

9. February 2025

## THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN “The Good Shepherd”

Jn 10:1-10

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

How familiar we are with the image of the Good Shepherd! As believers, we know very well that God Himself is the Good Shepherd of all people, as He made it clear to us in the coming of Jesus into the world. The sheep are those who entrust themselves to the Good Shepherd, listen to Him, know His voice and follow Him. Jesus gathers them from all over the world and continues to call them to gather them into His Church. In Jesus' parable, they are the sheepfold and the Lord Himself is the door.

But there are also thieves and robbers. They are those who want to approach the sheep but do not come in the name of the Lord. They come in their own name and have other intentions: to steal, to kill and to destroy. So they appear as enemies and often as false prophets.

The true shepherd, on the other hand, loves His sheep. He knows each one by name and leads them to good pastures. The sheep follow Him because they are bound to Him

by the bond of love. That is why they know His voice and distinguish it very well from that of strangers, whom they do not trust and from whom they flee.

Although initially addressed to 'the sheep of the stable of Israel', to put it in parabolic terms, that is, to those whom the Lord gathers from the Jewish people, their scope is much wider, as Jesus Himself declares: 'I have other sheep which are not of this fold; these also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and shall become one flock with one shepherd'.

But His hearers did not understand the significance of this comparison. To those who believed in Him more and more of its meaning would be revealed as the events around Jesus progressed, and His Spirit would reveal it to them more and more deeply.

People must realise that God Himself came in the person of His Son to gather His flock. He began by calling is "first-born", the people of Israel, who had been prepared for centuries to recognise the Messiah, for "salvation is from the Jews" (Jn 4:22). But the salvation achieved by Jesus will be extended to the whole of humanity, as clearly expressed in the missionary mandate which the Lord entrusts to His disciples: "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.*" (Mk 16:15).

People must recognise that God is the Father of all and that he manifests Himself in His Son, who comes into the world in His name and on His mission. This is the perennial task of the Church, formed from all peoples as the Mystical Body of Christ. However, since our Heavenly Father has endowed human beings with the gift of freedom, they can abuse it, as did the fallen angel and all those who deliberately reject God's invitation. Thus, instead of imitating God and trying to become perfect like Him, reflecting His goodness and wisdom, they run the risk of becoming like the fallen angel, who presents himself as a kind of evil father. This is why Jesus warns so strongly against the thieves and robbers who want to enter the flock to destroy it.

This has happened again and again. We see it from the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, when He begins to call "the sheep of the house of Israel". Often the resistance came from those who should have gathered with Him instead of scattering (cf. Mt 12:30); who should have built the kingdom of God instead of hindering it; who should have received true life from Him instead of trying to kill Him.

Although God's call is addressed to all people and it is up to us, as His disciples, to proclaim it, we cannot overlook the opposition that the Kingdom of God will encounter until the end of time.

In an intimate relationship with Jesus, we must learn to distinguish very well His voice (which speaks to us within us, through Sacred Scripture and the authentic Magisterium of the Church) from those other voices which deviate from the Lord's way and seek to block our access to the green pastures. The word of the Lord is: *"I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved"*.