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VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE Rev. Nicola Bux and Rev. Salvatore Vitiello - The Regensburg Lecture and its importance for the Church's 'diplomacy'

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - On the occasion of reaction to the Pope's Lecture on 12 September in Germany from certain sectors of the Muslim world, the diplomacy of the Holy See, or the 'the diplomacy of the Church', showed that it is based precisely on same reason on which the Holy Father grounded his lecture at the University of Regensburg. In a central passage the Pope said that the absence of reason is one of the worst pathologies of religion; instead of using reason to propose and spread faith, there are those who still think faith must be imposed by force. How can they imagine that God would approve this last method? He is the of essence love, goodness, peace. It is clear that only reason can convince man of the truth of religion. In his homily during Mass in Munich on September 10 Pope Benedict XVI said: "We impose our faith on no one. Such proselytism is contrary to Christianity. Faith can develop only in freedom. But we do appeal to the freedom of men and women to open their hearts to God, to seek him, to hear his voice".
"The world needs God. We need God. But what God do we need?" the Pope asked and then said humanity needs "the One who died for us on the Cross: in Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, who here looks at us so closely. His "vengeance" is the Cross: a "No" to violence and a "love to the end". This is the God we need. We do not fail to show respect for other religions and cultures, we do not fail to show profound respect for their faith, when we proclaim clearly and uncompromisingly the God who has countered violence with his own suffering; who in the face of the power of evil exalts his mercy, in order that evil may be limited and overcome. To him we now lift up our prayer, that he may remain with us and help us to be credible witnesses to himself."
In Regensburg the Pope said humanity has urgent need of dialogue between cultures and religions, explaining at length the concept of reason and its use. This is not the place for a systematic study of the question: however it would suffice to re-read the encyclical Fides et Ratio. The 'diplomacy of the Church' rotates precisely on reason, as a human foundation, against all anthropological pessimism, before faith but able to interact with it. While waiting for the promised Notes to the Pope's Lecture, in the meantime we «note» that a believer, to convince a person who is searching for faith, must be clear about his identity and be free of Irenic relativism or violent fundamentalism. The goal in fact is to bring about change, a conversion of mentality, which alone will renew the world. Christians know that Our Lord's very first commandment was: "Be converted and believe in the Gospel!". How to justify then such reductionism on the part of the media? A part from the fact the some Italian journalists were responsible for provoking the case, precisely by extrapolating the statement about Mahomet and Islam, repeated in a chain of news across the world, it should be said there would appear to be a spreading conviction that dialogue must never stop, almost as if dialogue were an end to itself and must not and cannot bring about any change in the interlocutors. A sort of empty rhetoric exercise, in which dialogue has taken the place of change, the means has replaced the end. The Pope recalled in this regard that since the West longer speaks about God it is unable to dialogue with the other cultures of the world disconcerted by western secularisation, seen as rejection of reason, the sacred and God. The only way to convert or change a mentality is the word, logos, as the Greeks would say; for Christians this logo prefigured what John the Evangelist calls eternal Logos made flesh in Jesus Christ who makes it possible for the person, the whole person to change, beginning with that constitutive element, reason. (Agenzia Fides 5/10/2006; righe 42, parole 644)

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