



VATICAN - TOWARDS THE PRIESTHOOD by Mgr Massimo Camisasca - "Called to be fathers in the Church"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Paternity is imitation of God. Since Jesus Christ revealed the last word of history that God is Father and therefore the essence of the Being is paternity, the likeness of God in man is precisely paternity.

Paternity means taking care of others, because God generates and does not abandon: «Though my father and mother forsake me, Yahweh will gather me up.» (cfr. Ps. 27, 10; Is. 49, 15). This is why carnal and spiritual paternity and maternity are the supreme imitation of God's presence. They are supreme participation in the very purpose for which we exist.

Paternity and maternity differ for physiological, psychological and historical reasons. However in the original sense they are equivalent, having in common the same generative and educational task.

God is the One who admits to being and educates to being. From this is derived the task of the Father. Therefore spiritual paternity means education. Now Christ left this task to Holy Mother Church. Therefore our paternity and maternity is relative to the Church: it generates children at the baptismal font, it nourishes, educates and sustains them with the sacraments and catechesis, through belonging to one another, in which develops a daily life which is the source of education.

Priests are servants of the maternity and paternity of God and the Church, servants of the body of Christ. This aspect reveals a decisive dimension of the spiritual paternity with which the priest is invested: not in reference to himself but to the Church. Paternity is leading sons and daughters to the Church, to the Body of Christ.

Innate in spiritual paternity is the danger that our person may become a screen between those we meet and the life of the Church. There is a danger that our qualities, our merits and our defects, what we are or what we may appear to be, hide what we truly should be; important therefore is a clear relationship between the Church and the person. We are not called to invent anything, but simply to serve what exists already; which is renewed, certainly, but which maintains its continuity, in time. We are called to enrich the Church with new form: in the Church there is something new with every new birth in Her, but this birth is more of a new manifestation of the old. Each of us must cultivate with great respect the tradition of the Church, the river which has reached us and enabled us to merge with it. (Agenzia Fides 3/11/2006; righe 29, parole 409)