

29. November 2024

Do not worship the Beast

Rev 20:1-4,11-15; 21:1-2

Then I John, saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the Abyss in his hand and an enormous chain. He overpowered the dragon, that primeval serpent which is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years. He hurled him into the Abyss and shut the entrance and sealed it over him, to make sure he would not lead the nations astray again until the thousand years had passed. At the end of that time he must be released, but only for a short while. Then I saw thrones, where they took their seats, and on them was conferred the power to give judgement. I saw the souls of all who had been beheaded for having witnessed for Jesus and for having preached God's word, and those who refused to worship the beast or his statue and would not accept the brandmark on their foreheads or hands; they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Then I saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. In his presence, earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace. I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing in front of his throne while the books lay open. And another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, as their deeds deserved. The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; Death and Hades were emptied of the dead that were in them; and every one was judged as his deeds deserved. Then Death and Hades were hurled into the burning lake. This burning lake is the second death; and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of life was hurled into the burning lake. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride dressed for her husband.

Satan's time is coming to an end! The rebellion against God that we perceive will not last forever. At the End of Time, Satan and his followers will be separated forever from the number of the faithful. The latter will be able to enjoy eternally and completely the beatific vision of God and will be able communion with the Heavenly Father and His own. But that time has not yet come for us! Nevertheless, that is the future to which we are heading and which we can already foresee in this life. The more we are aware of it

in our earthly life, the more "heavenly" our time here will become and the less we will cling to this passing world.

As today's text says, Satan is defeated by an angel and cast into the abyss. The prayer to St. Michael the Archangel reminds us of this event. In the Tridentine Mass, when it is not sung, it is usually recited at the end. A considerable number of the faithful have adopted this prayer into their "repertoire" and pray it also for their personal protection, when they feel threatened by the powers of darkness. This is highly commendable, because it would seem that, precisely at the present time, Satan is, as it were, unleashed for a little while; and we, united with the Lord, should offer him resistance.

In the first place, we are not to worship either the Beast or his image. Certainly we have to understand this figuratively. The "Beast" could be a power hostile to God at the spirit level; while "his image" could be a human representative. In the various epochs we travel through in the history of mankind, we can identify in different ways the temptation to "worship the Beast and his image". In the case of the Jews, it was the Greek kings who demanded that they offer sacrifices to other gods, which they had to resist (cf. 1 Macc 1:44-50,62-63). At the beginning of Christianity, some Roman emperors demanded similar gestures. In recent times, tyrants and rulers have also appeared who have spread around them a cult that is not compatible with the worship of God. In that sense, Christians suffered the respective persecution.

At this point, mention must be made of the Antichrist, who will probably be like a human representative of Lucifer (an "image of the Beast"). The martyrs have resisted the claims of evil and have preferred death rather than worship or undue reverence to the Beast and to receiving his mark. Such a mark could be something like a perversion of Baptism or something similar.

We must be aware that the Devil attempts to imitate the works of God, and, at the same time, counterfeits them. Holy Baptism is God's greatest gift, which supernaturally makes us His children. The mark of the Beast could be the attempt to bind people, marking them as "children of darkness" so that he can claim them as his property.

But the works of darkness do not remain! They are the work of creatures, and not of the Creator. The only thing the powers of darkness can do is to imitate, but not to create. Thus, they could pretend to substitute the loving Omniscience of God by an

artificial global control, in order to have a firm dominion over the "kingdoms of this world". A perversion of the most loving Father, of the sweet Reign of Christ and of the luminous presence of the Holy Spirit! Anathema!

As believers, we firmly trust that, thanks to our Savior, we are inscribed in the Book of Life and that, by His grace, we will be able to stand in the presence of God's glory. We look forward to the Resurrection of the dead; that wonderful work of God, when we will all receive an incorruptible body and will no longer be exposed to the plagues of this earthly life. Although with the eyes of faith we can already glimpse the splendor of the Heavenly Jerusalem and live in the joy of the children of God, this is only a pale reflection of the glory that awaits us. Through our pilgrimage in this world, through the processes of purification, we are prepared for that glory, so that we can welcome it. When we encounter the love of God and understand what He is really like, our joy and delight will never end.

May we know how to resist and persevere with the strength of the Lord and may we record in the Book of Life as many good works as possible!

NOTE: For those who wish to deepen the subject of the Antichrist, we recommend listening to the conference of Brother Elias entitled "The shadows of the Antichrist":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xb2_Tvgu0A&t=631s

And two powerful weapons in the fight against evil are the prayers to St. Michael the Archangel and St. Benedict. Both have been recorded by Harpa Dei as chants:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lovUujcZIqo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ll9TF2vsn3c>