

**TU SEI IL CRISTO... IL FIGLIO DELL'UOMO DEVE MOLTO SOFFRIRE.**

**Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Mark 8,27-35**

*Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."*

*Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*

*He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*

*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it*

Jesus rebukes his disciples, he tells them *"..you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear."*(Mark 8,18) despite the episode of the healing of the deaf-mute and the blind man, which were images of the resistance on the part of the disciples, who do not understand and do not accept who Jesus is, nor his message. Then Jesus takes them to the extreme north of the country, to the border with the land of the gentiles, to see if, far from the prevailing nationalist ideology, they can understand something about him. This is what Mark writes to us in chapter 8, 27-35, let's read. *"Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi."* We are at the extreme north of the country, therefore far from the influence of Judea and even Galilee, *" On the way..."* here, the evangelist already gives us a clue that makes us understand how the narration ends. *" On the way..."* " is where the sown seed did not bear fruit because the birds came, the image of Satan and took the seeds away. So this message from Jesus will be ineffective, Satan, the image of power, is refractory to the good news of Jesus.

*"..he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"* The twelve disciples, went to preach and Jesus wants to see what was the result of this preaching, the total confusion. *" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist;.."* because it was believed that martyrs would be promptly resurrected, *"..others say Elijah; .."* Elijah is the great and violent prophet, who was to come to prepare the way for the Messiah, *"..and still others, one of the prophets.."* They have not understood, all are people of the past.

*"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"* Jesus' question is addressed to all of his disciples, but only one answers and he is presented with the negative nickname which indicates his stubbornness, the stubbornness that will then lead him to deny Jesus, he is Peter. *"Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."* with the definite article. The traditional, awaited Messiah, the one who was to come to enforce the law, to occupy the power in Jerusalem, this is the Messiah. But Mark in his gospel presents Jesus as Christ, but without the definite article, that is, a

Messiah who is all to be discovered. In fact, you can see immediately that Jesus does not agree, from his reaction, “*Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.*” the evangelist uses, the same verb that is used to scold, to drive out the possessed and in this passage it will appear three times, Therefore what Peter said, Jesus does not like. “*..not to tell anyone about him. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man..*” Peter had replied “*You are the Messiah.*” the messiah of the tradition, Jesus presents himself as the Son of man. Jesus is the son of God as he represents God in his human condition and is the Son of man in that he represents man in his divine condition, that is, the full development of God's plan for humanity, that man has the divine condition.

“*...the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected...*” by whom? Not from sinners; those who are hostile to God's plan for humanity are the very ones who should know and promote the plan, the religious authorities. In fact, the whole Sanhedrin is against the Son of Man, they are “*..the elders..*” that is the presbyters, “*..the chief priests and the teachers of the law..*” the official theologians. “*..he must be killed ..*” representatives of the religious institution they will kill God's plan for humanity, *and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.*” exactly when Jesus began to teach, Peter begins to scold him, the same verb used by Jesus, which was that used for the possessed. What Jesus is saying for Peter is something that does not come from God, comes from some devil.

Here is Jesus' reaction “*....Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter.*” But the rebuke is for all the disciples because they all have the same mentality. Rebuking Peter Jesus says “*Get behind me, Satan!*” Jesus refers to Peter as Satan, why? Because, like Satan, he tempts Jesus to deviate from his plan for humanity as Satan nullifies the effect of the word, like the seed fallen on the ground, which immediately the birds, the image of Satan, took away. So Jesus rebukes Peter and treats him like Satan, that is like the devil, but he doesn't chase away him, but says, “*Get behind me,...*” It is not Peter who must lead the way, but it is Jesus, “*You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.*”

Then for the first time the theme of the cross appears in this Gospel; to these disciples, who followed Jesus out of ambition, to share with him the power, the throne and the success. Jesus makes it clear that following him means meeting the contempt of the people themselves and rejection by the society . *Then he called the crowd..*” now the discussion becomes wider “*..along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves...”* meaning give up these ideals of power, ambition and success “*..take up..*” literally “*lift up*” “*..their cross..*” The cross in the Gospels is not given by God, but raised by man. To what does Jesus refer? Not to death on the cross, it refers to the moment in which the condemned person is in court was condemned to this torture which then led to death and had to hoist the horizontal axis of the cross; then, accompanied, dragged by the executioner crossed the whole city and for the people it was a moral and religious obligation to insult him and beat him up. It meant total loneliness, rejection and contempt; this is the cross. The cross for Jesus means accepting to lose one's reputation, one's ideals. It is not an imposition for everyone, but a consequence of those who really want to follow him. “*Take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, he who wants to realize his ideals of success, of fullness of his existence he will meet with disaster “.. but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.*” Jesus ensures that to live for him, even if you go through contempt and rejection of society, it will not be a disaster, but the full realization of the person.

