



VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE - The Name of Jesus Christ **Rev. Nicola Bux and Rev. Salvatore Vitiello**

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The ministers of the Church speak less and less about Jesus and ever more frequently about peace, justice, solidarity and dialogue ...they are not convinced of the effectiveness of the Name in dialogue with the men and women of today. Perhaps they have forgotten that the name of Jesus is powerful and can save, whereas the rest are merely words which express merely a hope, as we see by the fact that the more they are spoken about, the less they happen.

It is known that the name of Jesus in Hebrew means 'God saves' and that this was the name given to the Child by Joseph, and also according to the Angel Gabriel's instructions to Mary at the annunciation, to indicate the Child's mission to save man from sin. Saint Bernard of Siena who described the name of Jesus as the splendour of preachers - according to the words of Psalm 71 - designed an emblem bearing the initials IHS in the form of the sun and its rays, which became a famous symbol. Saint Francis of Assisi pronounced the Name slowly as if to savour its sweetness. Now the Name neglected, they prefer to speak about values, peace, justice, solidarity ...to organise marches, torchlight walks, demonstrations rather than psalm chanting processions invoking God, indeed the name of Jesus, for the salvation of humanity; religious men and women prefer to promote initiatives for fair trade and solidarity, rather than engage in mission to make known Jesus Redemptor Hominis.

And yet from the Apostles down to Paul VI in Manila it was not so. Did Peter and John cure the lame man at the door of the Temple in the name of the value of solidarity? Did Saint Stephan speak to his persecutors against the death penalty in the name of justice or human dignity? Did Augustine say the martyrs shed their blood in the name of dialogue?

Benedict XVI in his catechesis recalled that the life of Saint Stephen "teaches us never to separate social charity work from the courageous announcement of the faith". The first Christian martyr "Thus, with charity, he proclaimed the crucified Christ, to the point of accepting even martyrdom.". Indeed "the Cross remains forever the centre of the Church's life and also of our life" ha Pope Benedict XVI said. "In the history of the Church, there will always be passion and persecution. And it is persecution itself which, according to Tertullian's famous words, becomes "the seed of Christians", the source of mission for Christians to come." (general audience 10 January 2007).

This is the point: the name of Jesus rarely draws the applause of the world - especially today - whereas it often leads to persecution and martyrdom. Are we ready for this, as we were told at Baptism and as, renouncing the Devil, we believed?

In fact the Pope concluded his Wednesday teaching on 10 January as follows: "And by accepting our cross, knowing that it becomes and is a blessing, we learn Christian joy even in moments of difficulty. The value of witness is irreplaceable, because the Gospel leads to it and the Church is nourished by it. St Stephen teaches us to treasure these lessons, he teaches us to love the Cross, because it is the path on which Christ comes among us ever anew".

As far as dialogue is concerned: Jesus revealed himself - as fundamental theologians well know- as Saviour. There is no other Name by which we can be saved. We can say that the Name is emanates the power of the Holy Spirit and hence the ministers of the Church and all Christians must always announce it. The news - the good news - the Gospel is the dialogue of salvation, come as Pope Paul VI used to say. Why are marches, torchlight walks, debates, meetings with bishop, priests and committed laity in front, not 'rogations' (processions of parishioners), supplications, litanies, processions to invoke the name of Jesus? "Whatever you ask in my name will be granted to you". These are His words, words of God.

Unless the "spirit of Assisi" - so often mentioned in circles lovers of dialogue more than the name of Jesus - is drawn from the Holy Spirit it is senseless. The Holy Spirit blows on one side to form the Church body of Christ,

on the other so that all men and women, believers and non, come to realise in all freedom that they are "called" towards Jesus Christ in the Church, as the Council said in Lumen gentium 2, 16 and Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical Ecclesiam suam. Hence the "spirit of Assisi" must face this truth and allow itself to be verified and possibly modified and purified so that all humanity may be saved and find the truth (cfr 1 Tim 2,4) they seek which is enclosed in the Name of Jesus. (Agenzia Fides 25/1/2007; righe 53, parole 782)