

6. January 2025

Biblical meditations

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

"The power to become children of God"

Jn 1:6-18

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'" And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.*

God gives His people, and therefore all humanity, a reliable witness to testify to the Son of God. He is the great prophet John, of whom Jesus will say: "*among those born of women none is greater than John*" (Lk 7:28). His mission was to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah by calling them to repentance.

Indeed, the call to repentance echoes throughout the Scriptures and has not lost its relevance today. People need to turn away from crooked ways and respond to the invitation of God's love. In encountering the One who is the true light, they cannot remain in darkness without falling into disgrace and into the snares of evil. Although God's patience is infinite and knocks unceasingly at the doors of the heart until the hour of death, there is the sad possibility that man will close himself off and ignore the call to conversion of a John the Baptist.

God, our Creator and loving Father, came into this world in the person of His Son to reveal His love to man. But, as the Gospel of John tells us, "*his own did not receive him*". How often the Lord waits at the door of a heart and cannot enter! Then His intention to enlighten it with His light, to reveal to it the goodness of God and to make it capable of responding to the invitation to live as His child, cannot be fulfilled.

But there are also those who receive Him. What a transformation then takes place!

John's prologue says that "*to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God*".

It is about the power of love that begins to define the relationship between God and man. The more this light penetrates us, the more we are able to receive it and walk in it, the more natural and trusting our relationship with the Heavenly Father becomes. We are then granted the grace to heal the very painful consequence of the fall into sin, the loss of paradise, as the loving and intimate relationship with God is restored.

In the depths of our being, grace can heal us of the existential helplessness we often feel as human beings after having lost Paradise. We return home with the certainty that we are no longer plunged into a bottomless cosmic void with no way out, but surrounded by the love of a true Father. It is in keeping with this intimate relationship with God that His children gain power over His Fatherly Heart, for having been born of God, they have access to Him.

To be "born of God" is truly a new birth, sacramentally experienced in Holy Baptism and unfolded when we follow the Spirit of God. Then we begin to see things in His light, both God and the world. It is the Holy Spirit who does this work in us, accompanying us after this new birth and ensuring that we mature into spiritual adulthood as we follow His guidance.

The Law of God was the "teacher" until the coming of the Messiah (Gal 3:24), to protect and prepare Israel. But when the Son of God is among us, the promises are fulfilled. The heart of God opens wide to all humanity, and the door is His only Son, "who is in the bosom of the Father" and has made Him known to us.

St John knows this and so do we. But there are so many people who have yet to learn that 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ'. Let us never tire of believing and proclaiming it!