

6. March 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

“I have overcome the world”

Jn 16:25-33

“I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.” His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

The Heavenly Father loves those who believe in His Son, for that is His will for all humanity. When a person accepts Jesus, loves Him and follows Him, that person lives in God's grace and divine love can reach him.

There is no doubt that God loves all people. Otherwise he would not have sent His Son to redeem them. With a solicitous love, our Father goes out in search of every person so that everyone may be saved. But there is a decisive difference: whoever obeys Jesus begins to model his life on this love that has found him and consciously allows himself to be formed by Him. The light of God has shone on him, so that he awakens more and more from the darkness. If he walks his way faithfully, the Son of God will take more and more shape in him and his thinking and acting will become more and more like that of Jesus, for he has taken up his abode in Jesus. His Spirit guides and enlightens him.

What a gift to all humanity! Originally, this grace was offered in a special way to the people of Israel, the 'firstborn'. Even today, the fact that so few Jews have recognised their Messiah remains a great sadness and unfinished story. When we listen to St. Paul, one of the leading Pharisees of the Jewish people, who went from persecutor to preacher, we can get an idea of God's sadness at this unbelief: *"I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race."* (Rom 9:1-3).

How he longed to convince his 'kinsmen by race' of Jesus Christ! Certainly that is still his great desire. However, over the centuries, relatively few Jews have accepted God's grace.

All the disciples whom the Lord had chosen remain faithful to Him, except Judas, but their faith is not yet strong enough. They are not yet able to bear all the circumstances of their Master's capture and death. They are still in need of the Holy Spirit who will be sent to them, who will strengthen them and enable them to stand firm in the persecutions that will come upon them and even to lay down their lives for Jesus.

Although His disciples will be scattered when Jesus is arrested, He will not be alone in that hour. These words can be a comfort and a certainty to Christians of all times. In the great affliction that comes with persecution and suffering, where there is often no one to assist us, our Father is always there to accompany us. Jesus assures us of this! At the same time, He is a comfort to those who feel powerless to help others in their great need. God assists the persecuted! When our possibilities are exhausted, He is still at their side. Therefore, we can pray for them and help them in this way.

Finally, Jesus encourages His disciples. He did not leave them in ignorance about what might befall them. In fact, His own life and death showed it to them. They must be aware of the hostility of the world, which will also turn against them if they remain faithful to the Lord. But it is precisely He who will give them the strength to overcome the world, indeed to conquer it. Their heart will remain centred on God and nothing, neither the seductions of the world nor the attacks from within and without, will be able to turn them away from Him. Thus the apostles serve as an example to us, as do so many others who did not allow themselves to be overcome by the world, but remained steadfast in their witness for Christ. By God's grace, this is and will remain possible,

even in times of harsh persecution, when the anti-Christian powers besiege the faithful and some of them even have to offer the sacrifice of their blood.

In such hours, let us remember what the Lord said to His disciples shortly before His Passion and Death, and let us be encouraged by His words:

“In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”