

13. April 2021

“The Holy Spirit interprets the Scriptures”

Jn 3:7-15

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. 'How is that possible?' asked Nicodemus. Jesus replied, 'You are the Teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things! 'In all truth I tell you, we speak only about what we know and witness only to what we have seen and yet you people reject our evidence. If you do not believe me when I speak to you about earthly things, how will you believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of man; as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

God has provided a new birth out of water and the Spirit for us humans (*cf. Jn 3:5*), so that the “old man” with his sinfulness can die and no longer darkens life (*cf. Rom 6:6*). We Christians receive this through the sacrament of baptism, which is also prepared for all other people who accept faith in Jesus (*cf. Mt 28:19*).

Now comes the call to live as “new men” (*cf. Eph 4:22-24*), to live a life that is completely aligned with the will of God and is clearly different from the life of the “old Adam”. The latter is not primarily concerned with God's will, but is oriented according to earthly realities. His thinking is in danger of revolving around himself and the transient world. He lacks the view of God and the view from God, he lacks the big perspective, he lacks the real understanding of existence, which only opens up in the encounter with God. Despite all the undertakings and realisation of ideas, in the end the life of the “old man” remains static, since it also remains spiritually bound to the earth.

Jesus contrasts this life with another, namely the life of the spirit: “*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 life of the Spirit is a life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This opens up to us the depths of the Divinity:

“To us, though, God has given revelation through the Spirit, for the Spirit explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God. After all, is there anyone who knows the qualities of anyone except his own spirit, within him; and in the same way, nobody knows the qualities of God except the Spirit of God. Now, the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of the world but God's own Spirit, so that we may understand the lavish gifts God has given us. And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learnt from human philosophy, but in terms learnt from the Spirit, fitting spiritual language to spiritual things. The natural person has no room for the gifts of God's Spirit; to him they are folly; he cannot recognise them, because their value can be assessed only in the Spirit. The spiritual person, on the other hand, can assess the value of everything, and that person's value cannot be assessed by anybody else. For: who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been his adviser? But we are those who have the mind of Christ.” (1 Cor 2:10-16)

The above mentioned mobility of the one born of the Spirit comes from his knowledge of God. It opens up to him again and again the way God knows, which is further opened up to us through the guidance of the Spirit. Even if in our wanderings through time *“we see only reflections in a mirror” (1 Cor 13:12)*, the Spirit of the Lord nevertheless conveys to us the reference of all created things to God. Thus we have already stepped out of the narrow field of a merely human understanding of life into the vastness of the Spirit. Thus we are given a key of understanding and with it the criterion of true judgement, for only through the help of the Spirit can we judge things in the light of God.

We also need the Spirit of God to be able to receive and understand the Lord's message in its depth: *“If you do not believe me when I speak to you about earthly things, how will you believe me when I speak to you about heavenly things?”* Human wisdom cannot comprehend heavenly things. It needs the supernatural light of God. One can read the Bible, for example, and gather much knowledge. But what is crucial is whether the Spirit of God can interpret it for us or whether we stop at the periphery of understanding.

Let us take the example of the resurrection of Christ.

Only the Spirit of the Lord teaches us to believe in the veracity of the resurrection and to incorporate it fully into our lives. As soon as someone - be it “theologians” - wants to reinterpret the resurrection, the Holy Spirit no longer speaks from them, but the human spirit, which has not understood heavenly things.

A simple believing Russian woman, on the other hand, would be horrified to learn that someone does not believe in the bodily resurrection. With the latter, the belief has sunk in deeply; with the “theologian” it has not.