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VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE don Nicola Bux and don Salvatore Vitiello - "The Method of Tradition"

Vatican City (Fides Service) - "The Method of Tradition". Obedience to Tradition, that is to that form of teaching to which we are committed, is documented in time by means of the dynamics of the encounter which defines the fact of being Christian: the event of the encounter with the Person of Christ whose presence remains in time through the visibility and tangibility of the ecclesial Body (cfr. Deus Caritas est n.1). This is the ongoing claim of the Church: to be the divine presence in the world. A claim and a deep lying identity of which the whole Body of the Church must be continually aware so as not to dissolve in attitudes or worse, in that so applauded by the world and often justified as preparatio evangelica, but which in the end never comes to explicit announcement of Christ the only Saviour.
The dynamics of the Encounter, permit today and everywhere tradere Christum, handing on Christ: both as he himself gives his self to humanity, incessantly per via pneumatic, through Sacred Scripture and the sacramental signs, primarily the Most Holy Eucharist, and as His Body, the Church, living and young, prolongs with her work of proclaiming, guiding consciences and sanctifying. The encounter therefore is not merely the description of a past event which involved, at the most a few people, the apostles and the first disciples and which remains for us inaccessible. The encounter is the actual method chosen by the Mystery to reach humanity, in every era.
The ineffectiveness of much, perhaps too much, is linked inevitably to insufficient understanding of this central question of method. Today, thanks also to the considerable contribution of experience gained by new movements and communities formed in the last century, the terminology which speaks of , is widely used, (here we will not deal with the problems raised in the theology of the 19th century by expressions of this type). It is nevertheless essential for the introduction of a new term to be not mere nominalism, instead it must correspond to a real, in depth and significant existential experience.
The Mystery, opting for the path of the incarnation, chose not to overstep mankind, but to save it by taking it upon himself, therefore going to the depth of human reality, bringing human questions to the surface and offering Himself as the plausible answer for heart and mind, for the person's religious sense, for the questions raised by the I . This is Christ's method: to reawaken man to the reality of his I, to the fundamental questions of which he is made and, once the demand for meaning has been reawakened, propose Himself as the answer, humanly convincing because it censors nothing (neither heart nor reason) but rather embraces the whole person.
Today, pastoral work, if it intends to continue to tradere Christum, to proclaim the Lord, must help people live reality; and not to search for vague consolation in flight from reality, which Christianity has never preached. In the relationship with what is real, the philosophical and practical dualism which separated reason from being, of which we all, for obvious historical circumstances, can become victims, is outdated. Reality, any reality, proposing itself, simply because it exists, proposes itself with a question to which heart and mind, affection and intelligence are called to give an answer. Dizziness of reason becomes the chance to stand on the threshold of the Mystery, to admit that there are things we do not understand, and therefore to recognise our limits.
The answer to this limit which collides with the human heart as it cries, indeed groans, its infinite need for meaning, is Christ: the Mystery Incarnate, the Mystery who makes himself accessible and who, precisely by means of this accessibility, unfurls all the power of human longing. Christ's method is and must be, therefore, the method for Tradition, for ecclesial Communion charged with reasons, for communication of the living Gospel, the method for all if it wants to avoid condemning itself to being ineffective.
How distant is such a viewpoint from that infinite indulging in preambles or «artificial dialogue of values», in which the person, the I with all his questions is never at stake. How distant is this call to reality and to the indispensable relationship with it, from those methods which mistake the means (dialogue) for the end (announcing Christ) inevitably overstepping the I.

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Present day debates on the secular nature of the State, the presumed incompatibility between monotheism and democracy, the necessity of «healthy» relativism (some even speak of Christian relativism) in order to prevent conflict with regard to the Church's right to intervene publicly, and regularly, on questions of moral and civil importance, could in actual fact deteriorate into unwarranted and unjustified self-limitation of the universal veritable dimension of the Christian Event. These debates, besides demonstrating in their concrete realisation the incapacity to see reality, because very often, the «sermons non believers» sponsored by a certain type of «pastoral of dialogue» are assisted by hordes of nuns and lay faithful who are only confused and disorientated by these debates while these sermons are systematically deserted by the original addressees (precisely non believers), are concerning signs of lack of proper understanding of the method of Tradition.
Christ communicates Himself today in exactly the same way in which He chose to communicate Himself two thousand years ago: entering realty, reawakening man to his ultimate questions and offering Himself as company, humanly convincing experience, the beginning of a new communion which, charged with affection and reasonableness, sets man free. Only if this perspective of method is profoundly re-understood and we have the courage to indicate not the path of doubt and relativism but Christ and the Church as the only answer for the human heart, which is itself reawakened by the encounter with the changed humanity of believers, can we say we are truly missionaries and have understood the method of Tradition. (Agenzia Fides 18/5/2006 - righe 71, parole 953)

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