

9. January 2022

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord  
The deeds of light

Acts 10:34-38

***Then Peter addressed them, 'I now really understand', he said, 'that God has no favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 'God sent his word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that the good news of peace was brought by Jesus Christ - he is the Lord of all. You know what happened all over Judaea, how Jesus of Nazareth began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil.***

"God has no favourites" - this is a powerful statement, for it teaches us to look at people's hearts, instead of judging them according to appearances or merely natural privileges. It is easy to say, but not so easy to put into practice. What man does not show weakness before a beautiful woman? Who does not give preference to the intelligent person over the less intelligent? Who does not allow himself to be impressed or even corrupted by wealth?

This statement allows us to see the depth of God, who possesses everything in fullness, and teaches us to live in freedom and to meet people in this same freedom. What is important is the heart of man, his inner motivations, his right action... We can often see that he who speaks much, does relatively little.

Being "no respecter of persons" gives us a free look at people. This is the way God Himself looks at them, and He teaches us to do the same. God therefore looks at all those who strive to do what is right.

However, this does not mean that it is sufficient to do what seems right to us, without concern for God and what He commands. This criterion could apply to those who, through no fault of their own, are unaware of God or to those who have a wrong or imperfect image of Him.

Today's reading tells us that "*anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him*". Now, to truly fear God, one must first know him. Seeking God and serving Him is not only an offer He makes to men; He Himself has inscribed that

longing in their hearts.

*Our Lord, anointed with the Holy Spirit, "went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil." Holy Scripture is not silent about the devil's influence on men. St. Peter, in his Letter, warns us of him: "Keep sober and alert, because your enemy the devil is on the prowl like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him, strong in faith." (1 Pet 5:8-9a)*

This opposite way of acting between Jesus and the devil is prolonged in our life. If we imitate Jesus' way of acting, doing good by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we will be collaborating in the destruction of the works of the devil, in that we will be spreading the light of God. With every good deed we do in the power of the Holy Spirit, we weaken the power of the devil and help the Lord in the healing of mankind. Perhaps we ourselves are not called to actually deliver the possessed, for we know that in our Church exorcisms are reserved for certain priests appointed for this purpose. But we must not underestimate the effect of good works done in the Lord.

For example, how a word of encouragement from someone can comfort and console us! Perhaps we can notice how the darkness in the soul fades, and we can be touched by that same love that inspired the other person to speak their word of encouragement to us. Then the light comes and the darkness dissipates.

It is the same with good works. In the "arena" where the battle between light and darkness takes place, so to speak, works of love have their effect. They are not only an expression of love of God; they are not only a concrete expression of love of neighbour; they are not only a proof that we are growing in virtue; they do not only bring joy to the heart... Good works are also a resistance against the one who seeks to devour men, seducing them to evil or useless works! In other words, good works are also a weapon in the spiritual combat, to spread the light of God.

What, then, is the conclusion of all that we have said? Attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, let us put the works of mercy into practice, especially keeping in mind the spiritual ones.