

28. January 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“Jesus goes up to Jerusalem in secret”

Jn 7:1-13

After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand. So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the works you are doing. For no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." For even his brothers did not believe in him. Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil. Go to the feast yourselves; I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." So saying, he remained in Galilee. But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

Jesus' life was already in danger. The hatred of the Jews had been kindled against Him because they were unwilling to believe Him or accept His testimony. Those who were hostile to Him were following the 'father of lies', as Jesus would later say very clearly: "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires." (Jn 8:43-44).

When we encounter the truth, we are faced with a decision. If we open ourselves to it, it will bring light and clarity and invite the will and also the heart to follow it. If, on the other hand, we close ourselves to it, blindness will take hold of us more and more. The same happens in the encounter with Jesus.

This blindness can take on very dangerous traits, as we see in the attitude of the hostile Jews towards Jesus. It can go so far as to want to eliminate the witness of truth.

Jesus knew this and that is why He did not go up to Jerusalem at first. His brothers wanted to persuade Him to show Himself publicly in Judea. However, they did not tell Him this because they were convinced of Jesus' mission and wanted to encourage Him. Rather, they did not believe in Him.

Here again we see Jesus sharing the fate of the prophets, who were often hated even in their own family or homeland. The Lord points out the reason for this hatred when He says to His brethren, *'The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil.'*

To this day it remains that way.

In the Roman Empire, before the edict of Emperor Constantine ended the persecution of Christians, they were considered enemies of mankind. They abstained from certain sins and practices common in the Roman Empire. They were unwilling to offer sacrifices either to the emperor or to idols. All this they did for the sake of Jesus, and thus it became clear that the works of the world are evil. As witnesses to God's truth, Christians were considered a hindrance and were therefore cruelly persecuted.

And what happens today? If believers hold fast to the revealed truth and bear witness to it, they are still in danger of being persecuted and even killed in some countries of the world. In the West, which lives on the heritage of the Christian faith, it is becoming increasingly difficult to profess the faith. In many countries, the anti-Christian spirit has so influenced public opinion that an unequivocal and uncompromising witness, based on the Gospel and the authentic doctrine of the Church, can lead to indirect persecution: isolation, marginalisation, ridicule, etc.

Nor can it be omitted to point out that even within the Church and Christianity, depending on the extent to which it has allowed itself to be influenced by an anti-Christian world, those who oppose this process of adapting to the mentality of the world and cling to the truth of the Gospel are pushed aside.

In any case, Jesus was compelled to go up secretly to Jerusalem for the feast because of the hostility of the Jews. People were looking for Him and there was no consensus about what to think of Him and His works. Some spoke in His favour; others had evidently

bowed to the views of the religious leaders and believed that Jesus was misleading the people.

But no one dared to speak out publicly for fear of the Jews, which suggests that the atmosphere was very oppressive.