Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Jn* 8:31-42): Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free’?” Jesus answered them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains. So if a son frees you, then you will truly be free. I know that you are descendants of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me, because my word has no room among you. I tell you what I have seen in the Father’s presence; then do what you have heard from the Father.”

They answered and said to him, “Our father is Abraham.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God; Abraham did not do this. You are doing the works of your father!” So they said to him, “We are not illegitimate. We have one Father, God.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me.

“If God were your Father, you would love me”

Fr. Givanildo dos SANTOS Ferreira
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Today, the Lord directs harsh words to the Jews. Not to some Jews, but precisely to those who embraced the faith: Jesus said “to those Jews who believed in him” (Jn 8:31). This dialogue of Jesus reflects, without any doubt, the beginning of those difficulties caused by the Jewish Christians in the first hours of the Church.

As they were descendants of Abraham according to their kinship, such Jesus’ disciples considered themselves superior not only to Gentiles who lived away from the faith, but also better than any non-Jewish disciples of the same faith. They said: “We are descendants of Abraham” (Jn 8:33); “Our father is Abraham” (v.39); “We have one Father, God” (v.41).

Despite being disciples of Jesus, we have the impression that Jesus meant nothing for them, nothing that

could improve what they already owned. But it is there where they all made a big mistake. Heirs of the promise, that is, those who believe, are the true sons, not those by physical descent. (cf. Rom 9:6-8). Without faith in Jesus it is not possible for anyone to reach Abraham's promise. That being so, among the disciples, "there is neither Jews nor Greeks; neither slave nor free; nor is there man and woman, for they are all brothers because of Baptism" (cf. Gal 3:27-28).

Let us not be seduced by spiritual pride. Jewish people considered themselves superior to other Christians. It is not necessary to speak, here, of separated brethren. But let us rather think of us. How often some Catholics consider themselves better than other Catholics just because they follow this or that movement, or because they observe this or that discipline, they abide by this or to that liturgical trend. Some, because they are rich; others, because they studied more. Some, because they hold important positions; others, because they come from noble families. "I would like that each one should feel the joy of being Christian.... God guides his Church, He sustains it always, especially at times of difficulty" (Benedict XVI).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "What is a worse death for the soul than the freedom of error?" (Saint Agustine)
- ""Liberation" means man's inner transformation, which is a consequence of the knowledge of truth. The transformation is, therefore, a spiritual process, in which man matures in true righteousness and holiness." (Saint John Paul II)
- "The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to 'the slavery of sin' (cf. Rom 6:17)." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1713)

Other comments

"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

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Today, when we are only a few days from Holy Week, our Lord is asking us to fight to live some very specific things, small, but at times, not very easy. We shall explain them throughout this commentary: basically, it is a matter of persisting with His word. How important it is to always refer our life to the Gospel! Let's ask ourselves: What would Jesus do in this situation I have to face now? How would He treat

this person who I find so especially difficult to treat? What would be His reaction before this circumstance? A Christian must be —according to Saint Paul— “another Christ”: “yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). How is it, our Lord's reflection, in our daily life? Am I His mirror?

Our Lord assures us that, if we persist in His word, we shall know the truth, and the truth will make us free (cf. Jn 8:32). To be truthful is not always easy. How often do we tell small lies, how often do we pretend, how often do “we act dumb”? We cannot deceive God. He sees us, He contemplates us. He loves us and follows us, in our day-to-day routine. The Eight Commandment teaches us neither to bear false witness nor to tell lies, no matter how small, even if they look trivial to us. “White lies” are not permitted either. Jesus Christ tells us in another moment: “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’” (Mt 5:37). That trend to do good, which is freedom, is very much related to truth. Sometimes, we are not free enough because there is a false bottom in our life, we are not clear. We must be convincing! The sin of lying enslaves us.

Our Lord says “If God were your Father you would love me” (Jn 8:42). How does our daily desire to know the Master materialize? With what kind of devotion do we read the Gospel, even though we may have little time at our disposal? What trace will it leave in my life, in my day? When looking at me can it be said, that I read Christ's life?