

30. November 2019

**“How can they believe in him if
they have never heard of him?”**

St. Andrew the Apostle

Rom 10, 9-18

That if you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. It is by believing with the heart that you are justified, and by making the declaration with your lips that you are saved. When scripture says: No one who relies on this will be brought to disgrace, it makes no distinction between Jew and Greek: the same Lord is the Lord of all, and his generosity is offered to all who appeal to him, for all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them? And how will there be preachers if they are not sent? As scripture says: How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of good news. But in fact they have not all responded to the good news. As Isaiah says: Lord, who has given credence to what they have heard from us? But it is in that way faith comes, from hearing, and that means hearing the word of Christ. Well then, I say, is it possible that they have not heard? Indeed they have: in the entire earth their voice stands out, their message reaches the whole world.

We have arrived at the end of this liturgical year and I take the opportunity to thank the Lord for all the meditations we could do throughout the year in the three languages: Spanish, English and German. We are very happy that they are now being transmitted in Chinese and we hope that French will be added next year!

We do not overlook the number of those who follow us daily, because many of them forward the speeches to other listeners. But many new listeners have been added. However, some have also told us that they no longer want to receive the speeches or forward them. The reason is my distanced attitude to developments in this pontificate, which I can neither approve nor conceal. Because of the Catholic faith, there is a special commitment to the truth entrusted to us in the Holy Church. If the truth is (or it looks like) weakened, relativised or even distorted, then this must be clarified.

Today's apostle feast shows us once again how important it is to know and proclaim the unshortened message of the Lord. Equally important is the confession: *"If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved."* And: *"How then are they to call on him if they have not come to believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him? And how will they hear of him unless there is a preacher for them?"*

If we take these words as a touchstone, then we must ask ourselves in the church of today whether one follows clearly the words as they are written and as it has always been proclaimed by the Church. Unfortunately one has to put some doubts here, if you look for example to the statement of Abu Dhabi, which states, in its more widespread uncorrected message, that God wants the differences of religions. Despite various objections and the request to clarify the notions that it cannot be a positive will of God, but only a permission, this has not happened. Therefore, it is very welcome that some bishops and cardinals made a Declaration of truths with the text: *"The Church of the living God - the pillar and the bulwark of the truth"* (1 Tim 3,15).

This writing is an explanation of the truths regarding some of the most common fallacies in the life of the Church of our time and make clear under points 5 and 6:

5. Muslims and others who lack faith in Jesus Christ, God and man, even monotheists, cannot give to God the same adoration as Christians do, that is to say, supernatural worship in Spirit and in Truth (see Jn 4,24; Eph 2,8) of those who have received the Spirit of filial adoption (see Rom8:15).

6. Spiritualities and religions that promote any kind of idolatry or pantheism cannot be considered either as "seeds" or as "fruits" of the Divine Word, since they are deceptions that preclude the evangelization and eternal salvation of their adherents, as it is taught by Holy Scripture: "the god of this world has made blind the minds of those who have not faith, so that the light of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not be shining on them" (2 Cor 4,4).

The message of the Lord must be proclaimed in its fullness according to its mandate, so that the efficacy of the Holy Spirit, who is the true evangelizer, is not weakened. We can not cloud the message by putting human thoughts and concepts in its place. It is important to hold fast to the Word of the Lord! The apostle speaks

clearly that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But there are still many in this world who do not call the name of the Lord.

Although we can recognize good fruits and seeds of the divine Word in other religions, they lack the true knowledge of Christ, and thus the fullness of divine grace. But is it right that one sits at the richly laid table and is allowed to receive exquisite spiritual food, to see starve the other man, who has to content himself with seeds and some fruits? Is it not our duty to say to him how he can come to the richly set table of God? And what applies to those who belong to another religion or spiritual systems, that is even more true for atheists.

Therefore, it is both, divine mandate and true charity to proclaim the authentic message of the gospel to all people in appropriate ways, so that they may attain salvation and be saved. Above all, the hunger for God and the truth must be satisfied. How poor is the man who does not know God, or what are lacking even those whose faith is still permeated by many errors. That is the primary task of the church. Everything else comes later in the right order and valence.