

17. January 2020

“God as King”

*1 Sam 8,4-7.10-22a*

*The elders of Israel all assembled, went back to Samuel at Ramah, and said, 'Look, you are old, and your sons are not following your example. So give us a king to judge us, like the other nations.' Samuel thought that it was wrong of them to say, 'Let us have a king to judge us,' so he prayed to Yahweh. But Yahweh said to Samuel, 'Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you: it is not you they have rejected.' Everything that Yahweh had said, Samuel then repeated to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, 'This is what the king who is to reign over you will do. He will take your sons and direct them to his chariotry and cavalry, and they will run in front of his chariot. He will use them as leaders of a thousand and leaders of fifty; he will make them plough his fields and gather in his harvest and make his weapons of war and the gear for his chariots. He will take your daughters as perfumers, cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields, your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his officials. He will tithe your crops and vineyards to provide for his courtiers and his officials. He will take the best of your servants, men and women, of your oxen and your donkeys, and make them work for him. He will tithe your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. When that day comes, you will cry aloud because of the king you have chosen for yourselves, but on that day Yahweh will not hear you.' The people, however, refused to listen to Samuel. They said, 'No! We are determined to have a king, so that we can be like the other nations, with our own king to rule us and lead us and fight our battles.' Samuel listened to all that the people had to say and repeated it in Yahweh's ear. Yahweh then said to Samuel, 'Do as they ask and give them a king.' Samuel then said to the Israelites, 'Go home, each of you, to his own town.'*

This Bible passage gives us a deep insight into how the Lord God deals with those who want to replace his leadership by human beings. God lets man decide, and does not violently impose his right to rule over the people. But through the prophet Samuel he clearly showed them the consequences. In spite of everything, the people of Israel did not want to change their minds, because they wanted to be like other peoples. This was a constant problem with the Israelites. It was difficult for them to accept otherness through their calling from God. So they preferred to put themselves in the hands of a king of their own choosing - without surely

understanding the full extent of this - with all the disadvantages that came their way.

Let us see the reaction of God's heart: „*It is not you they have rejected*“

It is clear that God is not indifferent to the decision of his people. We can see this in many parts of the New Testament, and the Father also expresses it in moving words in his message to Mother Eugenie; that private revelation that I have often quoted in the meditations.

God is not offended, as we perhaps easily experience in our human feelings, although He certainly feels a rejection of His love!

However, something is not being fulfilled, which God had intended for His people out of love. And this is the key to understand the will of God. Obedience to God is an obedience of love, a response to His love. This is why Jesus also tells us that keeping his commandments means loving him (*cf. Jn 14,21*)! The rejection of the will of God and the establishment of one's own will then leads to the fact that the guidance of God does not unfold and that man, with all his imperfections, takes over the leadership!

In his love God then goes along this way and certainly tries to intervene again and again. But he makes it clear to the people of Israel that he will remain silent when they call out to him because they have to suffer under the rule of a human king!

Why then does God remain silent? Perhaps because there is no real insight yet that they have rejected his love and have chosen the path of their own ideas, but only feel the oppressive yoke of the king and would immediately continue as before if it were another, less oppressive king.

What remains is a look at the fear of not being like the others! This is still a very immature attitude, which we find particularly pronounced in children and young people, but is also often found in adults.

It sometimes seems as if this is also a great temptation for Christians and even for the representatives of the Church hierarchy. Do we have the courage to remain faithful to our vocation if the whole environment takes a different path? Does the Lord then remain our King when we suffer or have to expect disadvantages for the sake of our faith and convictions? Does the Church have the courage to be different from the mainstream? Does She still call sin sin if the whole environment

already presents sin as a viable, and in the most perverse case even recommended, path?

To escape the pull of other peoples - as a metaphor for the environment, which has different moral concepts and convictions - requires courage and guidance from God. We try to listen to him in everything, because we know that he does everything out of love for us!

Let us not choose "kings" who are born of our own will, who then only enslave us and block our view of God's love, let us not abandon ourselves to dominant passions that are not restrained under the dominion of the Lord!

The Lord is our King and he has given us in Mary, the Mother of God, a mild queen! In this way we can render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (*cf. Lk 20,25*). Only He will give us full freedom! Let us not repeat the mistakes of the children of Israel. Let us allow God to be the king of our hearts! May He give us the strength and courage to fulfill his commandments above all!