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VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE don Nicola Bux and don Salvatore Vitiello - "Updating the Church and the role of the Roman Curia"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Since the ecclesiastical institution has a human face it is always in need of revision from the head to the furthest ramifications. Now the Church of Rome, mother and head of all Churches, is in quite a visible position; at the centre is her Bishop, the "golden lampstand". Each Bishop of Rome in his time must continue ongoing revision of the Church - in the sense of continual revision -, or the Living Christ would remove the lampstand (cfr Revelation 2,5).

In what does this revision consist? Many are familiar with the patristic expression "Casta meretrix" re-launched by Urs von Balthasar, with regard to the Church: like Rahab, the harlot in Jericho who sheltered Israelite scouts saving them from the sentinels; so in the famous conquest in turn she was spared by a red rope hanging down to the walls from a window. Red like blood, prefiguring another blood which was to save from enmity. The Church which for two thousand years has mixed unafraid with all peoples and nations, is made of human persons. The Church has never sided with the 'Cathars' (from the Greek 'pure') just as Jesus did not side with the just - today we would say the honest - his aim was not to engage in battle or organise pro-legality protests - his goal is the purification of the heart by means of the splendid news of forgiveness. Saint Ambrose used to say: "The Church has water and tears: the water of baptism and the tears of repentance". If she is the friendship of Jesus Christ, we know how He treated his friends, even traitors like Peter and Judas, careerists like the sons of Zebedee, unbelievers like Thomas and Philip - and we have described half of the Twelve - : he looked at them with compassion and mercy, drawing from the very worst, the very best.

This revision starts with Peter's self judgement: "Depart from me Lord, I am a sinful man"; which is at the beginning of each Sacrament: before celebrating the divine mysteries we recognise our sins. This awareness must accompany us every day, to keep us detached from any charge or seat, and keep us in the provisional state of administrators of the Lord's vineyard, humble workers as Pope Benedict XVI said. The duty of the Roman Curia is simply to make fruitful the vineyard the Lord has planted in the world, the Church, which knows she is composite, a mixed dough. After the Council there was much talk of leaven, but this serves for the dough, and in function of the dough. If we separate ourselves from the dough or the darnel before the Last Day we fall into Catharism and Protestantism going against divine patience and human freedom. This is postulated by the structure of the Incarnation, with the divine within the human; it is demanded by the structure of the sacrament, divine word which renders effective material; it is the very structure of man, flesh and spirit, which can never be separated despite the struggle between opposing needs. It was to this humanity inhabited by divinity that Jesus alluded when he added: "and blessed is the one who takes no offence at me"(Mt 11,6; Lk 7,23). No one possesses purity exclusively, we must all beg for it with humility, because we are kneaded with weaknesses, we are material until the end of time.

Therefore also the Roman Curia must be an environment of friendship in Christ who demands that we walk in love: especially love for the universal Church. There can be no room for bureaucrats, but rather clerics and lay people who love the Church and in silence - the Curia rotates around the Secretariat which comes from secret - they spend themselves in its service. This is why Pope Benedict XVI has given the example: revising but not breaking. This must be kept in mind also when we say that the Chair of Peter is a symbol and a guarantee of unity.

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