

Saturday 5th of Lent

Gospel text (Jn 11,45-56): Many of the Jews who had come with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw what He did; but some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees called the Sanhedrin Council. They said, «What are we to do? For this man keeps on giving miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, all the people will believe in him and, as a result of this, the Romans will come and sweep away our Holy Place and our nation». Then one of them, Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, spoke up, «You know nothing at all nor do you see clearly what you need. It is better to have one man die for the people than to let the whole nation be destroyed». In saying this Caiaphas did not speak for himself, but being High Priest that year, he foretold as a prophet that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the scattered children of God. So, from that day on, they were determined to kill him.

Because of this, Jesus no longer moved about freely among the Jews. He withdrew instead to the country near the wilderness and stayed with his disciples in a town called Ephraim. The Passover of the Jews was at hand and people from everywhere were coming to Jerusalem to purify themselves before the Passover. They looked for Jesus and as they stood in the Temple, they talked with one another, «What do you think? Will He come to the festival?». Meanwhile the chief priests and the elders had given orders that anyone who knew where he was should let them know so that they could arrest him.

«Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the scattered children of God»

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Today, while on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus is aware he is persecuted, harassed, sentenced, because the greatest and newest his revelation has been —the announcement of the Kingdom of God— the greatest and wider has been too the division and the opposition He has found amongst his audience (cf. Jn 11:45-46).

The negative words by Caiaphas, «It is better to have one man die for the people than to let the whole nation be destroyed» (Jn 11:50), will be positively assumed by Jesus in the redemption performed for us. Jesus, God's only begotten Son, dies in the Cross for the love of all of us! He dies to make true the Father's plan, that is, «to gather the scattered children of God» (Jn 11:52).

And this is the wonder and the creativity of our God! Caiaphas, with his sentence («It is better to have one man die...») and out of his hate, does nothing else but to try to eliminate an idealist; God Father, instead, by sending his Son out of his love for us, does something wonderful: to transform that malevoulous sentence into a work of redemptive love, because to God Father, each man is worth all the blood shed by Jesus Christ!

One week from today, we shall sing —in solemn vigil— the Easter Proclamation. With this wonderful prayer, the Church praises the original sin. And it does not do it because the Church ignores its gravity, but because God —in his infinite goodness— has done some deeds as a response to man's sin. That is, in the face of the “original disgust”, He has replied with the Incarnation, with his personal immolation and institution of the Eucharist. This is why, next Saturday, our liturgy will sing: «O, admirable condescendence of your goodness! O, immeasurable predilection which you have loved us with! O, lucky guilt, that has deserved us so great a Redeemer!».

If only our sentences, words and actions could be no more a deterrent for the evangelization, since we, too, have been requested by Christ to gather the scattered children of God: «Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit» (Mt 28:19).