

**..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 labour 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 Jesus' life: he had begun his preaching, and immediately there arrives an ultimatum, that seems like an excommunication, on the behalf of John the Baptist. Who is imprisoned and sends to say, "Are you the one who has to come, or do we have to wait for another?" Obviously, the preaching of Jesus deludes, and Jesus begins to preach in the city, but the result is a failure. And in fact, Jesus complains about these cities - there are mainly three: Corazin, Betsida, and Capernaum - and Jesus complains that if the same message had been brought to the pagan cities, they would have been converted, these no. Why this resistance? Because cities are dominated by the teaching of the synagogue.

And it is at this point, we are at Matthew's gospel chapter 11, 25, when Jesus exclaims: "*At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father,"* Jesus does not speak of God, he speaks of the Father this 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 accusing the educated, knowledgeable, and learned people of the doctors of the law, the scribes, who reason in terms of doctrine and law, but with the law and doctrine, one can arrive at a discussion and talk of God. With the Father with his power of love can be experience by imitating this love, that is why Jesus speaks of the Father. For the learned, the wise, the scribes, the doctors of the law, God manifests himself in doctrine and not in life, as Jesus teaches.

And, Jesus says, therefore they have been hidden "*....that 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 that follow him: they are the marginalized, the nullity and the invisible, these are the people who follow him and 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 with this reasoning? God, we have seen, knows the law, the Father only love. So it is in being deeply human, in being sensible to the needs and attention to the necessities, to the sufferance of others, that the presence of the Father can be experienced. As we have said, God is known through the laws, the Father only through the experience of love. With Jesus, God is made man, and man, humanity is the only sacred value.

Then there is an invitation from Jesus: "*Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden,*" labouring and heavy laden from what? From observing the laws, Jesus will say later in this gospel, that these scholars, scribes and doctors of the law, place heavy burdens on the shoulders of people. They are the doctrines that one accumulates, and for this they are labouring and heavy laden, and he says: "*..and I will give you rest.*" Meaning repose, finish to labour, take a breath, we could say: I am your breath.

And then, here is Jesus' challenge: "*Take my yoke upon you..*" the yoke as we know is the implement that is on the oxen to guide them to the field, and it was the image of the law. The law, Moses' laws, had become a yoke, a heavy yoke. Then Jesus invites us to make a change: leave the yoke of the law, the believer is no longer the one who obeys God by observing his laws, but the one who resembles 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,*" Jesus is

not talking of imitating his character, impossible, but his social choice. The "myths" at that time, the term denotes the disadvantaged, the term "humble" in Greek is *tapino*, meaning, to put yourself on the part of the last, the marginalized, the invisible, there is my presence. In fact he says: *"...you will find rest for your souls."* This is a quote from the Book of the Wisdom, that restores the person.

*Jesus concludes: "For my yoke.. "* therefore the acceptance of the imitation of the love of the Father, this is the yoke, *"... is easy, and my burden is light."* There are no more weights to carry, that crush the people as S. Peter will denounce in the council – saying- *"...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?"* ( Acts 15, 10) therefore observance of the law did not allow communion with the Father but to welcome, to love and the practicing of his love, yes.