

3. February 2025

## THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

“Who are you?”

Jn 8:21-36

*Again Jesus said to them, “I go away, and you will seek me and die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.” Then said the Jews, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’” He said to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.” They said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Even what I have told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge; but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father. So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.” As he spoke thus, many believed in him. Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, ‘You will be made free?’” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*

Jesus emphasises the need to believe in Him to the Jews who listened to Him and therefore also to all those who would receive His message down the centuries. The Lord alludes to a decisive reason for His uniqueness, which marks the Christian faith: He can forgive sins that no one else can forgive. He does so by virtue of His authority as the Son of God, who gives His life in atonement for the sins of the world. This is why other religions and belief systems can never be equated with Christianity, because there is only one Redeemer: God Himself. This is so central and decisive that Jesus insists on it again and again, inviting people to trust in Him, in His word and in His deeds. No one can be with God in eternity without having been completely purified of his sins. That is

why Jesus says to the Jews: 'Where I am going, you cannot come'. They need Him as their way! That is why He came into the world: to enable them to reach the Kingdom of His Father.

It is in this context that Jesus addresses the question of freedom in today's Gospel passage. There is true freedom only when one lives according to God's will. On the other hand, if a person lives in sin, he or she is enslaved. If someone falls into an addiction, it will usurp more and more of his freedom. It is the same with sin. It weakens us in the depths of our being, separates us from God, binds the powers of our soul and makes us succumb to the influence of the powers of darkness.

Who, then, can save us from this condition? Man cannot do it by himself, and one of the most important experiences in his life is to perceive that he cannot redeem himself and that he is in need of a Saviour, without whom he cannot taste true freedom, nor obtain that peace which only God can give.

'*Who are you?*' - the Jews ask Him when they hear His words, not understanding many things, but moved by them. Jesus testifies once again that the Father sent Him and is always with Him, and that He acts only in His Name. These words of the Lord touched the hearts of many of His hearers, who believed in Him.

'*Who are you?*'

If someone today asks Jesus this same question with an open heart, then he will get an answer, because He Himself said that '*For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.*' (Mt 7:8). Jesus will open his eyes and let him know that, lifted up on the cross, He wants to draw everyone to Himself to offer them the fruit of Redemption. The seeker will notice that the encounter with the Lord gives him freedom and frees him from the chains of sin that hindered his journey. His life will begin to be enlightened by the truth and, when he decides to follow the Lord, he will experience in his own flesh these words of his: '*So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*'

Jesus wants to grant all this to people and show them the glory of the Father. They only have to accept His offer and then grace can unfold in their lives. What is stopping us? It is not difficult! Just take one step and the gates of heaven will open. Then we will get an answer to the question, '*Who are you?*'.

Jesus is the One sent by the Heavenly Father, who is always watching over us. And our heart will recognise Him: It is You whom I have always been looking for!