Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Jn* 10:31-42): The Jews picked up rocks to stone Jesus. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?” The Jews answered him, “We are not stoning you for a good work but for blasphemy. You, a man, are making yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”’? If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be set aside, can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I do not perform my Father’s works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” Then they tried again to arrest him; but he escaped from their power.

He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized, and there he remained. Many came to him and said, “John performed no sign, but everything John said about this man was true.” And many there began to believe in him.

“For which of these are you trying to stone me?”

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Today, Friday, with just one week left to commemorate the death of the Lord, the Gospel presents the reasons for His condemnation. Jesus tries to reveal the truth, but the Jews consider Him blasphemous and worthy of stoning. Jesus speaks of the works He performs, works of God that testify to Him, how He can give Himself the title of "Son of God"... However, He speaks of subjects difficult for His adversaries to understand: "being in the truth," "hearing His voice"...; He speaks of following and commitment to His person that make Jesus known and loved —"Rabbi, where are you staying?" (Jn 1:38) the disciples asked at the beginning of His ministry—. But it all seems futile: what Jesus tries to say is so profound that they cannot grasp it, only the childlike and simple can understand, for the Kingdom is hidden from the wise and learned.

Jesus struggles to present arguments they might accept, but the attempt is in vain. Fundamentally, He will die for telling the truth about Himself, for being faithful to Himself, His identity, and His mission. As a

prophet, He will issue a call to conversion and be rejected, present a new face of God and be spat upon, propose a new brotherhood and be abandoned.

Again, the Lord's Cross rises with all its power as the true standard, the only indisputable reason: "O wonderful power of the holy cross! O unspeakable glory of the Father! On it, we can see the Lord's judgment seat, the judgment of the world, and the power of the Crucified. O yes, Lord: you drew all things to yourself when, with your arms extended all day long to an unbelieving and rebellious people (cf. Is 65:2), the entire universe understood that it must pay homage to your majesty!" (Saint Leo the Great). Jesus has to flee to the other side of the Jordan, and those who truly believe in Him move there, ready to follow Him and listen to Him.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe.” (Saint Augustine)

- “So many people were in close contact with Jesus and they did not believe... If your heart is always closed, faith doesn’t enter! Instead God the Father draws us to Jesus: it is we who open or close our hearts.” (Francis)

- “The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God (cf. Jn 10:31-38).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 548)