

GOD SENT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD IN ORDER THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BE SAVED THROUGH HIM – Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

John 3,16-18

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

The image of a God who judges and then condemns, a God who rewards, the good, but punishes the wicked is typical of every religion. This image of God is completely absent in Jesus; even Jesus denies the image of a God who judges and condemns. Let's hear what John writes to us, in chapter 3, 16-18. The context is that of the discourse with the Pharisee Nicodemus - the Pharisees were waiting for a messiah to be an expression of divine judgment - Jesus says no

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,..” Jesus declares himself the expression of God's love for humanity - God expresses his love by giving his son *“.. that whoever believes in him..”* to believe does not mean to adhere to a doctrine, but it means to adhere to one person, to his message, in this case to Jesus, *“.. should not perish but have eternal life.”* For the second time, in this chapter, a theme very dear to the evangelist appears, that of eternal life. Eternal life the Pharisees thought of it as a reward to be obtained in the future, for the good behavior in present life; for Jesus, however, it is a condition in the present. Life is called eternal not so much for the indefinite duration, but for the indestructible quality.

And Jesus continues *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn ...”* the Greek verb used by the evangelist means: to pronounce a sentence, to judge, so it is not to condemn, *“.. the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”* Jesus came to offer an alternative of life, a possibility of growth, of full realization of the its existence to man.

“Whoever believes in him..” continues Jesus *“..is not condemned,..”* hence the image of a judgment on the part of God is absent, in Jesus' message : there is no judgment and therefore no condemnation, *“...but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God..”* And here we must add two verses that are not in the liturgical version, otherwise it is not clear, it seems a contradiction. Jesus continues saying that the judgment is this *“..the light has come into the world,..”* and concludes *“.. and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.”* (John 3 19,20) There is no judgment from God, there is an offer of life, here represented as the light, it is up to man to feel attracted to this light and become part of the love of salvation, but who is evil, you know, hates the light. Whoever hurts wants darkness and therefore hides himself even further into darkness, the image of death. Then it is not a judgment by God that rejects the person, but it is the person who, for his interest, for his convenience - this evil - rejects the offer of fullness of life by God. God can do nothing more than make the light shine even more, but the more the light shines, for those who are evil, this is a

threat, it is something that blinds them, it is something that they hate. Therefore the invitation of the evangelist is to carry out daily actions of light in order to be able to enter into full harmony and communion with that God who is light and who is love.