

15. January 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The crucial decision”

Jn 3:31-36

He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony; he who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit; the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

In today's passage the supernatural dimension of Jesus' coming into the world and of His person is revealed to us, and we are thus introduced into the mystery of His divinity. Jesus is not simply a particularly gifted sage or a teacher with extraordinary divine gifts, however praiseworthy these may be. Such conceptions of Jesus do not correspond to reality because they are still based on an earthly way of thinking. Jesus, on the other hand, came "*from above*", that is, He was sent by the Father and - as we confess in the Creed - "was born of the Virgin Mary and became man", without losing His divine nature. This is indeed a great mystery which must penetrate the human heart through faith and become an enlightened certainty. To this day the Church has guarded and taught this truth to humanity.

Jesus, who came from heaven, bears witness on earth to what He has seen and heard. But people find it difficult to accept His testimony. In today's passage we even read "*No one receives his testimony*".

Why do people find it difficult to understand? A few days ago we heard how Nicodemus, a respected magistrate, initially failed to understand the Lord's words and tried to interpret them in human terms.

We might be tempted to think that the obstacle is the limit of human understanding.

But the obstacle cannot be an inability to understand, for God would not expect us to understand something that is impossible for us to grasp. The problem lies elsewhere.

With the coming of Jesus, people are also offered the grace to recognise Him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who awakens faith in us. We see this in the example of the disciples: they followed Him and through His words and deeds, including miracles, they were able to recognise and bear witness: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Mt 16:16). It was the same with John the Baptist, who recognised Him and became His witness. It was God who gave them the light to do so.

In fact, our heavenly Father wants us to recognise His beloved Son, whom He sent into the world and into whose hands He has placed all things (cf. Mt 11:27). God wants us to come to the knowledge of the truth by recognising Jesus (1 Tim 2:4). For this purpose He sends us His light.

But are people ready to accept and confess the testimony of the Lord?

Jesus Himself will say before Pilate: *"For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice"* (Jn 18:37b).

If we human beings seek the truth and try to live in it, we will one day meet Jesus and recognise Him in the light of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are 'capable of the truth'. This does not mean that we must conclude that all those who have not yet come to know Jesus are doing so because they have closed themselves off from the truth. But the words of Scripture we have just heard remain true: *"he who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God."*

Likewise, the final words of today's text can never be relativised: *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him."*

The great gift that God gives us in His Son and in His saving work is eternal life. It is redeemed life that will reach its fullness in eternity with God and with all the angels and saints. Nothing less than this is offered to us by the Lord, and this invitation is extended to all human beings without exception. But there is a door through which we must enter: It is the following of Christ, obedience to Him and the observance of His

commandments. This is the condition set by God, and for its fulfilment He gives us His grace in abundance.

If we do not accept God's invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb, even though we know it, then we exclude ourselves from His grace and remain in darkness because we have closed ourselves off from the true light.

Therefore, the crucial decision is whether or not to accept Jesus, the One sent by the Father. Whether we live in the light of God or whether we prevent it from reaching us in the fullness of grace depends on this.

Hence the mission entrusted to those who have found the "water of life" - as Jesus will tell the Samaritan woman in the next chapter - to become reliable witnesses of the One whom the Father has sent to humanity.

Tomorrow we will hear how gently the Lord speaks to the Samaritan woman in order to lead her to the knowledge of the truth.