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BENEDICT XVI NOTES LEGACY OF PREDECESSORS

Gives New Impulse to Church's Missionary Vocation

ROME, JUNE 28, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Placing himself in the line of his predecessors, Benedict XVI is giving new force to the Church's missionary vocation, affirming the importance of this mandate and even creating a new pontifical council for the task.

The Pope reflected today on the missionary vocation of the Church during his homily at vespers for the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, which he celebrated at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

Referring to the texts of the liturgy regarding Paul, he said that in them, one can perceive "a sense of movement, where the protagonist is not man, but God, the breath of the Holy Spirit, which drives the Apostle onto the roads of the world to take the Good News to all."

"If then the feast of the Holy Patrons of Rome evokes the twofold tension between unity and universality that typifies this Church," he said, "the context in which we find ourselves this evening calls us to favor the second, allowing ourselves, so to speak, to be won over by St. Paul and by his extraordinary vocation."

The Pontiff then went on to note Pope Paul VI's missionary spirit, as he chose the name of the Apostle to the Gentiles, and as he wrote in "Evangelii Nuntiandi": "There is no doubt that the effort to proclaim the Gospel to the people of today, who are buoyed up by hope but at the same time often oppressed by fear and distress, is a service rendered to the Christian community and also to the whole of humanity."

"The timeliness of this expression is striking," the 83-year-old Pontiff said, affirming that it reflects the "particular missionary sensibility of Paul VI and, through his voice, the great conciliar yearning to evangelize the contemporary world."

John Paul II's contribution

Benedict XVI then said of Pope John Paul II that "words are not adequate to explain how [...] [he] developed this missionary projection," with his travels and his insistence on the "urgency of a 'new evangelization.'"

This evangelization is new, the German Pontiff clarified, "not in the contents, but in the interior impulse, open to the grace of the Holy Spirit who constitutes the force of the new law of the Gospel and who always renews the Church; 'new' in the search of ways that correspond to the force of the Holy Spirit and are adapted to the times and the situations; 'new' because necessary also in countries which have already received the proclamation of the Gospel."

The Holy Father said that in taking up this legacy, he has been able to affirm that the Church is "young, and open to the future."

"And I repeat it today," he declared, "[...] The Church is an immense force of renewal in the world, not because of her strength, but because of the force of the Gospel, in which the Holy Spirit of God breathes, the God Creator and Redeemer of the world."

Loaves and fish

Challenges of our time are "certainly beyond human capacities," the Pope affirmed. But, he added, Jesus also showed the apostles that "with faith in God nothing is impossible, and that a few loaves and a few fish, blessed and shared, could satiate all. But it was not -- and is not -- only hunger for material food: There is a more profound hunger, which only God can satiate."

Affirming that also "in the deserts of the secularized world, man's soul thirsts for God, for the living God," the Bishop of Rome announced that he is creating a new pontifical council, "with the specific task of promoting a renewed evangelization in countries where the first proclamation of the faith already resounded, and where Churches are present of ancient foundation, but which are going through a progressive secularization of society."

The Holy Father concluded by praying that the intercession of the two great saints would "obtain for the whole Church ardent faith and apostolic courage, to proclaim to the world the truth of which we all have need, the truth that is God, origin and end of the universe and of history, merciful and faithful Father, hope of eternal life."

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