

5. May 2020

“No one will ever steal them from my hand!”

Jn 10,22-30

It was the time of the feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him and said, 'How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.' Jesus replied: I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are no sheep of mine. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.

The big key question for the Jews in the text today is: Are you the Messiah? But did they really want to know?

Jesus probably sees it differently, because, as he himself says, they are not among his sheep. They lack the decisive moment, namely to listen to his voice. A public confession, as they wanted Jesus to do, would not have changed anything. It would only have been used to accuse him even more. The Lord pointed out that the testimony had already been given, but was not accepted. Not even the works of the Father, which Jesus performed publicly and which bear witness to Him, made them recognize the Lord.

Here we are looking into the abyss of the human heart.

One can close oneself to the truth, one is able to close oneself to God.

It is not up to us to assess the culpability of such actions - that is up to God alone. Nor do we know whether these closures are permanent. But with the words of the Lord we are given a handle for the "discernment of spirits". The one who closes himself off from the truth, that is to say from the Lord, does not belong to his sheep, he does not know the voice of his Lord.

This clear statement should make us careful not to speak too easily and too quickly of unity with all people. In any case, Jesus does not do it, but makes instead a very clear distinction between his sheep and those who do not belong to them.

There is a great difference between the will of God that all people find unity in him and live as his children and the actual realization. The key for the realization is the knowledge of the Messiah and to follow him. Then true unity and peace among people will come into being which the world cannot give (*cf. Jn 14,27*). This invitation is extended to all people, and then there would be only one Shepherd who feeds the sheep: God himself!

Jesus promises eternal life to his sheep, because they follow him and he knows them! Then follows a sentence that is groundbreaking for the "flock of the Lamb" and is to be valid forever:

"They will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

These words are a great comfort in every age; but they become particularly current in times of persecution. The "flock of the Lamb" always suffers persecution, but at certain times it becomes more acute. It counts: whatever may come, if we hold fast to the Lord as disciples of him, no one will ever be able to separate us from him:

"For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power, nor the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Rom 8,38-39

Therefore, it is necessary to deepen daily the love relationship with the Lord and to walk his path in the security of His love. We have only to listen sincerely to his voice and hold fast to his promise.

It is not so much our own feelings - even if they are religious - that give us true anchorage in the Lord, but rather the promise of Jesus that no one can snatch us from His hand and from the hand of the heavenly Father. Feelings can easily fluctuate. If we build primarily on them, then we are more like a leaf in the wind, while the word of the Lord is the rock on which we can truly build.

Jesus gives us this word because he wants us to be sure of his love. He knows what is coming to his disciples. They should therefore receive the words deep in their hearts, that they are anchored there and that from these promises comes in all situations that comfort which can only come from God to strengthen us.

The same applies to the disciples of today too, when we consciously follow the Lord and listen to his voice. Tribulations lie on our way and in an increasing antichristian atmosphere, which has also entered our church, our firm confession to the Lord will be called for: Do we hold fast to the good confession or do we let it soften? Do we compromise with the world and with the world in the Church?

Never we should forget : The "flock of the Lamb", that is, those who listen to his voice and follow him wherever he goes (*cf. Rev 14,4*), the Lord will preserve and no one can steal them from his hand!