Monday of the Second Week of Easter

Gospel text (*Jn* 3:1-8): Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

Nicodemus said to him, “How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother’s womb and be born again, can he?” Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

“No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

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Today, “a ruler of the Jews” (Jn 3:1) comes to Jesus. The Gospel says he does it by night: what would his comrades say should they find out? In Jesus' teachings we find a baptismal catechesis that, most surely, circulated in the Evangelist community.

A few days ago we were still celebrating the Paschal Vigil. An integral part of it was the Baptism celebration, which is the Passover, a step from death to life. The solemn benediction of water and the renewal of baptismal promises were key points of that holy night.

In the baptism ritual there is an immersion in water (death symbol) and an emergence from water (a new life image). We are submerged in sin and we come out of it renewed. This is what Jesus calls “to be born from above” or “to be born again” (cf. Jn 3:3). This is “to be born of water”, “to be born of the Spirit” or “of the blowing wind…”.

Water and Spirit are the two symbols used by Jesus. Both express the action of the Holy Spirit that purifies and grants life, cleans and encourages, calms the thirst and breathes, soften and speaks. Water and Spirit make a single thing.

But Jesus also says the flesh is in opposition to the Spirit: “What is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of Spirit is spirit” (Jn 3:6). Carnal man is humanly born when he appears down here. But the carnal man is defeated by the spiritual man, who is spiritually born in the Baptism. Which means to be born anew and of above. A beautiful formula by Saint Paul could be our reflection and action motto, mostly in this Paschal time: “Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life” (Rm 6:3-4).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The thicket of the wisdom and knowledge of God is so deep, and so immense, that the soul, however much it knows of it, can always penetrate further within it.” (Saint John of the Cross)

- “A renewal of preaching can offer believers, as well as the lukewarm and the non-practising, new joy in the faith and fruitfulness in the work of evangelization. Christ is the ‘eternal Gospel’ (Rev 14:6); he ‘is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (Heb 13:8), yet his riches and beauty are inexhaustible.” (Francis)

- “To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become ‘children of God’ (Jn 1:12) we must be ‘born from above’(Jn 3:7) or ‘born of God’ (Jn 1:13) (...).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 526)