Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Jn* 8:21-30): Jesus said to the Pharisees: “I am going away and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come.” So the Jews said, “He is not going to kill himself, is he, because he said, ‘Where I am going you cannot come’?” He said to them, “You belong to what is below, I belong to what is above. You belong to this world, but I do not belong to this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.”

So they said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “What I told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you in condemnation. But the one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him I tell the world.” They did not realize that he was speaking to them of the Father. So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him.” Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him.

“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM”

Fr. Josep Mª MANRESA Lamarca
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Today, the fifth Tuesday of Lent, only one week away from the contemplation of our Lord's Passion, He invites us to look at Him in anticipation while redeeming us from the Cross: “Our High Priest is Christ Jesus, his precious body is our sacrifice that He immolated on the altar of the Cross for the salvation of all people” (Saint John Fisher).

“When you have lifted up the Son of Man” (Jn 8:28). The Crucified Christ, indeed,—“lifted up” Christ!— is the great and definite sign of the Father's love towards the fallen Humankind. His open arms, stretched out between Heaven and Earth, outline the indelible sign of His friendship with us, men. By seeing Him like this, lifted up before our sinful glance, we shall realize that He is (cf. Jn 8:28), and then, as those Jews that were listening to Him, we shall also believe in Him.

Only the friendship of He who is fully acquainted with the Cross, may provide us with the needed

connaturality to get us into the Redemptor's heart. Claiming a Gospel without the Cross, bare of any Christian sense of mortification, or infected by the pagan and naturalist ambiance which prevent us from understanding the redeeming suffering values, would place us in the terrible conjuncture of having to hear from Christ's lips: —After all, why should I go on speaking to you?

May our serene and contemplative look toward the Cross, be a question to the Crucified, whereby, wordlessly and noiselessly, we ask Him: “Who are you?” (Jn 8:25). And He will answer that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6), the Vine, which we, poor branches, if not united to, will not be able to bear any fruit, because only He has words of eternal life. And thus, if we do not believe that He is, we shall die for our sins. However, we shall live, despite everything, and we shall already live in this world a Heavenly life, if we take from Him the joyous certitude that the Father is with us, that He will never leave us alone. Thus, we shall imitate the Son by doing always that which pleases the Father.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “You have drawn all things to yourself, Lord, so that what was done in the one temple of Judea with concealed meanings, the devotion of all nations everywhere celebrates in a clear and open mystery.” (Saint Leo the Great)

- “The ones who say: Yes, yes, yes, I want to be saved, but... This is the heart of “lukewarm Christians” who always have something to complain about. How does the Lord resolve this? The healing comes only by looking to the Cross.” (Francis)

- “The divine name, "I Am" (...) expresses God's faithfulness: despite the faithlessness of men's sin and the punishment it deserves, he keeps ‘steadfast love for thousands’. By going so far as to give up his own Son for us, God reveals that he is ‘rich in mercy’ (Eph 2:4). By giving his life to free us from sin, Jesus reveals that he himself bears the divine name: ‘When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will realize that "I AM"’ (Jn 8:28).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 211)