

Wednesday's Gospel: The Free Perseverance of a Son

Gospel for Wednesday in the 5th Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 8:31-42)

Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham, and have

never been in bondage to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

They answered him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God;

this is not what Abraham did. You do what your father did.”

They said to him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.”

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.”

Commentary

The liturgy during these days of Lent continues to present us with the long dialogue between Jesus and the Jews in the Temple of Jerusalem. This time, Saint John notes that our Lord is addressing “the Jews who had believed in Him.”

At the outset, Jesus makes them see that “to begin is easy; to persevere is sanctity” (*The Way*, no. 983).

Following our Lord is not the same as letting oneself be carried away by a passing impulse. Believing in Him requires that we “continue in his word,” which is the only word that can lead us to the knowledge of the truth that frees us – including the truth about ourselves.

However, a “short circuit” soon interrupts the communication in this dialogue. Jesus announces that He has come to bring them freedom, and they feel offended because they “have never been in bondage to anyone.” Our Lord has come to break down the door of the sad prison of sin. But they refuse to recognize that they are bound by their failings, and they shut the door again tightly from within.

Saint Josemaría wrote: “‘God who created you without you, will not save you without you,’ Saint Augustine tells us. Ask yourself now (I too am examining my own conscience) whether you are holding firmly and unshakeably to your choice of Life? When you hear the most lovable voice of God urging you on to holiness, do you freely answer ‘Yes’?” (*Friends of God*, no. 24).

Many people began to follow our Lord in the Gospels, but few were able to “continue in his word” until the end. Few, we could say, knew how to behave like sons: “The slave does not continue in the house forever; the son continues forever.” Those who failed to persevere were not anchored in their divine filiation. They fled because their fidelity, their driving force, their apparently upright intention, was in the end that of a slave.

We are approaching Holy Week. There we will contemplate, close to the Cross, the woman who truly knew how to remain in the word of Jesus. The woman who, because she was Immaculate, lived with an always free perseverance. Let us go to her intercession and ask our Lady to teach us that “the secret of perseverance is Love” (*The Way*, no. 999).

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