

3. May 2020

“The true shepherd and the flock of the Lamb”

Jn 10, 1-10

'In all truth I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a bandit. He who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out all those that are his, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him because they do not recognise the voice of strangers.' Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus spoke to them again: *In all truth I tell you, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All who have come before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: such a one will go in and out and will find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.*

A clear word of Jesus, which points us to Himself as the only way to true life. Whoever gathers people and does not lead them to the Lord is a thief and a robber, he has other interests. That was the case before the times of Jesus, that was the case while he was on earth and is still the case today.

These words of the Lord call for vigilance.

Who then are His sheep that belong to Him, that listen to His voice, and know how to distinguish it from the voices of strangers?

In Revelation, chapter 14,1, it says: *“Next in my vision I saw Mount Zion, and standing on it the Lamb who had with him a hundred and forty-four thousand people, all with his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.”*

Here we are given some clear indications of this "multitude of the Lamb". They bear the name of Jesus and His Father on their foreheads, i.e. their thoughts, their conscious striving, their whole inner being is directed towards God. They confess God and have probably confessed him even in times of persecution. This faithfulness to the Lamb in persecution may lead to God saving them from the catastrophes of the Last Days.

They sing a "*new hymn*" (*Rev 14,3*). It is certainly a hymn of love that springs from the most intimate relationship with God. It can only be sung by those who are fully awakened in their love for the Lamb of God. So it is obvious that it is not just a song, but that their whole life has become the praise of God.

If they have not defiled themselves with women and have remained virginal, this means, apart from the literal sense, that they have not entered into an unclean relationship with the world, the prostitute of Babylon. Their virginity, which is undividedly directed towards God, does not allow this relationship. Any defilement by the world, which happens when one turns one's heart to the world and puts it in the place of God, hurts the virgin love of the disciples of the Lamb.

Finally, it is said of this flock that there is no lie in their mouth. They are therefore solidified in the truth, they do not get involved in deceptions and errors, in senseless chatter, in fables, in self-constructed philosophies, etc. The Word of God is their guideline, which separates soul and spirit. (*cf. Heb 4,12*)

After all, they are without blemish, i.e. they try to have their hearts purified by God, so that there is nothing that stands between them and God and so that they are not held captive by any kind of desire.

A wonderful flock! It is the Lord with His own who have persevered even through the great trial! (*cf. Rev 7,14*) The one hundred and forty-four thousand certainly does not only refer to a limited number of Christians, but to those who have been marked with the seal of the living God (*cf. Rev 7,3-4*).

The key to the fidelity of the "multitude of the Lamb" is to listen to the true Shepherd, who is Jesus himself. His voice must be clearly distinguished from other voices. We can do this if we live in a deep and authentic relationship with the Lord and, above all, if we welcome his Word and make it come alive in us. This is the guideline and this Word must be received with a heart that can be transformed by God.

In addition, there is the genuine teaching of the Church, as it has been handed down to us. In this we also recognize the voice of the true pastor, because the authentic teaching is given to us by the Holy Spirit and not by human reflection. We cannot fail to notice that we are in a very difficult time, which is taking on an apocalyptic character with the pandemic and its effects on human life, as well as with an almost incomprehensible loss of public worship.

At this time it is even more important to listen to the right voice of the Lord, to distinguish it well from confusing signals and interpretations. They should not be lent an ear, because they are foreign voices.

The one who gets too involved with the world, takes over its thinking or takes it up too much. This one will not know how to interpret the signs of the time properly. Instead, one takes part in a certain blindness and darkness that weighs also on a church that no longer has the necessary distance to the world and thus becomes a quasi irrelevant part of this world.