

2. May 2023

“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 we have for protection in this world. He, more than anyone else, sees the dangers that surround us. The most essential security we obtain through His love, which accepts us and is always in our favour, thus allowing us to be able to live in true freedom. Always and everywhere, God assures us of His love, so that our soul can abandon itself completely to Him and get rid of that prison that often oppresses 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 disasters, violence in so many areas of human life? We all know these dangers! In addition, there are invisible threats, coming from evil spirits (cf. Eph 6:12-13), and not infrequently also threats of a psychological nature, either in ourselves or through other people.

In the face of all this, the Lord assures us that no one can snatch us out of His hand. Besides assuring us of His love, He adds the certainty 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 can have too much of an impact on us and want 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.

The Lord counters all this with His affirmation that the Father, who is greater than all, holds us safe in His hands. He is mindful of all that is directed against us - or seems to be directed against us - and is able to conduct all situations in such a way that they serve the good 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 space.

Then we must apply them concretely in those situations where fear and insecurity want to take hold of us. Then it is important to remember the Lord's words 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 that "dark train of fear", which takes us further and further down, is stopped.

Jesus wants us to turn to Him when we are in difficult situations and to trust in His word. Let us remember how He admonished His disciples when they were afraid of 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 16:33).

All these promises are fulfilled when we listen to His voice and live as His sheep. Then we will know Him as the most attentive, loving and wise Shepherd.