

19. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“Believe in the light”

Jn 12:34-43

The crowd answered Jesus, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” When Jesus had said this, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him; it was that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Therefore they could not believe. For Isaiah again said, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.” Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Jesus' listeners find it difficult to accept His words and to trust Him. The Lord had already shown them enough signs, signs that left no room for doubt. So why couldn't they just believe and trust? Light came into the world in the person of Jesus, who invited people to walk in His light, to be "children of light".

On another occasion Jesus told His disciples that they were the light of the world (Mt 5:14), for His light begins to shine in those who believe in Him. How Jesus wanted all people to be children of light! But those who do not walk in the light that comes into the world in the person of Jesus Christ will not be prepared to resist the darkness when it comes upon them.

Why then were some of the Jews, and especially their religious leaders, unable and unwilling to believe in Him?

In this context, the evangelist quotes the prophet Isaiah: "*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.*"

In the Old Testament we often do not find this subtle distinction between God's active will and His passive will, that is, what He allows to happen. But this distinction is very important so that we do not get the wrong picture of God. It is not that He actively hardens man's heart, but that He desires to find attentive, open and loving hearts. However, because of man's freedom, God allows man to oppose truth and love, thus hardening his heart.

Throughout the meditations on the Gospel of John, we have seen how the Lord's offer was rejected again and again in the course of His public ministry. The signs of His divine authority were not recognised, and the hearts of those who showed themselves to be God's enemies were darkened to the point of being filled with a deadly hatred. As a result, they could no longer see; that is, they were spiritually blinded and deprived of the ability to bear fruit.

The quotation from the prophet Isaiah says: "*lest they should see with their eyes and perceive with their heart*".

In such a state, they cannot convert to God because the way is blocked. Their ears are deafened so that the message of the Lord cannot reach them. Consequently, the healing of the heart that the Lord brings to men cannot take place in them. And how necessary this healing would be in a heart darkened by sin and taken over by the evil inclinations of man! Even with God's grace, it is difficult to overcome these inclinations and acquire a new heart. But in the encounter with Jesus, the heart begins to heal, because it encounters the love that created and redeemed it, and can give itself to Him without fear.

Despite the massive hostility against Jesus, there were some leaders who believed in Him but did not dare to confess Him. This fear indicates, on the one hand, an atmosphere of repression and a very dominant exercise of religious authority and, on the other hand, human respect. There was also the fear of being thrown out of the synagogue and losing face among the people.

The decision to follow Jesus and thus the truth is crucial. It cannot be avoided or postponed for the sake of loving people more than God. This is still true today. This choice must also be made within the Church, which, under the strong influence of modernist tendencies, is in danger of diluting or even denying the message entrusted to it. For example, if other religions are to be considered as ways to God, a decision must be made, because the central message of salvation, which only Jesus Christ could give us, cannot be distorted. One must remain faithful to the message of Christ and the authentic teaching of the Church, even if this means being marginalised or persecuted.