

III ORDINARY TIME– 24th January 2021

REPENT AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL– Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Mark 1, 14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand^e repent and believe in the gospel.” Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Life, truth and light will always be stronger and more victorious than death, lies and darkness. For this reason the evangelist in the first chapter, verse 14, presents us with the stupidity of power. Power thinks that it suffocates the voice of life, truth and light, but it does not know that, each time it thinks to stifle this voice, the Lord sends an even more powerful one. In fact in Mark's gospel verse 14 it says that “.. *after John was arrested,*” John was inconvenient he had preached a change and therefore is eliminated, well the Lord sends a voice, a force even more powerful than John the Baptist, that of Jesus, the Son of God.

“...*Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,...*” the good news of God. And what is the good news of God that the evangelist will let us discover in his gospel? That God is not like it was believed; the God of Jesus is a God of a completely new love, that will be discovered in the pages of the Gospel, because this love is not attracted to the merits of the person, but by their needs. This is the good news of God.

Jesus said “*The time is fulfilled,..*” it was the time of the alliance with his people “.. *the kingdom of God is at hand ..*” he did not mean a realm but a way that God governs It is God who wants to rule his people and how would he do this? By not issuing laws that man must observe, laws are external to man, but by communicating to man his own capacity for love. This is why John had said of Jesus, “..*he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*” communicating to mankind his capacity to love.

The kingdom of God is near, but for it to become a reality, a conversion is needed, but conversion was also preached and announced by John the Baptist, but they are two different things. This is why Jesus is even more dangerous than John the Baptist. He was in the context of religion and conversion, the change of life was aimed at God, it was to obtain the forgiveness of the sins; here with Jesus there is no talk of forgiveness of sins, conversion is to believe in this good news and bring about the kingdom of God. Jesus came to inaugurate a completely new society; a society where, instead of selfishly accumulating for oneself, one generously shares

with the others; a society where, instead of rising above the others, one stands beside the poor and outcast, a world where, instead of commanding others, one sets out to serve. This is the kingdom of God.

But to do this, Jesus has need of collaboration; so the evangelist continues, *“Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee,..”* it is the lake of Tiberias, called the sea to remember the sea of the Exodus, the path to freedom and above all the frontier to the gentiles, *“..he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.”* And here is Jesus’ invitation *“Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”* What is the meaning of Jesus’ invitation? We have said that Jesus wants to inaugurate a new world where, instead of accumulating for oneself, one generously shares with the others; so what does the fisherman do? He catches fish for his own interest, for his own gain. To fish for men, means, to pull men out of the sea, from the sphere that can cause death by drowning, it means to carry out this activity not for their own interest, but for the interest of the people who are saved. Therefore to completely change the orientation of one’s own life *“Follow me”*, give up interest in yourself and this will give you the opportunity to help the people who are lost, to find the fullness of life.