

EXALTATION OF THE CROSS – September 14th, 2014

THE HUMAN ONE MUST BE LIFTED UP – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM

Jn 3.13-17

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Human One be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

In dialogue with the Pharisee Nicodemus, leader of the Jews, Jesus refers to an known episode of Israel's history, found in the Book of Numbers.

In chapter 3 verse 14 the evangelist writes: “*«And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,..»*”; the serpents were sent by God to punish the people according to the classical scheme of “punishment – salvation-forgiveness”. In Jesus there is only salvation.

“*«...so must the Son of Man be lifted up, »*” Jesus refers to His future death on the cross and speaks of the Son of man, that is man that has the fullness of the divine condition. “*«...that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. »*” believing in the Son of man means to aspire to the human fullness that shines in this Son of man.

For the first time, in this Gospel, appears a theme very dear to the evangelist, that of eternal life. Eternal life is not, as the Pharisees taught, a future prize for good conduct in the present, but a quality of life already in the present life. And it is called “eternal” not so much for the life without end, but for the indestructible quality.

And eternal life is not for the future, but it is already here. Whoever accepts Jesus, therefore aspiring to the human fullness that is resplendent in Jesus.

.“ *«For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, »*” Jesus' God is not a God that asks, but a God that offers, that even arrives in offering himself. “*«...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. »*”

Eternal life is not obtained by observing the laws, as the Pharisees taught, that is a code external to mankind, but by giving adherence to the Son of man. And Jesus appears here as a gift of love from God for humanity. God is love that desires to manifest itself and to communicate. And Jesus is the maximum expression of this manifestation and communication of God. “*«For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, »*” the original word here is “*« to judge the world»*”

Here again Jesus is talking to a Pharisee, demolishing the expected Judge – Messiah of the people. So the Son has not come to judge the world, “*«...but in order that the world might be saved through him. »*”. God is love and in him there is no judgment, nor condemnation, but there is only the offer of life.