

Saturday 4th of Lent

Gospel text (Jn 7,40-53): Some in the crowd who heard these words said, “This is truly the Prophet.” Others said, “This is the Messiah.” But others said, “The Messiah will not come from Galilee, will he? Does not scripture say that the Messiah will be of David’s family and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?”

So a division occurred in the crowd because of him. Some of them even wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. So the guards went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not bring him?” The guards answered, “Never before has anyone spoken like this one.” So the Pharisees answered them, “Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed.”

Nicodemus, one of their members who had come to him earlier, said to them, “Does our law condemn a person before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?” They answered and said to him, “You are not from Galilee also, are you? Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.” And they all went home.

«Never before has anyone spoken like this one»

Fr. Fernand ARÉVALO
(Bruxelles, Belgium)

Today, the Gospel presents the different reactions to the words of our Lord. John does not tell us any word from the Master but he tells us the consequences of what He said. Some thought He was a prophet; others said “This is truly the Prophet” (Jn

7,41).

Jesus Christ is truly a “sign that will be contradicted”, just like Simeon told Mary (cf. Lk 2,34). Those who listened to Jesus' words did not remain indifferent to them, to the point that on this occasion, as in many others, “a division occurred in the crowd because of him” (Jn 7:43). The reply of the officers who wanted to arrest the Lord centers the question and shows us the power of Christ's words: “Never before has anyone spoken like this one.” (Jn 7:46). It is like saying: His words are different; they are not empty boastful words, full of arrogance and falseness. He is “the Truth” and his way of speaking reflects this reality.

And if this happened amid his audience, his deeds provoked even more amazement and admiration; but also, criticism, gossip, hate... Jesus Christ spoke “the language of charity”: His deeds and words showed the deep love He felt towards all men, especially the most in need of assistance.

Today as it was then, we Christians must be and are “a sign of contradiction”, because we do not speak and behave like others do. By imitating and following Jesus Christ, we must likewise use “the language of charity and love”, a necessary language that, in fact, we can all understand. As pope emeritus Benedict XVI wrote in his encyclical *Deus caritas est*, “Love —caritas— will always prove necessary, even in the most just society (...). Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such.”

«No one ever spoke like this man»

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(*Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain*)

Today, we can feel how, a few days before His Passion in Jerusalem, the atmosphere around our Lord becomes “strained”. Because of him a kind of controversial argument begins. It could not be otherwise: «Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division» (Lk 12:51).

And it does not mean our Redeemer likes controversy and division, but rather that, before God, “half-baked ideas” are no good: «He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters» (Lk 11:23). It is inevitable! Before him one cannot take a neutral stand: either He exists or He does not exist; either He is my Lord, or He is not my Lord. «No one can serve two masters» (Mt 6:24).

John Paul II considered that before God one must choose. The simple faith our good God requests from us implies an option. We have to choose because He does not want to impose upon us: He came to Earth in a discreet manner; He died stunned, without making any ostentation of his divinity (Phil 2:6). This is what so wonderfully expresses Saint Thomas Aquinas in his Adoro Te devote: «On the cross was veiled Thy Godhead's splendor; but here (in the Eucharist) Thy manhood lies hidden too».

We have to choose! God does not impose upon us; He offers himself to us. And it is up to us to decide for him or not. It is a personal matter each one—with the help of the Holy Spirit— has to solve by himself. Miracles are useless, if man's dispositions are not humility and simplicity. We can see the Jews divided before the same facts. And, this is because in love matters it is not possible to give a half-hearted, half way reply: Christian vocation implies radical response, so radical as the testimony of submission and obedience Christ gave in the Cross.