

8. May 2023

"Remaining in the Word"

Jn 14:21-26

Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him. 'Judas - not Judas Iscariot - said to him, 'Lord, what has happened, that you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?' Jesus replied: Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him. Anyone who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not my own: it is the word of the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you.

Today Jesus shows us clearly that love for Him consists first of all in keeping His commandments, that is, remaining in His Word. This statement may seem a little surprising at first, because we are used to associating love with feelings. Without underestimating the emotional dimension, which of course is also part of love and gives it a special warmth, today's Gospel addresses itself more to the human will.

The will is that freedom, that power of love that is given to us so that we can decide for what is right, and then put this decision into practice. Now the commandments of God and the Word of the Lord are the right thing par excellence. There is nothing more important than striving to live fully according to His commandments and remaining in His Word. Indeed, eternal life is the reward we are promised for keeping the commandments (cf. Prov 4:4).

As people of faith, everything said so far is completely logical and understandable to us. However, in the face of the various temptations that attack us along the way, the difficulty lies in maintaining this fundamental decision to keep the commandments and to remain in the Word.

In fact, it is not only a matter of keeping the commandments in their literal content; the Lord also shows us the more subtle attitudes that are part of keeping the commandments in their deepest sense. Take for example the sixth commandment, which forbids adultery: Jesus goes further and tells us clearly that adultery is committed in the heart by merely looking at a woman to lust after her (cf. Mt 5:28). This is in addition to all the moral instructions that the Church gives us concerning the handling of sexuality.

It is not difficult to realise that, in the environment in which we live, these commandments of God are often no longer respected. Even within the Church - and this is particularly tragic - there are currents that claim that the whole content of the sixth commandment should no longer be kept to the letter. Let us remember, for example, that in many countries the Church hardly touches on the subject of chastity before marriage...

Therefore, our will must be fully united with God's will, and we must ask Him for the strength to be faithful to that which we have recognised as true and which has been handed down to us by the authentic doctrine of the Church. This is what it means to "remain in the word of the Lord ", so that God can dwell in us. Certainly He, in His infinite love, always seeks the sinner; however, He cannot establish His dwelling place in the person who does not live according to His commandments

A great vigilance is required to remain in the Word of the Lord. Therefore, it is important never to neglect the spiritual life, to embrace the Word of God deeply, to remember it frequently in prayer and to receive the sacraments as a gift given to us.

In His immense goodness, God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit for this path of vigilance: *"the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you."* It is the Holy Spirit who reminds us to do what the Lord wants of us. And not only does He remind us, but He also gives us a strength beyond our own ability, so that we are able to abide in the Word of the Lord.

Therefore, if we live in constant contact with the Spirit of God, He will strengthen us in the concrete situations where we are in danger of forgetting the word of the Lord, in the face of temptations or distractions that want to impose themselves in the foreground of our life.

We must not forget that temptations do not always come directly to us. We often prepare the ground for them when we neglect our religious duties, when we become more worldly, when we pay too much attention to unimportant or secondary things, when we neglect to work on our imperfections and do not sufficiently avoid venial sins, and so on. All this weakens our attention towards God and makes us more susceptible to temptation.

It is, then, the Holy Spirit who reminds us of all that the Lord said and, therefore, also reminds us of all the good advice we have received to maintain our intimate relationship with God. He is our helper, who speaks to us in the most diverse ways; He is the friend of our souls, who takes care that we live fully in grace, so that God can make His dwelling place within us.

There is no better friend or counsellor than He!