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Saturday's Gospel: Faith, Light for the Heart

Gospel for Saturday in the 3rd
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 6:60-69*)

Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”

But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that

I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you that do not believe.”

For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?”

Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

Commentary

Jesus' words always meet with a strong reaction. Either they are welcomed, even if they are not fully understood, or they are rejected. But this rejection is not because Jesus says things that cannot be accepted, although this is often used as an excuse. What underlies this rejection is something prior: the refusal to believe. When we are going to plant a seed, we prepare the soil. When we are going to sing, we do exercises with our vocal cords. When we are going to cook, we heat the oven first. Everything in this life requires a prior preparation. And this is also true of the response of faith. A person who doesn't want to believe finds it hard or even impossible to believe. A minimum of good will and an open heart are essential. This is the preparation needed for faith.

Why do some people reject Jesus, even without having tried to live by his words? We could say that, when

the horizon of one's life has become too small, when one has become accustomed to living from what is immediate or what consoles us here and now, even if that consolation doesn't last, any invitation to live otherwise is seen as unwelcome interference or aggression. But Jesus hasn't come to condemn but to save, to free us from the bondage of sin. And this helps us to understand why, when a person's heart isn't prepared, it is incapable of valuing and accepting the love that is offered.

John the Evangelist tells us that many of those who followed Jesus didn't believe and that one of them was even going to betray him. How is it possible to reach that extreme? What kind of expectations did they have on approaching our Lord? What kind of expectations do we have? Jesus prayed: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours,

be done” (*Lk 22:42*). We could paraphrase these words in this way: “Lord, this is my own vision of life, but You know much more than I do; help me open my heart and see with your eyes.” But sometimes we sense that, if we see with Christ’s eyes, something in our own life will have to change, and perhaps we don’t want to. It is then that we need to realize that, if God doesn’t help us, we cannot draw close to Him. But what is the point of a life lived far from God? Therefore, what a good prayer this is: “May I see with your eyes, my Christ, Jesus of my soul!” (Saint Josemaría, 19 March 1975).

Juan Luis Caballero

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