Sunday 12th (C) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 9,18-24): One day, when Jesus was praying alone, not far from his disciples, He asked them, «What do people say about me?». And they answered, «Some say that you are John the Baptist; others say that you are Elijah, and still others that you are one of the former prophets risen from the dead». Again Jesus asked them, «Who then do you say I am?». Peter answered, «The Messiah of God». Then Jesus spoke to them, giving them strict orders not to tell this to anyone.

And He added, «The Son of Man must suffer many things. He will be rejected by the elders and chief priests and teachers of the Law, and put to death. Then after three days he will be raised to life». Jesus also said to all the people, «If you wish to be a follower of mine, deny yourself and take up your cross each day, and follow me. For if you choose to save your life, you will lose it, and if you lose your life for my sake, you will save it».

«Who then do you say I am?»

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Today, Jesus, in the Gospel, places us before a key and fundamental question. And, our own life will depend from our answer: «Who then do you say I am?» (Lk 9:20). Peter answers on behalf of all of them: «The Messiah of God». What our response will be? Do we know Jesus enough to be able to answer that question? Prayer, Gospel reading, Sacramental Life and the Church are inseparable sources of information that can help us to know him and to live for him. Until, along with Peter, we are not able to answer with all our heart and the same simplicity... it will surely mean that we have not yet allowed him to transform us. To be able to satisfactorily answer Jesus' question we must get to the point of achieving Peter's enthusiasm, and harbor the same feelings as the Church does!

But today's Gospel ends up by exhorting us to follow Jesus in humility, in the negation of ourselves, by taking up our Cross and following him, for only in this way can we receive eternal Salvation and freedom. «What happens with pure gold happens with the Church, too; that is, that, when fire-exposed, gold is not harmed; on the contrary, his splendor is enhanced» (St. Ambrose). Obstacles and persecutions because of the Kingdom should not scare us; on the contrary, they should rather be a motive of hope and joy. To give our life for Christ is not to lose it, but to receive it for eternity. Jesus asks us to deny ourselves totally in faithfulness to the Gospel, and He wants us to freely give him all our existence. It is worth our while to give our life for the Kingdom!

To follow, to imitate, to live the life of grace, in short, to remain in God, is the aim of our Christian life: «God made man in order that by imitating the example of man, which is possible, we can reach God, which, before, was impossible» (St. Augustine). Let us hope that, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, God help us reaching him!