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“Only the name of Jesus will save us”

Acts 4,1-12

While they were still talking to the people the priests came up to them, accompanied by the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees. They were extremely annoyed at their teaching the people the resurrection from the dead by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. They arrested them, and, as it was already late, they kept them in prison till the next day. But many of those who had listened to their message became believers; the total number of men had now risen to something like five thousand. It happened that the next day the rulers, elders and scribes held a meeting in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, Jonathan, Alexander and all the members of the high-priestly families. They made the prisoners stand in the middle and began to interrogate them, 'By what power, and by whose name have you men done this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, addressed them, 'Rulers of the people, and elders! If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple and asking us how he was healed, you must know, all of you, and the whole people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, and God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man stands before you cured. This is the stone which you, the builders, rejected but which has become the cornerstone. Only in him is there salvation; for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'

What text could wake us up more than this one, which is actually so self-evident from the message of Acts, but which today is not seldom questioned or relativized.

People have been given no other name than the name of the Lord. Is this fire burning in us, which obviously blazed in St. Peter? Is this sentence really clear to us in all its consequences?

In order to read this message correctly in relation to the encounter with all people, it is important to name a clear difference. It is between the human effort to seek God and the self-revelation of God as we encounter it in the Old Testament and in the writings of the New Testament.

A true search for God is placed in the heart of man and the one who sets out is lured by the Spirit of God. The full answer to this search is given to us by God Himself through the proclamation of the Gospel, through the recognition of the name of Jesus through whom we are saved.

From this it becomes clear that all religions cannot be a way of salvation by themselves, for they do not know the name of Jesus as the Redeemer of men.

It is therefore very important to realize this clear difference so that we are not misled! This also applies to every misleading formulation.

Recently I heard a well-known preacher use the expression: "God of all religions". This expression is misleading.

God certainly loves all people and is also the goal of all sincere seeking of God. However, religions do not give the full answer to this. Often they are still riddled with errors and even carry anti-Christian contents in their bosom. So, God cannot be the "God of all religions".

Even if I do not want to suppose that this Catholic preacher is being completely clear about the consequences of such a statement, and of deliberately misleading, such statements are more than problematic.

It is the nature of error that it clouds our thinking. Instead of looking clearly at the Holy Word with our reason and faith and taking, for example, this sentence of St. Peter as a yardstick (which also corresponds to church doctrine), the error shifts as a "false light" between reason and true doctrine. If one follows the error, after the fogging comes step by step the blindness. So one can then easily fall into the error that it does not matter what one believes, that the religions are equal, are loved by God equally, etc.

It is true, however, that God loves all people and therefore wants all people to know the "true religion", i.e. the way he has given us in his Son Jesus, *"for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved."* Even the signs and wonders in front of all eyes were done in the name of Jesus, as the now strengthened apostle Peter proclaimed.

This word falls in the time of the pandemic, in a time in which public worship came to a standstill almost everywhere. The Easter message could not be

proclaimed in its fullness even in Jerusalem, there where St. Peter spoke these so important words.

It is precisely at such a time that the true Word of God should lift us up and instruct us. The meditation of the phrase I have chosen today will save us from error and open us up to the value of the gift of our faith.

Every word of God enlightens us and strengthens the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. Every erroneous formulation or even error opens the door to confusion.

Let us be very careful that the Word of God and the purity of the Church's teaching give us orientation and let us close our hearts and ears to any misleading statements.

The truth is: *“Only in him is there salvation; for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.”* This name is Jesus.