

20 April 2020

“Be born from above”

Jn 3, 1-8

There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him.' Jesus answered: In all truth I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. Nicodemus said, 'How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?' Jesus replied: In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised when I say: You must be born from above. The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

A word of the Lord that is difficult to understand: *“In all truth I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”*

Jesus puts it to Nicodemus, and Nicodemus doesn't understand it because he wants to understand it on the level of reason. But this is not enough, for it is a word that only opens up through faith, or rather, through the revelation of the Lord!

Born again does not mean that a so-called doctrine of reincarnation is hidden here, that doctrine which comes from the Hindu-Buddhist understanding and says that man has several lives.

Jesus speaks of a different birth, that which the Spirit of God gives us and which is expressed sacramentally in Holy Baptism, that is, *“through water and the Spirit”*.

A person is born again (from above) when he leaves the old life, which has a tendency to sin, and orients itself towards God, that is, is now led by the Holy Spirit! Such a person lives a new life! He is now, as the Holy Scripture expresses it, born again. The "old man" dies by having his inclinations to evil (*cf. Eph 4,22*). The new man will be led by the power of the Holy Spirit and the spirit strengthens the striving for the virtues, so that all what comes from God may be present.

Jesus sent out his disciples to baptize, (*cf. Matt 28,19*) to offer the new birth to man. In it, sin is forgiven and all that Jesus has obtained for us is awarded. When man now follows the leading of the Spirit, this new life becomes fruitful in him and forms him in the image of God. We become what we are to be according to Gods will.

Nicodemus certainly could not understand this in the first moment, more often the Lord has predicted something that exceeds the present understanding. But if the path of trust and openness towards the Lord shapes us, we will understand it later.

The Lord gives us one more word, which we will only learn to understand with time: *“The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

It is indeed the case that one is not always understood in his motivations when following the Spirit of God. This is because when we do not follow the Spirit of God we often have certain interests as our goal, which are either our own or are in the logic of the matter. This is easy to understand.

However, the motivations of the Spirit always have in all aspects first the glory of God as the pure intention and in his spirit we learn to serve people without selfish interests. That is why the "natural man" often does not understand, as Scripture expresses it, and there man who acts in the Spirit of the Lord is not so easily understood. So we can compare him in a certain sense to the wind, as Scripture says.

It is a great gift for us that we may know how Jesus uses these words and are invited to live as new people, born from above!