

II ORDINARY TIME– 17th January 2021

..THEY CAME AND SAW WHERE HE WAS STAYING AND THEY STAYED WITH HIM.. – Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

John 1,35-42

The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

The verb "to look at," in John's Gospel appears only twice, in the first chapter, where the evangelist presents the beginning of Jesus' activity. Evangelists, we know, are not only great theologians and great writers that follow the writing rules of their time. Well these rules said that, when you wanted to relate to the same theme, you use the same word or verb only in that section. And here in this passage the verb "to look at" appears twice. This verb means to enter inside of a person, into their hearts and see there their true reality.

So, the evangelist writes in the first chapter from verse 35 that John is still there with his disciples and "...he looked at Jesus", that is, fixing him. He sees the true reality, not what appears outwardly, but what he is, and indicates him as "...the lamb of God". Already John had spoken of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away and eradicates the sin that is in the world and does so by pouring out the Holy Spirit because the light, John wrote in his prologue, does not fight against the darkness, the light expands, his light and so Jesus will eliminate sin.

But why the lamb? What is it referring to? A lamb was never on the list of animals to sacrifice to obtain the forgiveness of sins, it does not have this meaning, the lamb of God is the lamb that Moses commanded every family to eat on the night of the liberation from the Egyptian slavery, why? The lamb's flesh gave strength and consistency to begin the long journey towards freedom and the blood would have freed them from death when the exterminating angel passed. Then the evangelist presents Jesus as the lamb of God, the one whose flesh will give the ability to initiate this new liberation, but no longer fleeing from a promised land, but from a land that had turned into a land of slavery dominated by law, which literally cokes and suffocates people. And his blood will not deliver from physical death, but from death forever. So John points to Jesus as the lamb, the one to follow.

Two of his disciples welcome this word, they turn to Jesus, Jesus invites **them to see Where he is staying**. At that time a disciple did not only follow the lessons of his master, but lived with him; one of these two of John's disciples is called Andrew and immediately he goes in search of his brother who is the other important protagonist of this passage, called Simon Peter. Well, when Andrew turns to his brother saying, with enthusiasm "*We have found...*", found meaning the fruit of a long search, we have searched and found "*...the Messiah*" which means Christ, there is no reaction from Simon; not even a word of consent or information, nothing. And the evangelist wrote "*...brought him* ", Simon is almost a dead weight that must be almost carried to Jesus and in front of Jesus there is no reaction here either.

So, "*Jesus looked at him...*" here Jesus fixes him and enters the interiority of this man and sees him, as we said before, bringing out the true reality of him, he says "*You are Simon the son of John.*" Who is this John? It is John the Baptist. A master's disciples called themselves sons; then by Jesus saying to Simon that "*You are the son of John*", he is a beloved disciple, the best, the model.

But this disciple was not there when John indicated Jesus as the Lamb of God, he does not know this information. Then here Jesus adds "*You shall be called Cephas*"; it is an Aramaic word that the evangelist translates meaning "*stone*" (*rock*), that is, indicating stubbornness, headstrong. Here in this gospel Jesus does not invite Simon to follow him and Jesus will never address Simon calling him Peter; it will be the evangelist who will use this nickname as a literary device which indicates the his stubbornness and his tenacity, every time that he is against or in opposition to Jesus.

If Jesus does not invite Simon Peter to follow him at the beginning, he will do so only at the end when finally Peter will surrender, he will lay down his ideals of glory, he remained with the image of the Messiah as the Lion of Judah, but John the Baptist did not present Jesus as the lion, but as the lamb. It will take Peter to change his mentality and only at the end of this gospel will Jesus finally ask him to "*...follow me*".