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Saturday's Gospel: Recollection

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

Gospel (*Jn 11:45-57*)

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him; but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But

one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death.

Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim; and there he stayed with the disciples.

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the

Passover, to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?” Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

Commentary

In this passage, Saint John reveals to us the intentions of our Lord’s adversaries practically on the eve of the Passion, that is, for us, on the threshold of Holy Week which makes it present and commemorates it. The evangelist tells us that the leading Jews “from that day took council how to put him to death.” And how did our Lord react when he learned this? “Jesus therefore no longer went

about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim; and there he stayed with the disciples.” In our Lord’s reaction, we can see a measure of his prudence, since the hour for his sacrifice had not yet arrived, determined by the Father and not by men. Such an interpretation is certainly legitimate.

But we can also find here something deeper and more spiritual, which can help us in our preparation for Holy Week to take part fully in the ceremonies of the Sacred Triduum. As on so many other occasions, our Lord feels the need to recollect himself, to enter deeply into his soul to face the terrible test of the Passion. The Fathers of the Church and the authors of books on spirituality have frequently highlighted the intensity of his prayer life. Here we have a new proof of this.

As a specific resolution for our prayer, we could reflect on a point from *The Way* by Saint Josemaría: “Strive to be recollected. Seek God within you and listen to him” (no. 319). To do so, on the eve of Holy Week and throughout it, perhaps we can follow some advice from Pope Saint John Paul II. Those of us who are older remember that he proposed a “television fast” to Christians during Lent. His suggestion can also be applied to the new means of communication, especially smartphones and the Internet. Let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us keep and ponder on the events of Holy Week in our hearts (cf. *Lk* 1:19).

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