

IV LENT– 14th March 2021

GOD SENT HIS SON IN ORDER THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BE SAVED THROUGH HIM. - Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

John 3,14-21

Jesus speaking to Nicodemus

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

This Sunday's liturgy presents us with the conclusion of the long encounter between Jesus and the Pharisee Nicodemus, leader of the Jews, that is, a member of the Sanhedrin; it is John's gospel chapter 3,14-21. In this conclusion of the discourse Jesus demolishes three fundamental points of the Pharisaic spirituality and what were they? The conception of eternal life as a reward granted in the future for good behavior in the present; the judgment of God, a God who judges and rewards and punishes mankind according to their behavior, and, the third, is the truth as a doctrine to be observed.

So, Jesus begins by referring to a well-known episode in the history of Israel, when, in exile, in the exodus into the desert there was the plague of poisonous snakes that killed people; Moses raised a rod with a copper serpent and whoever looked at it was saved. Jesus referring to this episode says that " *...so must the Son of man be lifted up*". .. the Son of man what does that mean? The man who has the divine condition. This is not an exclusive and privilege to Jesus, but a possibility for all believers. John said in the prologue(John 1 ,12) "*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...*", And Jesus says "... *whoever believes in him...*" believes in whom? In the Son of man: believing that each of us comes into the world because it is a plan of love on the part of the Father, a plan that God wants to carry out. Anyone who believes in this, and here's the novelty , "*...may have eternal life.*" It is the first time that Jesus speaks of eternal life in this gospel and he will never speak of it with terms in the future, but always in the present. For Jesus, eternal life is not a condition that is acquired after death, but a quality of life already in this existence that will then allow the individual not to experience death.

The second supporting element of Pharisaic spirituality, as of every religion, is a God who

judges, a God who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. But the Father of Jesus is not like that; the Father of Jesus is love, he is an incessant and growing communication of love, it is up to man to accept this love or not. He is not a God who judges and even less who condemns people, it will be the people who, rejecting this offer of love and life, remain in the sphere of death. Jesus uses it with the image of light: light is the source of life. Who is it that hates light? There are two categories: the wicked because they are afraid of being discovered, and those who live in the dark. If one lives in the dark, always in the dark, when this source of light comes, this light blinds him and he hides even more in the dark. So Jesus speaks here not of a judgment on God's part, but of a judgment that people give themselves by excluding themselves from this source of life.

And finally the third is that of truth. Jesus has just said that anyone who does evil hates the light and we would have expected now as opposed “*..those that do good..*” but Jesus states “*...whoever does what is true..*” As opposed to doing evil there is not a doing good, but doing the truth, because in this gospel doing the truth does not mean observing a doctrine, but doing good. While a doctrine can divide and separate people from each other, doing good is what brings us closer together.

Then Jesus guarantees that whoever does good always comes to the light and when the moment will come with the encounter that God is light, this light will not absorb man, but it will be man who will absorb the light, which will merge with him, expand his person and make him eternal and indestructible.