

3. January 2025

This is the Son of God

Jn 1:29-34

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, for he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

The witness of the Baptist, the witness of the Church, is a legacy for us: Jesus is the Son of God and therefore also the expected Messiah. How important this testimony is for us today! I would like to quote a few words from the book 'Salvation comes from the Jews', written by Roy Schoeman, a Jew who received the grace to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. Here we have an example of the effect that this experience can have on the mentality and actions of a Jew. Roy writes clearly and consistently in the preface to this book:

"If Jesus is the Messiah, then Jews who reject Christianity (or Messianic Judaism) are wrong. If Jesus was not the Messiah, then Christians, however well-intentioned, are wrong. Being wrong does not necessarily imply moral dishonour or guilt, but it is illogical to insist that somehow Judaism is right for Jews and Christianity is right for Christians, and that truth depends on which group you belong to. If Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, then of course the whole meaning and purpose of the Jewish religion revolves around the purpose of preparing the ground for the incarnation of God as man, and any Jew who does not accept Jesus has not understood the true role of Judaism in the history of salvation".

Are we still convinced of this today and do we draw the same conclusions as Roy Schoeman, who testifies to his conversion whenever the opportunity arises? His joy at

having found the Lord and the Catholic Church invites us to be aware of the immense honour and grace of being able to say with John the Baptist: *"This is the Son of God!"*

This profession of faith has not lost its timeliness, even if many people today no longer consider it so important... But according to the logic of Scripture, there is nothing more important for humanity than listening to the message of the Gospel and doing God's will. What Roy Schoeman said about the Jews can be applied to the whole of humanity. The purpose of human existence is to know God and to respond to His love. This has such a priority that everything else must take second place. In other words, all earthly realities must be placed at the service of the essential reason for existence. The Apostles understood it, a Saint Paul lived it, a Saint Francis Xavier burned for it, as well as many other witnesses.

Consequently, it is impossible for the Church to promote religious relativism by proclaiming that all religions lead to God. Whoever says this will have to face the words of Saint Paul: *"Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed"* (Gal 1:8).

But here the question arises: how can we reach the people of our time, how can we awaken in them a desire for true love and truth? Certainly, at the human level, there is no effective means, no systematic methodology to achieve this goal.

Sometimes it is simply a matter of being able to endure the fact that perhaps in one's own environment the question of God and the search for a more Christian life are not raised, and that these essential questions arouse little interest or are even seen as something strange. However, the inner suffering caused by this situation, together with our prayer and witness, can be offered to the Lord for the conversion of others.

In any case, we must never become discouraged or allow ourselves to be infected by indifference or apostasy. There will be times when it is necessary to withdraw completely into interior prayer, so as not to darken our souls. This is especially necessary when we find ourselves in times of increasing anti-Christian influence. Then it is necessary to have an inner space in the soul, a kind of 'monastic cell', where we can withdraw to be alone with God. From there, with renewed strength, we can go out again to bear witness to the Son of God in the place He has given us.

He is the Son of God!