



## **VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE- "A Year of Continuity", Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello**

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - On 22 December 2005, exactly a year ago, on the occasion of the traditional exchange of Christmas greetings Pope Benedict XVI addressed the Roman Curia. That extraordinary discourse will stand in history because of a fundamental passage on the hermeneutics of the Second Vatican Council. What, as a theologian and as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he had affirmed, sustained and encouraged by a host of renowned scholars, theologians, especially dogmatic theologians, ecclesiologists, historians and canonists, the Holy Father placed before the universal Church.

The famous passage of his discourse was this: "The question arises: Why has the implementation of the Council, in large parts of the Church, thus far been so difficult? Well, it all depends on the correct interpretation of the Council or - as we would say today - on its proper hermeneutics, the correct key to its interpretation and application. The problems in its implementation arose from the fact that two contrary hermeneutics came face to face and quarrelled with each other. One caused confusion, the other, silently but more and more visibly, bore and is bearing fruit. On the one hand, there is an interpretation that I would call "a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture"; it has frequently availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology. On the other, there is the "hermeneutic of reform", of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God. The hermeneutic of discontinuity risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church".

The hermeneutic of "discontinuity and rupture" had failed. Indeed it was described as the "cause of confusion" and the effects of that confusion are there for all to see.

But a year later, how has the Pope's unequivocal indication of method been received? Has there been a sincere desire to correct mistakes and trends? Is the language of theologians, historians and above all of liturgists changing ?

One has the impression that much remains to be done and that there is still considerable resistance to "conversion of mentality". As the Holy Father authoritatively recalled "renewal" is a constitutive part of "the one subject-Church", therefore with profound gratitude to the Holy Spirit who continues to renew and render the Church young and beautiful, we must be thankful for the extraordinary event of the Second Vatican Council. However it needs still attentive reception avoiding with care all the many "temptations" (and more than temptations) to discontinuity which marked and at times prevailed in its first reception .

It would appear necessary and urgent to open, "schools of hermeneutics of continuity", so that the young generations, especially of theologians and priests, do not suffer the wounds and scandal of the confusion generated by the hermeneutics of "rupture" in these last forty years.

If there must be rupture let it be with the worldly schemes of the "progressivist and conservators", or "left and right wing" politicians who in the ecclesial Body are nonsense and manifest a concerning adaptation to "the mentality of this world" and a strange forgetfulness, macro-amnesia, of the real identity of the ecclesial body. A hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture has no citizenship in the Church or in the historiography of the Council and, although still sustained by influential schools of thought and by major means of research and economic means, it is destined to disappear. Truth, on the contrary, walks on legs apparently fragile but covers great distances, surpassing all the means and powers of this world.

A year since that historic discourse what is needed is a great choral opera to make the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI's unequivocal indications the authentic criterion for discernment in every ambit of Church life: from theology to pastoral care, from liturgy to history, from catechesis to charity, culture and mission, everything must be permeated with healthy reception of the Second Vatican Council, first of all of the texts, in which the Council

lives and is consigned to the centuries and to history. The only legitimate hermeneutic is, we are certain, that of “renewal” in lasting continuity with the one subject-Church. (Agenzia Fides 21/12/2006; righe 54, parole 727)