

16. September 2023

## Following the voice of the Lord

Jn 17:1a,11b-19

*“Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. While I was with them, I kept those you had given me true to your name. I have watched over them and not one is lost except one who was destined to be lost, and this was to fulfil the scriptures. But now I am coming to you and I say these things in the world to share my joy with them to the full. I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them, because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world. I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth.”*

As we read the Sacred texts, we can note once again how essential it is for the Lord to glorify the Father. The Name of God was to be manifested through Him, and men could know through Him the goodness of the Father. Jesus takes those who follow Him as a gift and, at the same time, a charge given to Him by the hands of the Father, and He asks Him to preserve them in His Name. He protects them as the Good Shepherd, and we know that, after this prayer to the Father, He will give His life for the sheep (Jn 10:11).

Jesus is well aware of the many dangers that lie in wait for men, when they often try to set up an autonomous domain, disregarding the relationship with God.

However, God calls man to live in intimate communion with Him, and out of this will come true and lasting brotherhood and unity among men, as children of the same Heavenly Father. This is the Kingdom of God! Human works collapse after a time, no matter how high they want to go, as happened with the tower of Babel (cf. Gen 11:1-9). The various kingdoms of this world come and go. They crumble quickly when they have no true foundation; when sin, corruption and injustice find a place...

On the other hand, the intimate communion of life with God, into which Jesus brings His disciples, remains forever, because it is grounded in God. This is a cause for joy! And this is the joy that Jesus gives to His own: it is the joy in God, the joy of living in unity with Him, the joy of knowing Him, the joy of being able to serve Him.

However, the disciple of the Lord is still in danger as long as he lives in this world, and is exhorted to be vigilant, for he may be confronted with hatred and rejection. Jesus does not paint for us a world that willingly embraces the faith; nor a world that we, the faithful, should embrace. This would be a utopia! There will be no Paradise on Earth!

The Church must remain vigilant, and not be seduced into co-operating with other religions, institutions and governments in the pursuit of a world peace whose foundation is not God. This would be a false peace, which can quickly turn into a dictatorship and start persecuting Christians. The spirit of the Antichrist can hide behind seemingly good objectives in order to deceive people.

The Lord's words, on the other hand, are realistic and truthful. His people are to live in the world, but not to be of the world. This means that their thinking and acting must be defined by the Holy Spirit, not by "political correctness" or other confusions.

The mission of the disciples is to proclaim the gospel to this world and to permeate it with the leaven of truth; but in no way can they allow the truth of the gospel to be distorted by the poison of ideologies.

In this holy mission entrusted to us, we Christians can rely on the Lord's prayer, which assures us today that we will be preserved from Evil, according to what He asked of His Father.

Therefore, let us abide in the Word of the Lord and take it deep within us. It is our orientation, whatever worldly ideas or concepts may appear, even within the Church. Thanks to the Word of the Lord, we learn to discern, because in it we hear the voice of our Shepherd, whom we follow. Only after Him will the sheep go, and He will protect them!