

II ORDINARY TIME – January 18th, 2015

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

Jn 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).

In the book of Exodus, chapter 12, describes Easter, the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt . In this chapter, God commands, through Moses, that every Israeli family is to take a lamb, slaughter it and eat it. Why? The meat of the lamb would give energy to begin this journey of liberation towards the land of freedom and the blood would save them from the passing of the exterminating angel that would have brought death.

Well, the evangelist John thought a great deal of these theological lines to present the figure of Jesus. Let's read.

“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!” Here is the lamb that God has sent to his people. The flesh of Jesus will give capacity, strength and energy to begin this journey of fullness towards the liberation. And the blood of Jesus will not free us from physical death, but will deliver us from death forever. The blood of the lamb will transmit to man the same divine life. For this will give a life that is called “eternal” not only for the duration (forever), but for the indestructible quality.

“The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.” Therefore, the process of liberation begins. Jesus is referred to as the lamb and there are already the first disciples that leave John the

Baptist and follow Jesus because they feel within themselves this need of the fullness of life, of liberation.

In fact, Jesus who meets human desires, seeing that they followed Him, “.. *turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?”* Jesus does not ask, “who are you looking for”, but “what are you looking for.” If they are looking for the fullness of life, the answer to their own desire of life, of happiness, they can continue to follow Him, but if they are looking for honour, power and riches Jesus will disillusion them

“And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come and you will see.” The place where Jesus dwells cannot be for information, but for an experience, because Jesus dwells in the fullness of the sphere, of divine love. In this gospel Jesus is thought of as the Word, “ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*” so following Jesus means entering into the dimension of God’s love.

“So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day,” It is the first step towards a union between Jesus and his disciples. Now the disciples go to stay with Jesus, but it will be Jesus, later on in chapter 14, 23, that will ask his disciples if he can stay with them. Jesus will say, “*If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*” Therefore there is a union between the disciples and Jesus to become one reality that expresses the manifestation of God, which will be the theme of this gospel.

The evangelist underlines that, “.. *it was about the tenth hour.*” every indication in the gospels is not superfluous, but has profound significance. The day was nearly over and a new day was beginning. With the first disciples to follow Jesus, a new reality is beginning.

The evangelist also underlines that, “One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew,...” Andrew will appear twice in this gospel, with a Philip, in the episode of the conversion of the bread and fishes and when the gentiles ask to see Jesus. “*Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ)*

It is strange that on the behalf of Simon, there is no reaction, no reply and no enthusiasm, but it must be his brother who leads him to Jesus. “*Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John.”* Saying “the son” meant the only son. But here we have seen the Simon has a brother, Andrew, so John cannot be the name of the father of Simon and Andrew.

What does it mean “the son of John”? And who is this John? John the Baptist. Simon was also a disciple of John the Baptist, furthermore an ideal disciple, for this reason Jesus calls him “the son”. He was John the Baptist’s model disciple.

And Jesus looked at him, therefore revealing a deeper reality “*You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).* Peter means hard like a stone, tough and headstrong. For the moment this nickname of Simon remains a mystery, but it will be revealed during the gospel because we will see this disciple being contrary, in opposition to all that Jesus will do.