

29. June 2024

Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles
"The true Church"

Mt 16:13-19

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said, 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a blessed man! Because it was no human agency that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community. And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Here Simon Peter makes the decisive profession of faith: *'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'*. And the Lord assures him that this knowledge can only come from God. We know that it is precisely here that the difference is made from all other views that people may have of Jesus: whether they see Him only as a prophet, as is the case in Islam; or whether they consider Him an "avatar", as is the case in certain Hindu or esoteric currents...

This is the profession of faith that the Church must bear witness to until the Return of the Lord: "Christ is the Son of God", making clear, once and for all, the difference between Him and other religions or belief systems that do not yet recognise Him as such. To proclaim this message, that Jesus is the Son of God who offers salvation to humanity, will be the mission of Peter and his successors. Just as not one jot or tittle of the law can be abolished (cf. Mt 5:18), neither can the truth of the gospel be cut back in any way. This mission has been entrusted particularly to the Petrine ministry, to whom the Lord has given a large part of His authority and power.

The true Church is founded on the truth of the Gospel. The Lord has placed Peter as the rock of this Church. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he is to strengthen his brethren and be a guarantor of the true faith (cf. Lk 22:32). Even if we find many

elements of the true faith in the so-called "sister churches" and ecclesial communities, especially in Orthodoxy, it is still a sad reality that so many Christians are not in full communion with the Catholic Church. Genuine ecumenical efforts are intended to help overcome this division. But ecumenism cannot lose sight of its goal, which unfortunately is all too often the case today. Although we do not know how the Holy Spirit will gather all "*one flock and under one Shepherd*" (Jn 10:16), true ecumenism must be clear that full unity with the Catholic Church is necessary in order to bear witness that "all are one" (cf. Jn 17:21).

This does not mean that there cannot be a "unity of hearts" even before full communion is achieved. But it would be a great goal to be able to celebrate Holy Mass together one day, so that unity becomes a visible reality.

However, one cannot fail to note that, unfortunately, a strange trend is spreading in the Church. Modernist ideas are poisoning the Body of the Church, and one could almost say that something like an "anti-Church" is beginning to form. Doctrine no longer seems to be so important. Often the world is taken as a criterion and orientation rather than the Gospel itself, and moral convictions are being relativised...

This is where it would be the Pope's mission to announce clearly and unambiguously the Church's ever valid doctrine, and to counteract misinterpretations and misguided tendencies. As the Supreme Shepherd, he is particularly entrusted with the task of protecting the flock and leading it to the good pastures, as well as overcoming all confusion. It cannot be overlooked that, unfortunately, this is not happening in the present Pontificate.

It is imperative for the Church to remain faithful to her mission and to identify and oppose all erroneous tendencies. The Lord has promised the Church that the gates of hell will not prevail against her (Mt 16:18); but the Church, for her part, must obey her Lord in all things....