IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION IN PAULINE CHRISTOLOGY

VATICAN CITY, 5 NOV 2008 (VIS) - Continuing his series of catecheses on Pauline Christology, in today's general audience Benedict XVI considered the importance given by the Apostle to the resurrection of Jesus, as evinced in his First Letter to the Corinthians.

In the resurrection "is the solution to the problem posed by the drama of the Cross", said the Pope. "The Cross cannot of itself explain the Christian faith. The Paschal mystery consists in the fact that the crucified One 'was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures'. ... This is the key to Pauline Christology, everything revolves around this centre of gravity. ... He Who was crucified - and who thus expressed God's immense love for man - rose and lives among us".

"The originality of this Christology never comes at the expense of faithfulness to tradition. The 'kerygma' of the Apostles precedes Paul's individual re-elaboration. All his arguments are rooted in the shared tradition in which the faith of all the Churches is expressed. In this way St. Paul offers us a universally-valid model for theology and preaching. Theologians and preachers do not create new visions of the world or of life but remain at the service of transmitted truth, ... of the real fact of Christ, of the Cross, of the resurrection. Their task is to help us understand today, behind the ancient words, the reality of God-with-us, and thus the reality of true life".

"In announcing the resurrection St. Paul is not concerned with presenting a comprehensive doctrinal exposition, but approaches the subject by responding to the concrete doubts and queries that were put to him by the faithful". He concentrated "on essentials: we have been 'justified' - that its made just, saved - by Christ Who died and rose for us. What emerges above all is the fact of the resurrection, without which Christian life would be simply absurd.

"On that Easter morning", the Holy Father added, "something extraordinary yet at the same time very real happened, something marked by specific signs recorded by numerous witnesses. For Paul, as for other authors of the New Testament, the resurrection is linked to the

testimony of those who had direct experience of the Risen One. This involved seeing and feeling, not just with the eyes or with the senses, but also with an inner light that compels us to recognise what the exterior senses record as objective fact. Paul, then, gives ... fundamental importance to the apparitions, which are a condition for faith in the Risen One. ... Thus that chain of tradition came into being which, through the testimony of the Apostles and the first disciples, reached down to later generations and to us".

"The first way to express such testimony is to preach the resurrection of Christ as a summary of the announcement of the Gospel, as the culmination of an itinerary of salvation". For the Apostle, the resurrection is of fundamental importance because "it consists in the fact that Jesus, elevated from the humility of His earthly existence, was declared to be Son of God 'with power'".

"With the resurrection begins the announcement of the Gospel of Christ to all peoples, the Kingdom of Christ begins ... which has no other power other than that of truth and love. The resurrection, then, definitively reveals the true identity and extraordinary stature of the Crucified One. ... Jesus is God, ... Lord of the living and the dead".

"The theology of the Cross is not a theory, it is the reality of Christian life. Living in faith in Jesus Christ, living truth and love, involves daily sacrifices, it involves suffering. Christianity is not the easy path, rather it is a demanding climb illuminated by the light of Christ and His great hope".

"True believers obtain salvation by professing with their mouths that Jesus is the Lord and believing with their hearts that God raised Him from the dead. In this way they become part of the process by which the first Adam, worldly and subject to corruption and death, is transformed into the ultimate Adam, celestial and incorruptible. This process began with the resurrection of Christ, on which is founded the hope that we too may one day enter with Christ into our true homeland in heaven".