



VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE rev. Nicola Bux and rev. Salvatore Vitiello - The "fundamental coordinates" for mission in Italy

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - In Germany Pope Benedict XVI spoke of his experience of meetings with Bishops from all over the world: "The bishops tell me with gratitude about the generosity of German Catholics [...] Now and then however, an African bishop tells me: 'When I present social projects in Germany I find doors open immediately. But if I come with a project for evangelisation I meet with reserve. Clearly some people have the idea that social projects should be urgently undertaken, while anything dealing with God or even the Catholic faith is of limited and lesser urgency. Yet the experience of those Bishops is that evangelization itself should be foremost, that the God of Jesus Christ must be known, believed in and loved, and that hearts must be converted if progress is to be made on social issues and reconciliation is to begin, [...]. Social issues and the Gospel are inseparable. When we bring people only knowledge, ability, technical competence and tools, we bring them too little. All too quickly the mechanisms of violence take over: the capacity to destroy and to kill becomes dominant, becomes the way to gain power". (Benedict XVI Homily in Munich 10 September 2006)

What can we say? Also in Italy many pastoral operators clerics and lay persons put the Gospel after projects of sociality, legality, globalisation etc., reducing Caritas offices, as one often hears, to development agencies. It would seem that neither Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi* or John Paul II's new evangelisation left any trace in the Church. Why? One non secondary cause relativism, refusing and reducing the possibility of a universally valid salvific truth, has led people to consider evangelisation secondary or indifferent and human promotion a priority, as if the announcement of Christ God and Man, were not in itself promotion of the human person .

Certainly, the great vision of man brought by Christ and proposed by the Church cannot plunge cultures which open to the Gospel in crisis. However we follow the example of the Pope commenting a passage of the Letter of Saint John: "The central theme of the Letter appears in verse 15: "Whoever recognises that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he lives in God "... John highlights confession which, after all, distinguishes us as Christians: faith, that is, in the fact that Jesus is the Son of God made Man... In this epoch of inter-religious meetings we are easily tempted to water down this central confession or even hide it. But doing so we do not render a service to encounter or to dialogue. All we do is to render God less accessible, for others and for ourselves".

Again in an address in Germany the Holy Father recalled "It is the responsibility of Christians in this hour to render visible the orientations for a just way of life, which for us are clarified in Jesus Christ". This is obviously true also for Italy. Cardinal Camillo Ruini, supplied the key for testimony for Catholics in Italy, underlining at the beginning of the Standing Council of the Italian Bishops' Conference on 18 September, the importance of the Pope's "lesson" at the University of Regensburg, in which "he not only proposed but explained the truth and perennial validity of Christianity with a magnificent theological, historical and philosophical fresco from which there emerged the essential bond between human reason and faith in God who is Logos, demonstrating that this bond is not confined to the past but instead opens perspectives for our desire today to know and to live fullness of life and freedom. This Lecture, his Encyclical "Deus caritas est" and his Discourse to the Roman Curia 22 December 2005, offer the fundamental coordinates of the message proposed by the Pope: we must meditate it and assimilate it already in the context of the Meeting awaiting us in Verona".

John Paul II, in his homily for the beatification of martyrs Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz and companions said: "Being Christians means giving oneself every day in response to the offering of Christ who came into the world that all may have life and in abundance "(AAS, LXXIII, 191, 342). This is the greatest act of worship and love for God and for humanity which Catholics also in Italy are called to perform. (Agenzia Fides 12/10/2006; righe 48, parole 710)