

24. September 2021

The necessity of faith

Lk 9:18-22

Now it happened that he was praying alone, and his disciples came to him and he put this question to them, 'Who do the crowds say I am?' And they answered, 'Some say John the Baptist; others Elijah; others again one of the ancient prophets come back to life.' 'But you,' he said to them, 'who do you say I am?' It was Peter who spoke up. 'The Christ of God,' he said. But he gave them strict orders and charged them not to say this to anyone. He said, 'The Son of man is destined to suffer grievously, to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death, and to be raised up on the third day.'

Although we have heard these words many times and know them well, how tragic is what the Lord tells us here! Jesus has to command His disciples not to reveal to anyone their recognition of the Messiah, even though His coming into the world is the saving message for all mankind and a source of constant joy.

What a distortion of reality!

Perhaps we men have become accustomed to a lack of faith and are no longer aware of the perversion of many areas of human life. But if we look at it with the light of faith, we will see the deep darkness that hangs over the world. It is the recognition of the Messiah that brings light into this darkness! God has mercy on mankind!

It is God's mercy that gives us true hope by sending us His own Son. Thanks to it, we can confidently look up to God, and even death itself becomes meaningful.

But unfortunately people find it difficult to recognise the Messiah and the path He had to walk for our salvation. Even in Jesus' time, when people heard His preaching, saw His miracles and knew His testimony, there were many who did not come to the profession of faith that Peter pronounces in today's Gospel.

Why is this so?

It is a question that we cannot answer in full, because we know that the grace of faith is an undeserved gift, whether we have received it through our parents as children, or whether we have experienced a conversion. That is why we cannot say for sure why one person receives faith and the other does not.

This in no way means that God has destined some people for the faith and not others, as the doctrine of predestinationism erroneously teaches. Nor is it irrelevant whether man believes or not; whether he adheres to this or that religion. In His Son Jesus Christ, God has revealed the true faith, and has entrusted it to the Church. He had previously spoken through the prophets (cf. Heb 1:1-2). Now the Church has been entrusted with the mission of proclaiming the true faith.

When a person receives this proclamation and thus comes to know the truth, he is confronted with a decision: either he opens himself to this truth and to the working of the Holy Spirit, or he closes himself to it.

If a person culpably closes himself off, there will always be serious consequences, because man was created for God and therefore for the truth. If he closes himself to the message of faith, God's plan cannot be realised in him and the grace of salvation cannot reach him. Consequently, this person will not be able to take the place that God had prepared for him in the plan of salvation. If he lives in sin and is not converted, his eternal salvation will be in danger.

So the question we must ask ourselves is what we can do to bring the faith to people so that they can recognise like Peter: You are "the Christ of God".

As faithful Catholics, we know the answer: pray intensely, offer our sacrifices to the Lord, walk consistently on the path of holiness, practise the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and take every opportunity to pass on the authentic Gospel.

We know that the Lord wants to reach all people, and that we are called to cooperate in this mission. God wants to save all people through His Son! Through Him, God's love goes out in search of His children, and we are invited to join in this search.