

2. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN “Disputes of Jesus in Jerusalem”

Jn 8:12-20

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” The Pharisees then said to him, “You are bearing witness to yourself; your testimony is not true.” Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come and whither I am going, but you do not know whence I come or whither I am going. You judge according to the flesh, I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and he who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true; I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me.” They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father also.” These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

The Pharisees were repeatedly scandalised by the authority of Jesus' words, which were to reveal to them who He was and thus open the way of truth for them to recognise Him as the Messiah. If they recognised Him as the Messiah, the door would have been opened for them to know more fully God, the Heavenly Father, who had sent Him into the world. When this path is taken, the Holy Spirit can reveal more and more of the truth to us, and our knowledge of God becomes more accurate and broader, and our love for Him grows.

Even today there are people who are scandalised by the claim that Jesus is the only way to the Father, and these words of His are often not accepted or reinterpreted. This relativisation has spread even within the Church and, unfortunately, those who should know and proclaim the truth are in danger of tarnishing it with human concepts and adapting it to the spirit of the times. With such an attitude, we may lose sight of the fact that we are actually acting on the commission of Jesus and that we are called to serve the truth that He came to proclaim to us, not to proclaim our own truth.

Therefore, if we are called to be reliable witnesses of the truth, we cannot dispose of it, relativise it or modify it as we please.

In any case, Jesus does not withdraw His words in the face of opposition, but tries to explain them to His listeners. His far-reaching statement still stands: *"I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

How could the Lord retract such a statement, depriving people of the hope of finding themselves before the One who can truly lead them out of darkness and into the Kingdom of God? How could the search of those who, moved by the Spirit of God, have set out to find the One whom, even without knowing it, they have been seeking all their lives, be hindered?

How could the world, so often in ignorance of true values, be deprived of the light and simply abandoned to darkness? How could the Jews, God's chosen and beloved people, who had long awaited the One who had already come into the world, be deprived of the knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah?

Jesus makes it clear that He is the light of the world and the One sent by the Father. He also responds to the objection that since He testifies to Himself, His testimony cannot be true, by pointing out that it is the heavenly Father who testifies to Him through His words and works, and that He proceeds from Him. Therefore the testimony He gives of Himself is true.

But the Pharisees refuse to acknowledge the truth about Jesus through His words and works, and so they shut themselves off from the light. Jesus points out a major obstacle that prevents them from recognising this, an obstacle that still exists today: *"You judge according to the flesh"*.

This is an essential key: to recognise the Lord as the Messiah, the Son of the Father, we need the Holy Spirit. Mere natural understanding is not enough to know Jesus for who He is. If we try to grasp the Lord with our human categories, we will at best get as far as the door to knock on in order to gain deeper knowledge from there. Even to say 'Jesus is Lord', in the sense of recognising Him as our Lord, we need the light of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).

Therefore, when we hear voices in the Church today that no longer proclaim Jesus according to the testimony He and His disciples gave throughout the centuries, it is a sign that the light of the Holy Spirit is gradually being lost and, consequently, the knowledge of God is being obscured.

In their encounter with Jesus, the Pharisees are offered the opportunity to recognise the Son and, through Him, the Father as He truly is. But their human judgement stands in the way.

They only had to listen to Him, assimilate His words, recognise His works and draw the right conclusions; then the light would penetrate them, they would become His disciples and would not close their hearts to the point of wanting to kill Him. Today people have the same opportunity. They can ask Jesus who He is and He will answer!