

Rome, 23 giugno 2009

**XXXIX Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana
AUGUSTINIANUM 6, 7 e 8 maggio 2010**

Dear Friends,

The *Augustinianum* and the Organizing Committee (F. Cocchini, A. Di Berardino, R. Dodaro, V. Grossi, M. Marin, A. Nazzaro, S. Pricoco, E. Prinzivalli) thank all who took part in the recent *XXXVIII Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana*.

The *XXXIX Incontro* will be held **6-8 May 2010** and will address the topic:

Silence and Speech

Discussion of the relationship between silence and speech is typically modern. Nevertheless, the reciprocal relationship between these linguistic phenomena and the complex realities they metaphorically represent has frequently been treated in various contexts within patristic reflection.

The God of biblical revelation reveals and makes Himself known through the word. The word, the narration of deeds accomplished by God, words expressed in praise and in preaching represent the human response to the received word. At the dawn of the Christian era, Hellenistic thought, following centuries of theorizing and developing the rhetorical arts, recognized silence as the dimension that overcomes the limits of language, which is always circumscribed and finite. Word and silence appear as ambivalent realities that are always developing while they are also charged with implications that seem to reassert continually the priority of the one over the other.

Early Christian authors understood the relationship between silence and speech as the hermeneutical key to the identity of Christ and his work. Out of the primordial silence of God came the Word, the *Logos*, through whom God spoke and called the universe into being. This is the same Word addressed to the patriarchs of Israel and, finally, the Word that issued forth from the Father and was made flesh.

In this early Christian period, philosophy – above all neoplatonic philosophy – sublimated silence by overcoming rhetorical artifices. The philosopher, aware that cataphatic discourse was unable to express God fully, embraced apophatism, a silence that is understood not as an absence of words, but as their transcendence. This transformation from speech into the silence of adoration is found in both pagan and Christian thinkers, and particularly in monks.

From its origins, the practice of the Christian life has alternated between moments of silence (reading, prayer, meditation) and speech (liturgical celebration, preaching), as well as between correspondingly different spaces (church, oratory, monastery) and allusive symbols.

Researches in these areas require contributions on the part of scholars from diverse disciplines. The chronological limit for papers is the pontificate of Gregory the Great (with the exception of archeological papers which may extend up to the Carolingian era).

Scholars wishing to offer a communication (20 minutes) or a relation (25 minutes) should send the title of their paper together with a brief abstract no later than **30 November 2009** to the following address: Segreteria Incontri *Augustinianum*, Via Paolo VI, 25 – 00193 Roma / Italy - Fax +39.06.68006298; E-mail: incontri@patristicum.org

The Organizing Committee will meet early in January 2010 to evaluate proposals for papers and will inform those who submitted them of their decision immediately thereafter.

The Organizing Committee of the
XXXIX Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana 2010