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VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE Nicola Bux and Salvatore Vitiello - "Magisterium, sole interpreter of the Word of God or just one of many opinions?"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - "Magisterium, sole interpreter of the Word of God or just one of many opinions?" - Dissent in the Church has taken on a new form: rather than oppose what is said by the Pope and the Bishops with him, it reduces it to one of many opinions. Sad to say certain bishops contribute with "perhaps" and "ifs" in their interventions, carrying coals to media relativism which reduces everything to opinion and doubt. Contributions also come from certain ecumenical centres where authentic Catholicism, flanked by that of other confessions, is proposed as complementary to them. An example: the Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, promulgated by John Paul II on the concept of communion ("Communionis notio"): according to the method of Catholic theology, should be the point of authentic interpretation of ecclesiology in ecumenical dialogue, instead it is normally ignored if not rejected; then there are complaints of a lack of reception of official dialogue documents in the catholic home. In actual fact no few ecumenists doubt that the catholic Church possesses the fullness of the means of salvation: a sign of this ambiguity is the practice of inter-communion and the search for so-called differentiated consensus on the truths of the faith. The same can be said of the Declaration Dominus Iesus still very timely for the question of inter-religious dialogue, and the Encyclicals Redemptoris misso and Fides et Ratio, indispensable for theology of religions. Hence the need for an in depth study of the state of the ecumenical movement and that of interreligious dialogue.
Who has the duty to "oversee" all this? Since the Greek word "episkopè" has precisely this meaning, it falls to the bishops, as shepherds, and to the Grand Chancellors of theology faculties and rectors of seminaries to guarantee the teaching of Catholic Doctrine and continual comparison between it and philosophical and theological reflection. Most of the time we hear that Bishops pass over tricky questions for the sake of peace and quiet; this is a grave omission, because in this way future priests, confessors and bishops, and lay people who teach religion will bring the sheep "back to the sheepfold without milk" as Dante says. When this primary instance of doctrinal and disciplinary verification fails to function, the Holy See must intervene for a principle of subsidiarity; this iter of verification has nothing of darkness, it is done in keeping with the Gospel method of fraternal correction.
The theological method serves to distinguish between truth and error, today 'weak' theology. Do the bishops know whether or not at the beginning of courses teachers help students to distinguish between doctrine and theology? They should promote those points in Catholic doctrine on which there exists most ignorance or confusion: in Sacred Scripture, the historicity of the Gospels and the person of Jesus Christ - in view of what is emerging with the gospel of Jude and the Da Vinci Code - exposing the limits of the critical- historic method and that of the contextual, spiritual and so-called inspired letters; in sacramental doctrine, the essence and role of sacramental grace, the indissolubility of marriage, the relationship between marriage and faith, between civil and ecclesiastical marriage.
In this regard it is necessary to be aware of the place given today to moral teaching in Christian law: very often bishops intervene on bio-ethical matters, expressing understanding for present day research and for situations of people, while making not the slightest mention of the necessity of conversion demanded by Christ and the assistance of grace, limiting themselves to the natural laws. Would it not be better for a bishop to speak of the theological and cardinal virtues so necessary for becoming 'perfect like the Father '? The bishop is not an 'opinion maker' , he is a man of God who speaks with God and who speaks of God with man. This is the vocation of every Christian. A Catholic religious instruction teacher who fails to communicate Catholic doctrine presenting our religion purely as a human phenomenon, is no different from a docent in philosophy?
All this as Protestantism advances among Catholics in various parts of Europe also due to a scarcity of priests;

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people are getting used to parishes run by lay people, therefore without the Eucharist, or dioceses where the members of the council of presbyters are mainly lay people; the divide between personal and faith of the Church is growing. It is urgent to bring the West back to the faith, to the Catholic doctrine of the one salvific truth.
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