

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Gospel text (Jn 11:45-56): Today's Gospel (Jn 11:45-56) Many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what Jesus had done began to believe in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, "What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish." He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to kill him.

So Jesus no longer walked about in public among the Jews, but he left for the region near the desert, to a town called Ephraim, and there he remained with his disciples.

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before Passover to purify themselves. They looked for Jesus and said to one another as they were in the temple area, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast? " For the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should inform them, so that they might arrest him.

"Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God"

Fr. Xavier ROMERO i Galdeano
(*Cervera, Lleida, Spain*)

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 for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.” (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, “but also to gather into one the dispersed 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 malevolent 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: “Go, therefore, 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).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“One man has died for all, and now in every church in the mystery of bread and wine he heals those for whom he is offered in sacrifice, giving life to those who believe and holiness to those who consecrate the offering.” (Saint Gaudentius of Brescia)

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“For the Christians, there will always be persecution, misunderstanding. But they have with them to face it the certainty that Jesus is Lord and this is the challenge and the cross of our faith.” (Francis)

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“(…) The Bible venerates several great figures among the Gentiles: Abel the just, the king-priest Melchisedek (...) and the upright "Noah, Daniel, and Job" (Ezek 14:14). Scripture thus expresses the heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to ‘gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad’ (Jn 11:52).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 58)