

SECOND OF CHRISTMAS – January 4th , 2015

THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM

Jn 1.1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

In the prologue of his Gospel, John sums up and formulates all the contents of his work. Therefore there are eighteen precious and very rich verses. To understand them, we begin with the clamorous statement that the evangelist puts at the end of the prologue. The evangelist writes, “ *No one has ever seen God.*” This is a grave final statement, that, amongst other things, contradicts the same Bible, because in the Bible it is written that Moses and other personages have seen God.

John does not agree, “ *No one has ever seen God.*” Thus the description that they have made of God, also on the part of Moses, are limited, incomplete, a face diverted and even false. Therefore no one has ever seen God. “*The only God*”, meaning Jesus, who is the only begotten son, “*who is at the Father’s side*”, that is in the full intimacy with God, “*he has made him known*”.

With this statement the evangelist concludes the prologue, inviting then to place all the attention on the figure of Jesus. What does it mean that no one has seen him and only the son has revealed him to us? That Jesus is not the same as God, but God is the same as Jesus. If we say that Jesus is the same as God it means that we have an image, an idea of God.

Well, then the evangelist invites us to suspend this image and to center all our attention on Jesus. All that we see in Jesus this is God. Therefore Jesus is not like God, but God is like Jesus, and many images and ideas of God, we will see in the behavior and teachings of Jesus, inevitably they will fall through.

Therefore the evangelist invites us to place all the attention on Jesus because in Him appears God. And because in Jesus appears the divinity, and we return to this reading of the prologue, there was need of a new relationship between mankind and God. Moses, the servant of God, had imposed a relationship between the servants and their Lord, based on obedience ; well, Jesus, who is not the servant of God, but the Son of God, proposes a new relationship between the sons and their Father, not based on obedience, but on the similarity and acceptance of his love.

Here is why then, in the previous verse the evangelist has written “*For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth..*”, ‘grace and truth’ is an expression that indicates faithful love, true love, “*..came through Jesus Christ.*” Therefore a new relationship no more based on laws, but on the acceptance of His love.

And , always going back in the reading of this prologue, the evangelist writes “*..from his fullness..*”, that is from the fullness of this man in which appears the divine condition, “*...we have all received, grace upon grace*”. What does the evangelist want to say? It is the strength of the life of the believer and of the Christian community.

To the love received from the Father corresponds a love communicated to the brothers, this is the strength of the growing of the believers. The bigger the response to this love to the brother, the more, in time, will be greater the part of God’s response of His love. Therefore the more we communicate this love to brothers, the more love we receive from God. This is a growth without end.

This growth in love is what the individual and believer realizes. And, going back again jumping a verse, the important statement of the evangelist that “ *the word*”, ‘the word’ meaning the creative word, the creative knowledge, “*... became flesh....*,” the evangelist does not write that it became man, but uses the word flesh that indicates mankind in his complete weakness.

The project of God is not realized in a superman, difficult to imitate, only to admire, but is realized in the human weakness. This means that God appears in humanity. The more mankind becomes human the more he shows the divine that is in himself. And the Word that becomes flesh, this project of God,

that becomes flesh, is the fullness of the love of God that shows itself in mankind that becomes the only true sanctuary from which radiates the love of the Father.

And this Word that becomes flesh, man is made in all his weaknesses, writes the evangelist, "*And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*" that is complete. The characteristic that distinguishes Jesus is the faithful love. When is love real? When it is faithful. And this Word that becomes flesh, that is made man, sends us to the beginning of the prologue, where the evangelist writes, "*In the beginning was the Word,...*"

John distances himself from the theology of the Book of Genesis, where it states "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" No, the evangelist does not agree. In the beginning, before creating heaven and earth, there was this Word, that is this creative word, creative knowledge, a word that has a project and ,before the creation, this project consulted God.

And what was this project? To give the divine condition to mankind. This is God's project to humanity, therefore the prologue can be defined as God's hymn of love for all humanity, God's optimism hymn. God is so in love with mankind that, before creating the world, he had the project to give to mankind his own condition, the divine condition.

And for this, right in the middle of the prologue , therefore the most important verse of all this passage, the evangelist writes that while this 'project', "*He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him..*" this is the warning always present for all the communities "*..., who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God..*"

Sons of God are not born, but they become ,welcoming Jesus as a project of the love of God for their own existence. This fact of becoming sons of God to who welcomes Jesus, means that God does not absorb mankind, does not detract or distract him from the others, he is a God that strengthens mankind, communicates the same capacity of love because with Him and like Him mankind goes towards the others.

The novelty brought by Jesus is that you do not live for God, but you live of God. This is John's prologue: the optimism hymn of God for humanity and a proposal for each man to become a son of God. Sons of God are not born, but one becomes one, for the continual and daily choice of the faithful love like the Father communicates to us.