



VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE don Nicola Bux and don Salvatore Vitiello - "Tradition or Treason"

Vatican City (Fides Service) - "Tradition or Treason". To avoid also in our day what Pope Paul VI termed "the Church's self-demolition", the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI chose the Church as the subject for his latest series of teaching. The Church must be seen as a mystery to be accepted; this is why we have Apostolic Tradition, or the handing down to our day of the truth revealed by Jesus Christ about and about mankind which the Apostles first received and then handed on to their successors. Being sent (in Greek *apostellein*) involves the task of making disciples of all peoples through baptism and the handing on of all that the Lord taught in the certainty that He is with us until the end of time (cfr Mt 28,19-20). By virtue of this totality the Church is catholic. This handing-on is an incessant movement. The Church herself is movement - in Greek the word means convocation from all over: this was stated by John Paul II. This means she cannot be reduced to the epochs through which she has existed. If one starts to prefer the early Church to the medieval or modern Church, or one millennium to another, or one truth of faith, or part of it to another, we pass from tradition to treason. For the Fathers, this preference (in Greek *airesis*) was heresy.

In this way in the ecumenical field there was an idealisation of the Church of the first millennium or of a new Church; in the liturgical field there was a longing for the early liturgy as corresponding to the ecclesiology of communion, now almost an ideology. They lingered putting one Pope against the other and in the end found themselves 'one Pope behind'. Remember how many, at the moment of his election, labelled John Paul II as a 'traditionalist'? The same is happening now with Benedict XVI. Except that a year after his election the "mistaken interpreters" of Vatican II or of the Church's "discontinuity", are beginning to move 'against Ratzinger' on more than one front in the name of the 'spirit of the Council'. The password is: 'do not extinguish the spirit'. All this happens in the shadow of ecumenical communities where it would seem even certain bishop go for inspiration rather than St Peter's Square; under the wings of cultural or social Centres which reduce Christianity, to quote French historian Alain Bécancçon "to ankylosis between humanitarian religion and democratic religion". To call oneself Catholic is antiquated, better ecumenical.

What to do? We must shout on the rooftops what is said in secret. This, more than ever, is the time for frank debate and discussion of questions fully aware that the Church exists before us, she does not begin with us. In *primis*, it should be said that the Magisterium is always of the Pope, never of any one Pope; of the Bishops united with him in the of the word and the liturgy and never of any one bishop in a personal interview; that the Eucharist is always apostolic, coming in its form from the Apostles and no one may make it more attractive with his creativity (cfr Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, chap. III); above all as Augustine says, the spaces of charity must dilate as the work of the Church, not only of some of her organisations.

If we have the humility to realise we are not greater than the Apostles, if we believe what has always been believed by everyone, everywhere, then Apostolic Tradition will continue its course, especially towards the young people of all the nations: because, Balthasar declared, Jesus Christ is Catholic. Pluralism? In the Church it is obvious, like the fact that the Apostles are Twelve, but it is not an article of faith. Whereas Communion is: being one in mind and heart always. Therefore, Apostolic Tradition coincides with Christianity: obedience to that form of teaching to which we have been committed, as the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said. (Agenzia Fides 11/5/2006 - righe 42, parole 622)