

14. April 2023

Tuesday of the Easter Octave

There is no other name by which we can be saved

Acts 4:1-12

*While they were still talking to the people the priests came up to them, accompanied by the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees. They were extremely annoyed at their teaching the people the resurrection from the dead by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. They arrested them, and, as it was already late, they kept them in prison till the next day. But many of those who had listened to their message became believers; the total number of men had now risen to something like five thousand. It happened that the next day the rulers, elders and scribes held a meeting in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, Jonathan, Alexander and all the members of the high-priestly families. They made the prisoners stand in the middle and began to interrogate them, 'By what power, and by whose name have you men done this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, addressed them, 'Rulers of the people, and elders! If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple and asking us how he was healed, you must know, all of you, and the whole people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, and God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man stands before you cured. This is the stone which you, the builders, rejected but which has become the cornerstone. Only in him is there salvation; for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'*

What statement could shake us more than this one, which in reality certifies what was natural for the Apostles, but which today is not infrequently questioned or relativised? There is no other name given to men to find salvation than the Name of the Lord! Does this fire burn in us too, which evidently burned in St. Peter? Are we clear about this statement, with all its implications?

In order to correctly apply this unequivocal message in relation to all people, it is important to draw a clear distinction. One thing is the human effort to seek God; another thing is the self-revelation of God as we find it in the Old and New Testament.

In the heart of man is planted the sincere search for God, and he who sets out will be drawn by the Spirit of God. The complete answer to this search is given to us by God Himself through the proclamation of the Gospel, in which the Name of Jesus is made known to us, in whom we obtain salvation.

On the basis of this certainty, it is clear that the various religions cannot in themselves constitute ways of salvation, since they do not know the Name of Jesus as the Redeemer of humanity.

It is therefore very important to be clear about this difference, so that we do not allow ourselves to be deceived. This also applies to all confusing formulations. For example, I recently heard from a well-known preacher the expression: "the God of all religions". Such an expression is misleading...

There is no doubt that God loves all men and that He is the goal of every sincere search for God. However, religions cannot offer a complete answer to this search... They are often full of errors and even harbour anti-Christian contents. Therefore, there can be no "God of all religions". While I do not want to assume that this Catholic preacher was fully aware of the implications of such a statement, nor accuse him of seeking to mislead people, such statements are grave.

It is characteristic of false doctrines to cloud our understanding. Thus, instead of our reason and faith being guided by what Holy Scripture tells us (for example, in this statement of the Apostle Peter), taking it as a criterion, false doctrine stands between the understanding and authentic doctrine, like a "false light". If one follows error, the understanding, which was first clouded, will be progressively blinded. In this way, one can easily fall into the error that it does not matter what one believes, that all religions are equal and willed by God, and so on.

The truth, on the other hand, is that God loves all people and that is precisely why He wants everyone to know the true religion, i.e. the way that He Himself has given us in His Son Jesus, *"for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved"*.

Also the signs and miracles that happened before the eyes of all were worked in the Name of Jesus, as the now fearless and strengthened Apostle Peter proclaims.

Every Word of God enlightens us and increases the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. On the other hand, every erroneous formulation and, moreover, false doctrine as such, opens the door to confusion.

Let us be very careful that our orientation is the Word of God and the purity of the Church's doctrine, and let us close our hearts and ears to any misleading statement.

The truth is that *"of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved"*. That Name is Jesus!