

19. April 2023

The light came into darkness

Jn 3:16-21

For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be judged; but whoever does not believe is judged already, because that person does not believe in the Name of God's only Son. And the judgement is this: though the light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, to prevent his actions from being shown up; but whoever does the truth comes out into the light, so that what he is doing may plainly appear as done in God.'

The clarity of today's text leaves no room for "grey areas". Even if they exist in the life of man, they must be led to the light of God. And this is the moment of decision: Does one want to live in the light of God or remain in darkness? Does one believe in the Son of God and receive life in Him, or does one reject Him? Of course, these strong statements count for those who have had the opportunity to truly meet the Son of God. Here the encounter with the Lord is the decisive moment.

By sending His Son, God accomplished the supreme work of salvation on behalf of mankind. His intention is not to pronounce final judgement on this world, but to save it. We must keep this truth in mind in every proclamation, no matter how difficult the circumstances we encounter; no matter how tangled and desperate the situation may seem. People must receive the Good News of faith in order to be saved.

And yet, at the same time, there is also judgement. If we accept faith, we already go through the judgement, because we receive forgiveness of sins in Christ. We can "come boldly to the throne of grace" with all our faults and failures that we commit again and again (cf. Heb. 4:16). Thus, the Lord's sacrifice becomes effective every time our faults are forgiven and we are strengthened to walk in His light. In this way, the Lord also purifies us from the consequences of sin, and our life begins to be

oriented towards eternity. We become "heavenly creatures", i.e. men who have already been redeemed and whose focus is on God.

Those who do not accept the faith are deprived of all this. They do not live in this grace and their faults and failures continue to weigh on them. If they willfully reject the faith, then they close themselves off from the light that wants to enlighten them.

In today's Gospel, the Lord makes a serious statement about the state the world is in: *"the light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil."*

If we sincerely confront this statement and do not relativise it, we could hardly fall into a false optimism about the world, as if all its developments were good in themselves, or as if it were Christ Himself who leads all the events taking place in the world. This way of looking at reality corresponds to human thinking, perhaps also related to an evolutionary theory, without the necessary discernment.

Scripture's view of the world is much more realistic. Only the encounter with God opens the door for the light to enter. If God's light penetrates the hearts of people, an improvement in life situations can be expected. If God's light illuminates the hearts of those who bear responsibility for others, then they will be able to make the right decisions for the good of mankind.

On the other hand, people's works will continue to be evil as long as they remain under the dominion of their passions, as long as they are driven by selfishness, as long as they are carried away by corruption and other sinful inclinations that persist in their hearts. And this will not change automatically, nor will it be transformed simply by external motivation.

An encounter with the Lord is necessary! This is what God offers humans so that they can live in His light.

That is why, even after 2000 years, the Church's task of evangelisation is not finished. On the contrary, it has become even more urgent. Those nations that were among the first to embrace the Christian faith, especially the European peoples, are in need of a

renewal of faith, for they are in danger of losing their precious heritage and falling into apostasy.

Much of the Asian continent has not yet been evangelised or has not accepted the faith; the nations of Africa, although they have embraced the faith and not infrequently live it with enthusiasm, need a deepening of evangelisation so that the faith truly transforms people. Something similar is true for the American continent.

Let us ask the Lord to strengthen the faithful, so that they may proclaim the Gospel with authenticity and truly be a light in this world, which needs it so much.