", is continual personal conversion of each living member of the Church: conversion to the Truth, which is obedience to the Truth, conversion to the Presence of Christ which is recognition of his Presence and only consequently ethic and moral conversion. Ontology prevailing over ethics necessarily postulates the priority of "recognition of the Mystery present", over any subjective ethical effort which would be totally ineffective were it not founded on Christ.

Personal acceptance of Christ and the Truth he reveals and continual personal conversion is the path to take so that the unity the Lord gives his Church may shine in all its effectiveness. A qualified and especially "visible" moment for the world of unity of the Church and of Christians is, according to the recent teaching of His Holiness Benedict XVI, unity with regard to "unnegotiable values" such as life, family, education, when we prove our fidelity and unity and consequently our authentic membership of the Catholic Church. Membership the term which is the most apt description for unity and will be the subject of the next reflection. (Agenzia Fides 20/4/2006 - righe 42, parole 581)