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Tuesday's Gospel: Dedication of the Temple

Gospel for Tuesday in the 4th
Week of Easter, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 10:22-30*)

It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”

Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

Commentary

The scene in today’s Gospel passage takes place during the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, celebrated on the 25th of Kislev (November-December).

This feast, which last eight days, commemorated the purification of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus in the year 165 BC, after the desecration by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. *1 Mac* 4:36-59; *2 Mac* 1:2-19; *2 Mac* 10:1-8).

Jesus is walking through Solomon's portico. "It was winter," the evangelist tells us. This reference indicates to the Gentiles the time of year this scene takes place, and also that the portico would have provided shelter from the cold winds.

Suddenly some Jews approach Jesus and ask: "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." As is often the case in the Gospels, these people don't come with good intentions. Their hearts, shut by their pride, are unable to understand his words. Jesus, who sees into their hearts, responds with words that are very clear. If they are unable to see the Messiah in Him it is

because they do not want to believe. “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me.”

And he tells them even more bluntly: “you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.” He wants to make clear to them that if they open their hearts to Him, if they truly want to believe, He will help them. Jesus needs a minimum of good will to act in people’s hearts because pride is so blinding. As Saint Josemaría said: “That is why the devil shows so much interest in blinding our intellect with pride, in convincing us to remain silent. For he knows that, as soon as we open our soul, God pours out his gifts.”

Our Lord makes reference to some of these gifts in this Gospel passage: “my sheep hear my voice” and “they follow me;” “I give them eternal life”

and “no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

We listen to these words during the season celebrating Christ's Resurrection. Jesus sustains us with his Love and promises us that we will reign with Him eternally. Could He offer us anything greater than to live in his friendship on earth and for all eternity? And our trust and security are strengthened because we know the good Shepherd is beside us.

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