

26. April 2024

“God's plan stands firm for ever”

Acts 13:26-33

In those days, when Paul came to Pisidian Antioch, he said in the synagogue: 'My brothers, sons of Abraham's race, and all you godfearers, this message of salvation is meant for you. What the people of Jerusalem and their rulers did, though they did not realise it, was in fact to fulfil the prophecies read on every Sabbath. Though they found nothing to justify his execution, they condemned him and asked Pilate to have him put to death. When they had carried out everything that scripture foretells about him they took him down from the tree and buried him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem: and it is these same companions of his who are now his witnesses before our people. 'We have come here to tell you the good news that the promise made to our ancestors has come about. God has fulfilled it to their children by raising Jesus from the dead. As scripture says in the psalms: You are my son: today I have fathered you.

“Yahweh's own plan stands firm for ever, his heart's counsel from age to age” (Ps 33:11)

God carries out His plan of salvation and, in His omnipotence, He knows how to make use of all circumstances, even those resulting from evil intentions. This is an extremely important discovery, because it often seems that evil triumphs, while God's plans are apparently overshadowed! However, this impression is related to our lack of understanding, for God's plans are so wise and all-encompassing that only He Himself, through His Spirit, can reveal them to us.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognise Jesus and acted according to their own blinded will, even to the point of condemning our Lord to crucifixion. It is not for us to determine what guilt they bore for this act; but what we can do is to grieve and be bewildered by the fact that the Messiah was rejected precisely by those who belonged to His people. What a tragedy not to have welcomed the hour of grace, the time of the coming of the Redeemer! What suffering and what consequences resulted for Israel!

Now the apostles, strengthened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, make the Jews see that, with the Resurrection of Jesus, God has fulfilled His plan of salvation, announced of ancient times. Their listeners must know that not even the atrocity of the crucifixion

of the Son of God could prevent God from fulfilling His plan. It is the Spirit of God who opens their eyes! Now they can recognise everything in its context and, what is more, they can testify again and again to God's exploits!

All this can awaken in us a deep trust in God's guidance. Whatever happens, whatever Evil sets out to do: God will bring everything to His goal! This does not only apply to the history of nations, but also to personal life.

Here we must be careful not to think that evil is perhaps not so bad, because God integrates it into His plan of salvation and because, after all, those who were responsible for the Lord's death only realised the salvific plan. This is not so! The evil act is still evil, and the one who does it will be held accountable. But this does not mean that the history of salvation will stop, nor can it be stopped. I would explain it like this: although the fulfilment of God's plans can be delayed, evil does not have the power to stop it.

Let us take our Jewish brothers and sisters as an example... Can we imagine what it would have been like if, at that time, they had accepted the gospel in great numbers; if the leaders of the people had responded to the call to conversion?

God knows how to insert everything into His plan of salvation; even if He leaves us the possibility of opening or closing ourselves to the truth. Precisely for this reason, our task must be to place ourselves completely at the Lord's disposal for His work, and to serve Him with unrestricted trust. In His hands and in His wisdom we leave all that we cannot know. If it is important to understand the contexts, the Spirit of God will discover them for us. And if it is not important, we simply abandon ourselves to Him. The Lord will lead everything to the ends that only His Wisdom knows!