

V SUNDAY OF EASTER– 14th MAY 2017

I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE - Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

John 14,1-12

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”

The announcement, by Jesus, of Peter's betrayal, throws despair into the community of the disciples, and it is only the beginning of the storm that will break out in his group. So, Jesus tries to encourage his group; this is how chapter 14 of John's gospel begins.

Jesus says *“Let not your hearts be troubled.”* The result of his announcement. *“Believe in God; believe also in me”*, Why does Jesus unite the faith in God and the faith in himself? Because he will be captured, tortured and assassinated in God's name, like a blasphemer, an enemy of God and Jesus states that there is full harmony between himself and God.

Then Jesus gives a very important, precious indication, one of those indications that, if understood, really changes the relationship with the Father: *“In my Father's house are many rooms.”* What is it that Jesus wants to say with this fact of the many rooms? The immensity of God cannot be manifested in one person or in one community, but needs multiple forms to flourish through new and original flats, of love, forgiveness and mercy. In fact, later on, in verse 23, Jesus states: *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* So, every individual, every community is called to be the only sanctuary, where the Father's love and mercy dwell.

Jesus continues: *“If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you,…”* this means the sanctuary, that every person becomes this visible sanctuary, *“I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”* Jesus is in the fullness of the divine dimension, a fullness that is not an exclusive privilege, but is possible for all believers *“And you know the way to where I am going.”* What is the way? As Jesus has already said: love that makes service.

And here at this point, there is the intervention of three disciples. Here in the liturgical version there are only two, number three indicates the totality, therefore the misunderstanding on behalf of the group.

The first is Thomas who asks *“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”*

And here Jesus answers with this important and solemn affirmation: *“I am..”* and with this claims the fullness of the divine condition *“... the way, and the truth, and the life.”* Jesus is the way because he is the truth; he does not say to have the truth, and does not ask of his disciples to have the truth, but to be the truth. What is the truth in this gospel? The truth in this gospel is a divine dynamism, that is not expressed through a formula or doctrine, but only through works and acts of love. This path, which leads to this dynamic love, leads to life, and here the evangelist uses the term indicating indestructible life.

"No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him" When have the disciples known and seen the Father? In the previous episode, that was the washing of the feet: Jesus, that is God, put himself at the service of his disciples, indicating and showing who is God. Who is God?. Generous love, who puts itself at the service of the people.

And here is the intervention of the second disciple: *"Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Here is another important affirmation "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* In this gospel's prologue, the evangelist had written that no one had seen God, only the son was the revelation. What does this mean? That Jesus is not the same as God, but God is the same as Jesus. So the evangelist asks us to suspend everything known, known of God, but test it, control it, with what he presents of Jesus. If it coincides keep it but if it is distanced or different, it must be eliminated. So in Jesus there is the only possibility of knowing who is God, and who is this God? We have seen: love that makes itself service to others.

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" and here is another very important statement, *"The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works."* In Jesus' words, the works of the Father are manifested, and the creative power of the Creator . This means that Jesus' every single word , contains in itself the energy of the same creative action of God and all he said was realized.

"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves." Jesus does not ask to be believed in for a doctrine, theology, but for the works, that communicate life, because the doctrine is disputable, the actions that communicate life, are seen and can be verified. Works in favour of mankind are the only criterion of credibility for Jesus and his disciples.

And at the end a surprising statement : *"Truly, truly, I say to you,."* This duplicate repetition of truth means solemnly that what I say now is true. *".. whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do;"* so , these works that communicate life, everyone can do, but Jesus even states: *".. and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father."* Jesus warns his disciples that his death will not mean his absence, but a presence even more intense The fact that there is no physical Jesus, will not be seen as a loss, but as a gain, and will enable the disciples and the community to carry out the same actions as Jesus, with his same power.