

27. November 2020

“No service for the beast”

Rev 20:1-4,11-21:2

I, John saw an angel come down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a heavy chain. He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, which is the Devil or Satan, and tied it up for a thousand years and threw it into the abyss, which he locked over it and sealed, so that it could no longer lead the nations astray until the thousand years are completed. After this, it is to be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones; those who sat on them were entrusted with judgment. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image nor had accepted its mark on their foreheads or hands. They came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Next I saw a large white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls. The sea gave up its dead; then Death and Hades gave up their dead. All the dead were judged according to their deeds. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the pool of fire. (This pool of fire is the second death.) Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The time of Satan is coming to an end. The rebellion against God that we perceive is not of eternal duration. Satan will be separated forever from the faithful at the end of times. They will be able to enjoy the glory of the contemplation of God and the fellowship with the heavenly Father and His own undisturbed. It is not yet so far for us living beings. But this is the future that we are heading towards and that already begins in this life. The more we integrate it into our present life, the more “heavenly” it already becomes and less attached to this transitory world.

Satan - it is said today - is overpowered by an angel and thrown into the abyss. The ecclesiastical prayer to St. Michael the Archangel contains this process and used to be

prayed after the Holy Mass. Today we still hear it after the Tridentine mass when it is not sung.

Some believers have included it in their prayer reservoir and pray it also as a personal defense when they feel threatened by dark forces. It is highly recommended, because - so one might think - that especially in the present time Satan seems to be released for a short time and we should resist united with the Lord.

Above all, neither the beast nor his image should be worshiped. We certainly have to understand this in a figurative sense. The beast might be a spiritual ungodly power and his statue might possibly be a human representative. In the different epochs we pass through in the history of mankind this may be realized in different ways. With the Jews, it was alien kings who demanded sacrifices for idols and they resisted (*cf. 1 Macc 1:44-50,62-63*). In early Christianity, some Roman rulers demanded similar gestures. Not far away from this, tyrants and rulers have appeared in recent times, spreading a cult around them that cannot go hand in hand with the worship of God. Christians experienced persecution accordingly.

This brings me to the subject of the Antichrist, who will probably be like a human representative of Lucifer (statue of the beast). Martyrs have resisted the intentions of evil and have preferred to go to their deaths than to pay worship or undue reverence to the beast and be marked. Today, such a mark could be something like a negative baptism or something similar.

We have to be sure that the devil tries to imitate God's works and at the same time to falsify them. Holy baptism is the great gift of God, which makes us children of God in a supernatural way. The sign of the beast might be the attempt to bind people, to mark them as children of darkness and thus to be able to lay claim to them.

But the works of darkness do not last. They are the work of creatures and not of the Creator. The dark powers can only imitate and cannot bring them into being themselves. A loving omniscience of God would be replaced by global artificial control in order to have a firm grip on the "kingdoms of this world". A perversion of the loving Father, the mild kingship of Christ and the luminous presence of the Holy Spirit. Anathema!

As believers, we firmly trust that we are inscribed in the book of life through our Savior and that we may stand before the face of God's glory in His grace. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead to this glorious work of God, when we will all receive an incorruptible body and no longer be exposed to the plagues of earthly existence. Even though we can already perceive the splendor of the heavenly

Jerusalem through faith and may already live in this life in the joy of the children of God, it is only a reflection of the glory that awaits us. Through our journey on earth we are prepared for this glory, so that we can also receive it, because when we meet the love of God and understand even more how it really is, our rejoicing will know no end.

May we persevere in the power of the Lord, and that as many good works as possible may be collected in the book of life.