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VATICAN - WORDS OF DOCTRINE -Ministers, in other words, servants of the Church
Rev Nicola Bux and Rev Salvatore Vitiello -

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - We recently saw yet another attempt by some clumsy “news man”, to invent a scoop anonymously recording and diffusing answers given by priests in the confessional. The recorded answers and positions, it seemed, were of outstanding “originality” and autonomy, and some even in contradiction to ecclesial Magisterium.

If at first one may be shocked by the profanation of the sacrament, it is also necessary to realise that very often the authors of such acts are not Catholics or Christians, or even believers, and therefore give this profanation a value equal to an interview, perhaps somewhat extorted.

They will render account to the Lord and their conscience for this lack of respect for something so sacred for others, an element, this lack of respect, characteristic to our epoch.

Much more concerning instead would appear the outcome of the “survey”: the presence in many cases, almost forty years after the fury of 1968, of unjust subjective abuse which transforms the ministers-servants of the Word and the ecclesial Magisterium, into masters who feel they are entitled to dispose of a treasure which belongs not to them but to Christ.

The truth about man is not at the disposal of anyone. It is an unavailable good which, except for the legitimate paths of gradual comprehension and interiorisation and mature elaboration, remains revealed by Christ and by Him entrusted to the Church once and for all.

If a situation is objectively and morally unacceptable and foresees the impossibility to receive the sacraments, including sacramental absolution, the Holy Eucharist, then the individual priest has no power to modify neither the reality nor the doctrine. The claimed charity with which the greatest sins are often justified, becomes an act of mistruth about Christ and his mercy for all men and women and their existential situations.

Mercy can never be effective and fruitful where there is deceit, and priests must always remember that they are the ministers, that is the servants, of the truth of Christ, of the Church and of Grace: they are not its masters and therefore cannot dispose of it arbitrarily.

This attitude which urgently calls for conversion, first of all on the part of the sacred ministers, is also seriously misleading for the faithful who, feeling obliged in conscience by what they hear in the confessional, are in danger of being led like the blind man by another blind man and we know what happens to both of them. The Vademecum for Confessors Concerning some Aspects of the Morality of Conjugal Life, issued by the Pontifical Council for the Family in 1997, was more than clear and explicit when it stigmatised all those attitudes which, justifying themselves under false guise of charity, are none other than falsities with regard to the truth of Christ, the truth of the human person and the truth of human life.

One has the impression that deviating from sound doctrine is, all told, just another short cut. In fact is it much easier to quieten consciences with false appeasement, that to walk with our brothers and sisters along the slow and painful but liberating path of the truth about self and one’s life. To fully explain the Church’s magisterium requires knowledge and assimilation of the contents and the reasons the Church’s wisdom has matured down through the centuries, the will and ability to give reasons for one’s faith is one response, and not the least, to the call to paternity towards all those whom the Lord places on our way, especially sinners.

Sharing the cross of others is certainly much more arduous and complex than the trivialisation and deceit behind many superficial positions of certain confessors. Nevertheless precisely the sharing of the limits and the cross consequential to sin, renders the confessor a brother among brothers, the servant rather than the master of mercy. Experience shows that only the truth renders truly free, as the Lord so powerfully announced: “the truth will make you free”; in confession the penitent senses clearly if on the other side of the curtain (if still in use) there is a

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father who loves in freedom and in truth and therefore corrects and sustains in the company of the Church, or if instead there is a master who thinks he can command everything, even Christ, the Revelation and the Magisterium. (Agenzia Fides 1/2/2007; righe 52, parole 689)

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