

XIV ORDINARY TIME– 5th July 2020

I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART - Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Matthew 11, 25-30

At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

In a difficult moment in the life of Jesus: he began his preaching, and immediately he receives an ultimatum, which has all the flavour of an excommunication from Giovanni Battista, who is imprisoned, who says to him: *..are you the one who has to come, or do we have to wait for another?* Evidently Jesus' preachings are disappointing, he begins to preach in the cities, but the result is failure. And in fact Jesus complains with these cities - they are mainly three: Corazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum - that if he had brought the same message to the pagan cities, yes they would have been converted, these would not. Why this resistance? Because they are cities dominated by the teaching from the synagogue.

And at this point, we are at chapter 11, 25 of Matthew's gospel, and Jesus declares *“At that time..”* so in connection with this moment, *“I thank you, Father,..”* Jesus does not speak with God but with the Father, it is important to understand his teaching *“.. Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding...”* Jesus is not degrading the educated, wise and learned people, they are the doctors of the law, the scribes, who reason in terms of doctrine and law, but, if with the law and the doctrine, we get to discuss and talk about God and the Father, one can only experience his power of love by imitating this love, this is why Jesus speaks of the Father. For the learned and wise, therefore the scribes and the doctors of the law, God is manifested in doctrine and not in life, as in the teaching of Jesus.

And therefore it is hidden, says Jesus *“..you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;..”* Despite the failure of Jesus' preaching, there is a group of people following him: they are the marginalized, the nullities, they are the invisible, these are the people who follow him and they listen to his message.

And Jesus continues, again repeating the word Father, *“.. yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.”* And here Jesus, with a typical theological and rabbinical reasoning, states: *“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”* What does Jesus mean by this reasoning? God, we have seen, can be known by law, the Father only in

love. Then it is in being deeply human, being sensitive and attentive to the needs and sufferings of others, that the presence of the Father can be experienced. As we have said, God can be known through the law, the Father only through the experience of love. With Jesus, God became man, and man, humanity, is the only sacred value.

And then there is an invitation on the behalf of Jesus: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,..”* weary and oppressed by what? Of the observance of the law, Jesus will say later in this same gospel, that these scholars, scribes and doctors of the law, place heavy burdens on people's shoulders. It is the doctrines that accumulate, and because of this they are tired and oppressed, and he says *“..and I will give you rest.”* the term used by the evangelist means to cease from fatigue, to catch your breath, we could say: I will be your breath.

And then, here is Jesus' challenge: *“Take my yoke upon you,..”* we know the yoke, it was that which was placed over the oxen to guide them in the field, and was an image of the law. Their law, the law of Moses, had become not only a yoke, but a heavy yoke. Then Jesus invites you to do a change over: leave the yoke of the law alone, the believer is no longer the one who obeys God observing his laws, but the one who looks like the Father practicing a love similar to his. *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,..”* it is not speaking of Jesus to imitate his character, impossible, but his social choice. The *“lowly”* at that time, the term indicates the underprivileged, the word *“humble”* in Greek is *tapino*, that is, to put yourself on the side of the least, on the side of the marginalized, on the side of the invisible, there is my presence. In fact he says: *“..and you will find rest for your souls.”* this is a quote from the book of Wisdom, which refreshes people.

And Jesus concludes *“For my yoke..”* hence the acceptance of the imitation of the Father's love, this is the yoke *“.. is easy, and my burden is light.”* there are no more weights to carry, which crush people as St. Peter will later denounce in the council (Acts 15,10) – when he says: *“..why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?”* Therefore observance of the law did not allow communion with the Father, acceptance, love, the practice of his love, yes..

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