

IV LENT – March 15th, 2015

**GOD SENT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD SO THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BE SAVED THROUGH HIM
– Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM**

Jn 3.14-21

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.

Whoever believes in him isn't judged; whoever doesn't believe in him is already judged, because they don't believe in the name of God's only Son.

"This is the basis for judgment: The light came into the world, and people loved darkness more than the light, for their actions are evil. All who do wicked things hate the light and don't come to the light for fear that their actions will be exposed to the light. Whoever does the truth comes to the light so that it can be seen that their actions were done in God."

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.

“*«Whoever believes in him is not condemned,.. »*”, who believes in him is not judged, “*«...but whoever does not believe is condemned already.. »*”. It is mankind that judges himself. And let’s see why.... “*«... because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. »*”. It is mankind that judges, refusing the love that God offers him; for he who reacts against life, only death remains.

In fact, Jesus continues, “*«And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, »*” it is an imagine of life, “*« ...and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. »*” He who oppresses mankind will never accept the message that will lead them to serve. But what is important is that here Jesus refers –remember He is talking to a Pharisee, who is observant of the laws and doctrine –but to the works, not to the belief or orthodoxy.

It is not doctrine that separates one from God, but conduct. For this God does not offer doctrine, but the fullness of life. “*«For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed»*” Jesus refers to that which is the common experience. The delinquent, who does evil, does not like the light, but hides in the darkness. Well in front of an offer full of light, he who does evil, burrows himself even farther in darkness and there remains entrapped.

“*« But whoever does what is true...»*”. In contrast to doing evil, Jesus speaks of “doing what is true” The truth is not to believe, becoming a doctrine, but is done. Here is why Jesus in this Gospel will not say that He has the truth, but that He is the truth. Who has the truth, based on this truth, on this doctrine, feels able to judge, to condemn and divide himself from the others, the difference of who is in the truth. Why does it mean “ to be in the truth”?

If it is in contrast with “doing evil”, to be in the truth means “doing good”, being part of the dynamic creativity of God who loves his creatures and wants only their good, the good of mankind, it is the most important value in his children’s existence. Therefore “*...whoever does what is true...»*”, means that he that has put the good of others as the principal value of his existence, “*«..comes to the light, »*” the more one loves, the more the person becomes bright because he shines with the same light of God. “*«...so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God. »*”

His works are done in God because God is he who does good for mankind. Therefore to do the truth, to be part of his same dynamic creation that puts the good of mankind as the absolute value. He who has the truth, shares it with others; who is in the truth belongs and communicates life to everyone.