

30. January 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“His time had not yet come”

Jn 7:25-36

Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, “Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? Yet we know where this man comes from; and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.” So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord; he who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.” So they sought to arrest him; but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come. Yet many of the people believed in him; they said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?” The Pharisees heard the crowd thus muttering about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. Jesus then said, “I shall be with you a little longer, and then I go to him who sent me; you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come.” The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”

Why were the religious leaders of the Jews so determined to put Jesus to death? Even Pilate, the Roman procurator, realised during the interrogation that Jesus was innocent and could not be objectively accused of anything (Mt 27:18). Why, then, such fierce persecution of the Lord at such an early stage of His public ministry? Let us remember that even in the place where He was brought up, in Nazareth, they wanted to throw Him off the cliff.

The Scriptures themselves point out the reasons for the persecution. In the first part of John chapter 7, we had heard Jesus speak of the hatred of the world because He testified that its works are evil. In chapter 8, the Lord points out that the Jews (referring to those who persecuted Him) have the devil for their father (v. 44). In this context, we must

also include the passage we heard yesterday, in which Jesus affirmed that those who persecute Him do not seek God's glory, but their own glory (Jn 7:18), that they do not judge with right judgement (Jn 7:24), and so on. We could find more reasons for the blindness of His persecutors, which then led to the cruel death of the Son of God, who had done nothing else but proclaim the Kingdom of God and make it manifest by the signs He performed.

This is an unfortunate interplay of many different elements.

As painful as it is that the Son of God should have been treated in this way, all the events that led up to this point can serve as a lesson for us. On the path of following Christ, it is important that, from the very beginning, we pay attention to our heart, for, as the Lord says, out of it comes what is evil: *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander..."* (Mt 15:19).

With great vigilance, we must resist at the root everything that proceeds from our evil inclinations and wants to direct our thoughts and feelings in a direction contrary to what the Gospel teaches us. If we do not do so, evil will unfold and begin to dominate more and more to the point of giving rise to evil deeds.

As can be seen from those who wanted to take Jesus' life, evil thoughts against Him soon took hold of them and they succumbed more and more to the dominion of the devil. The weakness that the devil was able to exploit was envy, perhaps also pride, that an unlettered man would present Himself as God. Then there was the misconception that Jesus could deceive the people and thus challenge the religious leaders' position among the people. Because instead of listening to Jesus and trusting Him, they did not resist these twisted thoughts but gave them free rein, the devil was able to use them as instruments to carry out his evil plans through them. This is the situation 'behind the curtain' that we as spiritual people need to be aware of.

If we allowed ourselves to be carried away by our evil inclinations, the same thing would happen to us.

But Jesus' hour had not yet come. No one could lay a hand on Him, for it is not His persecutors who determine the hour when He will be handed over. It is only the Heavenly Father who sets the hour. In Him, in His Father, Jesus has His home, and

the Jews cannot come there yet. For that they, like all of us, must first receive the forgiveness of sins that Jesus will obtain for mankind when His hour has come, taking upon Himself all the guilt that separates men from God and enslaves them.

In that hour the destiny of men will be changed if they will only believe in Him whom the Father has sent. In this hour, heaven will open its gates to all who listen to the voice of the Father, and Jesus will set us free from the bondage of death, sin and the devil. It is to this hour that the Lord is heading. Once He has suffered and risen from the dead, we too will be able to go to Him and He will be found by us.