

Constructing History by Uniting Faith and Culture



VATICAN CITY, 16 DEC 2011

(VIS) - Yesterday evening, in keeping with a pre-Christmas tradition, the Holy Father presided at Vespers in the Vatican Basilica with students from Roman universities. Also present at the ceremony - which this year coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the Office for Pastoral Care in Universities, established by Blessed John Paul II - were representatives from a number of academic institutions, and Francesco Profumo, minister for education, universities and research.

Benedict XVI's homily, extracts of which are given below, reflected on the Apostle James' call to "be patient until the coming of the Lord".

"To you who live at the heart of the cultural and social environment of our time, who experience new and increasingly refined technologies, who are protagonists of historical changes which sometimes seem overwhelming, the Apostle's call may appear to be an anachronism. ... His exhortation to patient constancy, which in our time may leave us somewhat perplexed, is in fact the way to a deeper understanding of the question of God and its importance in life and history; because it is in patience, in faithfulness, in the constant search for and openness to God, that He reveals His Face".

"St. James ... reminds us that ... we are not alone, and that we do not create history by ourselves. God is not distant from man, He has come close to him, He became flesh. ... Patience is the virtue of those people who entrust themselves to this presence in history, who do not let themselves be drawn by the temptation to place all their hope in the present moment, in a purely horizontal perspective, in projects that are technically perfect but far distant from the profound truth that gives human beings their greatest dignity: the transcendent dimension, the fact of being created in the image and likeness of God".

"In the incarnation of the Son, ... God experienced man's temporality, his growth and development over time and history. The Child is a sign of the patience of God, Who was the first to be patient, constant and faithful in His love for us. ... How many times has mankind tried to construct the world alone, without God or against Him! The result is to be seen in ideologies which, in the end, revealed themselves as being against man and his profound dignity".

"Being constant and patient means learning to construct history together with God, because only if built upon Him and with Him can it have solid foundations. ... Let us, then, stoke up hope in our hearts, because the Word of God reminds us that ... the Lord is with us and that we can build with Him. ... We can plan our entire history, the history of humanity not as a utopia but in the certainty that the God of Jesus Christ is present and accompanies us".

"The Lord asks each of you to collaborate in constructing the city of man, uniting faith and culture with seriousness and passion. Therefore I invite each of you to seek the true Face of God with patient constancy. ... Announce to everyone that the true Face of God is in the Baby of Bethlehem, so close to each of us that no one can feel excluded, no one can doubt the possibility of meeting Him, because He is the patient and faithful God, Who waits and respects our freedom".

At the end of the liturgy, a Spanish university delegation consigned the image of "Maria Sedes Sapientiae" to a delegation from the Roman University of "La Sapienza". The image will be taken on a "Peregrinatio Mariae" to various university chaplaincies in the Italian capital in preparation for an international symposium of university professors, due to be held in June 2012.

HML/

VIS 20111216 (640)

Pope Benedict XVI