

20. February 2020

“To trust the ways of God”

Mk 8, 27-33

At that time Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' And they told him, 'John the Baptist, others Elijah, others again, one of the prophets.' But you,' he asked them, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of man was destined to suffer grievously, and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter tried to rebuke him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do.'

Jesus asks the disciples a crucial question: Have people recognized Him as the Messiah? The answers show that the people have well understood that in Him the presence of God is great, as for example in the prophets Elijah and John the Baptist. But they still lack the decisive dimension. This is what Peter says, certainly on behalf of all: *"You are the Messiah!"*. In the Gospel of Matthew the statement is even more precise: *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God"* (Mt 16,16).

With this realization, as a Jew of that time, but also later as a pagan, one enters another dimension of faith. The expected Messiah is the Redeemer of Israel and of all mankind. The promise of God has been fulfilled. The search and the waiting have come to an end, the time of fulfillment begins, which is inaugurated with the incarnation of Christ and will last until his Second Coming.

Now the way to God is free, for Jesus, who says that He Himself is the way (*cf. Jn 14,6*), has opened it forever through his Passion, Death and Resurrection, calling us into communion with God.

But all this we have said, the disciples did not know yet at that time. To know Him, they would have to witness other events in the Lord's work and they would still

need the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, who would open their eyes, making them understand all that Jesus had said and done.

The fact that they recognized the Messiah was not, then, everything yet; but that confession of faith inserted them in the path of following the Lord, in the same way that it has happened to all of us. Peter also had to painfully discover this in his following of the Lord. Today's passage tells us about one of these moments.

After the profession of faith, Jesus began to speak openly to them about how He would continue on His way. He spoke to them about His Passion, His Death and His Resurrection; that is to say, he explained to them all the way that He, as Messiah, would have to go through to redeem humanity.

Peter heard what his Master would have to suffer... The text tells us that he then began to rebuke the Lord. Perhaps it was a mixture of pity and fear, perhaps he even felt authorized to do so by his previous profession of faith!

But Jesus severely corrects him, for He sees that through Peter it was Satan who wanted to prevent him from fulfilling his mission, by coming between him and the will of the Father. Jesus rebukes Peter in front of all the disciples, and so they too receive an important lesson: We men should not step between the ways of the Lord! Peter had not simply supported Him in silence and understanding, as the Mother of the Lord would later do on the Way of the Cross. No! Whatever his motivation might have been, Peter wanted to stop him!

All of us who are on the path of discipleship of Christ must remain in a listening relationship with our Lord. This is true even if we have been on the road with Him for many years and have trusted friends with Jesus. We will never be able to understand all His ways, least of all those that involve suffering - this is what happened to Peter!

When we find ourselves before those ways of the Lord whose understanding surpasses us, then we are called to step back and put our trust in God. It is He, in His Wisdom, who will lead everything; He, in His Omniscience, can include in His plan all those things that we do not know. It is better that we do not pretend to understand everything from our human way of thinking and acting, for this intrusion on our part could even be a door for Satan, as we see in today's text.

Let us always try to aspire to what God wants, and in humility let us worship His Wisdom, especially when we do not understand - or do not yet understand - things.