

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

Jn 3,16-18

At that time Jesus said to Nicodemus,

"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.

God is not a judge, but is the one who communicates life and offers to humanity the fullness of life that manifests itself and is present in the only son, Jesus. It is John's Gospel ,chapter 3, 16-18, but we will need to integrate with verses 19 and 20, otherwise the passage, as it is shortened for the liturgy, is not understood.

"For God so loved the world", therefore there is this manifestation of the love of God towards the world. God is not a pessimistic God, a God sick of humanity, but a God in love with humanity. And he is so in love, so in love with the world *".....that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him..."*

To believe in the only Son means to believe in the model of humanity. Here Jesus is presented as the only son. He is the Son of God, so that Jesus manifests God in His human condition but it is the Son of Man that represents man in the divine condition. Therefore in Jesus there is the model of humanity, the growth, the full maturity of mankind, that one can obtain without being conditioned by anyone.

"...should not perish but have eternal life." Eternal life for Jesus is not a promise for the future, but a possibility in the present. Whoever lives putting in his life a love like that which God has for us, that is a total love, unconditional and unlimited, already has a life of the same quality that is called eternal, not so much for the length, but for the quality, that is indestructible: even death cannot affect it.

"For God did not send his Son..," and again the insistence on this 'his son', the Son of God, the son of man in the human fullness and that brings with it the divine condition, *"..into the world.."*, and here, in the original text, it does not say to condemn, the word is to judge, God is not a judge, but it is he who communicates life. And the son is the same.

Therefore he has not sent his Son to judge the world; this was what the Pharisees were waiting for a messiah that came to judge, to separate the good from the bad, the pure from the impure, but not God, not Jesus. Therefore he has not sent his son to judge, but because *".. the world might be saved through him"*.

Jesus offers an alternative of life, he offers an alternative of society. Those that welcome him are with Him in the fullness of life. *"Whoever believes in him.."* - and to believe means to give support to this model of man, a man capable of an unlimited and unconditional love - *"..is not condemned"*. Therefore on one will be judged. The idea of judgment is unknown in John's Gospel. Who believes will not be judged, because he is already in the fullness of life.

On the contrary ,who does not believe has already been judged, *"... because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God"*. It is man that judges himself, refusing this fullness of life, this love. Refusing the fullness of life, that is Jesus, brings the fullness of death, this is the meaning that the evangelist wants to give, this judgment that then becomes a condemnation.

Therefore the message of God is absolutely positive: who welcomes it is in the fullness of life, who refuses it, is not judged, but is condemned by himself. And here then the verse 19 and 20 lets us understand better this thought that otherwise was cut in half.

The evangelist writes: *".... the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil"*. Here is the judgment. Those who, even on seeing the shining light of the Lord hide themselves, remain in the darkness of death. Those who, actually are attracted by this beam of light, enter into the fullness of life. The evangelist in fact comments, *"For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed."*

Therefore there is on judgment on the part of God, there is a positive proposal of life. Who welcomes it is in the fullness of life; who refuses it, because this fullness of life goes against his interest, goes against his aspirations, remains in the darkness of death. Not for the judgment of God, but for the judgment that man, of his own choice, gives by himself.