



## **VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE don Nicola Bux and don Salvatore Vitiello - "Obedience of Faith"**

Vatican City (Fides Service) - "Obedience of Faith". Unity as a gift from heaven to recognise and make visible through full adhesion with personal freedom and Belonging, as a fundamental category of understanding ourselves as an ecclesial body, belonging to something greater, a communion guided to the encounter with the Mystery, open the door to reflection on one of the most fundamental traits of faith: obedience.

No other "word of doctrine" needs to be understood and understood again and again as this; what is needed is a general "education to obedience": starting from logical and theological comprehension of its meaning in view of reaching convinced and motivated, personal adherence, existentially effective and visible, to this indispensable Christian attitude.

Although we can consider finally of the past, both for its evil and destabilising effects and for its concrete inapplicability, that pedagogic line which supported unbridled "spontaneism" in education, preventing not only the imposition but even the proposal of a certain life style, much remains to be done to achieve obedience which is profoundly human, living memory of the identity of 'I' as "dependence on the Mystery", relationship with the One who gives life.

If by obedience, as in present day cultures which promote artificial freedom, we mean renunciation of thinking, supine acceptance of dogma-precepts imposed from outside, certainly this is not and cannot be the Christian concept of obedience. To understand obedience "in faith, of faith, to faith" it is indispensable to start from the Event of the encounter with Christ, "which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (Deus Caritas Est, n.1).

Only through a living relationship with the Risen Christ is it possible to grasp something of the mystery of Christian obedience: the new horizon of significance which the encounter with Christ flings open wide for life, prompts in the human person an unexpected and extraordinary correspondence, a new horizon, which was nevertheless secretly awaited by the heart which, thanks to this encounter, revives its fundamental existential questions.

Could it be that this correspondence, this extraordinary attraction, this new horizon which the encounter opens for life, brings with it a desire for discipleship which, far from being something imposed from outside, is truly a need of the 'I': "Lord where do you live? (Jn 1,38), where it is possible to continue and deepen that correspondence experienced by our heart? The first two disciples to encounter the Lord, ask: "Where?", or, what place, what human space holds this Presence? The answer we know well is: the Church. In the Church, divine presence in the world, the living presence of the Risen Lord is enshrined, the Church hands on, makes possible in our day, through the Holy Spirit, the encounter with Christ, a contemporary of every man and woman precisely because he is the Risen One.

Obedience then has nothing to do with extrinsic imposition which mortifies the 'I' in its subjective and limited aspirations, obedience is on the contrary a condition for being able to say also in our day: "We have found the Messiah" (Jn 1,41). It is impossible to proclaim Christ to the world without obedience to the Church, this proclamation will remain sterile, ineffective, barren of real fruits of authentic conversion. Obedience does not mortify human freedom, on the contrary it is an "explosion of freedom", precisely because the 'I' realises it is fully dependent on the Other, totally belonging to the communion of the Church.

The first mission of the Apostles, the first mission of every baptised person, is to live "obedience of faith" (Rom 1,5), and because of this obedience to proclaim Christ to all men and women in order to lead them to the same encounter, the same unity, the same belonging and obedience.

Each of us is called to serious discernment in this sense: let us ask ourselves if at times the tragic ineffectiveness of so many pastoral initiatives, (not truly ecclesial) might not be determined by a mock "critical spirit" so

concerned with a thousand and one , that in the end it fails to live sincere and full obedience to the Magisterium, the first area in which obedience of faith and belonging to the ecclesial body are proven. The Church's unity has precisely in communion of opinion, determined by obedience, one of its principle points of visibility. Proof of this is the widespread habit, even at the highest hierarchical levels, to present personal opinions without asking one's self about the disorientation they may cause among the faithful and the possible harm they would inflict on the ecclesial body. This is stated in the Instruction "On The Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian" signed by the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger. (Agenzia Fides 4/5/2006 - righe 58, parole 718)