

27. April 2021

“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.

Once again we hear Jesus speaking of the sheep given to Him by the Father. We must pay close attention to the emphasis Jesus places on the fact that He does everything in obedience to the Father, and that His works bear witness to Him. The sheep have been given to Him by the Father, and the Father is greater than all.

If we look at the New Testament, we see how important it is for the Lord to glorify the Father and to refer everything to Him.

Today I want to focus on the following aspect of Jesus' sermon: “*No one will ever steal them from my hand*”; and: “*The Father (...) is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand.*”

God knows perfectly well the need for protection that we have in this world. He, more than anyone else, sees the dangers that surround us.

We obtain the most basic security through His love, which says the big yes to us, and thus enables us to be truly free. Always and everywhere God assures us of His love, so that our soul can entrust itself completely to Him and also get rid of the cramp that often constricts it, believing that it has to prove, both to itself and to others, that it is worthy of being loved.

Other insecurities in our lives are related to dangers that really exist: wars, natural catastrophes, violence in so many areas of human life... We all know these

dangers! In addition, there are invisible threats from evil spirits (*cf. Eph 6:12-13*), and not infrequently also threats of a psychological nature, either in ourselves or through other people.

That is why the Lord assures us that no one will ever steal us from His hand. Besides assuring us of His love, He adds that He will always watch over us, as a good shepherd does over his sheep. In this security we can move, come what may!

There is always the danger that negative events and experiences will capture us and try to determine our whole life. We are well aware of the extent to which fears can subjugate and torment us: fear of real or imaginary events; or simply fear of an uncertain future.

To all this the Lord responds with His affirmation: the Father, who is greater than anyone, holds us securely in His hands. He is aware of all that is directed against us - or seems to be directed against us - and is able to direct all situations in favour of His sheep (*cf. Rom 8:28*).

It certainly requires trust to believe and hold on to these words of His, but in this trust we can grow! One way to do this would be to meditate deeply on these words of the Lord, repeating them again and again so that they can penetrate within us. Indeed, the Word of God has the power to work, if we give it room to do so.

Then we must apply them concretely in those situations where fear and insecurity want to dominate us. Precisely then it is important to remember the words of the Lord and to hold on to them. We can repeat them in our minds or say them out loud and talk to the Lord about it.... Even if the feelings of fear do not disappear immediately, the "dynamism" of fear is stopped and the "dark train of fear", which leads further and further down, is brought to a halt.

Jesus wants us to turn to Him when we are in difficult situations and to trust in His words. Let us remember how He admonished His disciples when they were afraid before the storm at the lake of Gennesaret (*cf. Mt 8:23-27*).

The Lord wants us to walk in the certainty of His love and protection: *"In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world."* (*Jn 16:33b*)

All these promises are fulfilled if we listen to His voice, if we live as His sheep who have the most attentive, loving and wise Shepherd.