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Friday's Gospel: Christ, the Psalms and the Temple

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

Gospel (*Jn* 10:31-42)

The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?”

The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John at first baptized, and there he remained. And many came to him; and they said, “John did no sign, but

everything that John said about this man was true.”

And many believed in him there.

Commentary

Today's Gospel passage shows us Jesus arguing with some of the Jews, who accuse him of blasphemy because, being a man, He made himself God (cf. v. 33). Our Lord takes advantage of this situation to make clear two truths about his Person: that he is the Son of God and that he is the “true Temple.”

In responding to the accusation, Jesus quotes a verse from the psalms: “I say to you, You are gods, all of you, sons of the Most High” (cf. *Ps* 82:6)). In doing so our Lord wants to emphasize that, if it is permissible to call certain men “sons of God”

because they are messengers of the divine Word, how much more fitting it is to apply this term to the very Word of God. Jesus thus presents himself as the true messenger of the Word, the true Son of God, the one whom “the Father consecrated and sent into the world” (v. 36).

Since the Father has “consecrated” the Son,” we are led to realize that Jesus is also the “true Temple.” To understand this, we need to remember that this scene takes place during an important Jewish feast: “It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem” (*Jn* 10:22). This eight-day feast celebrated the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian empire and the re-consecration of the Temple after its desecration during three long years (cf. *1 Mac* 1:54; *2 Mac* 6:1-7). For the Jews, ending the desecration and re-sanctifying and consecrating the Temple was extremely important because the

Temple was the holy place where men came into contact with God and offered their sacrifices.

Jesus reveals to us that in reality He is the true Temple (cf. *Jn 2:21*). He Himself is now the holy place where it is possible to celebrate worship as God wants – that is, not with the sacrifice of animals but with the only sacrifice that is pleasing to God, the giving of our heart completely, in “spirit and truth” (*Jn 4:24*).

This reading invites us, then, to reflect on the fulfillment of the Scriptures in Jesus of Nazareth. Our Lord uses the psalms to make himself known and suggests how the great Temple made of stone was a symbol of his person and mission.

Now that Holy Week is drawing near, we can make a special effort to listen carefully to how the great stories, symbols and images of the history of Israel have their fulfillment in Jesus,

and especially in his Passion, Death and Resurrection.

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