

3. January 2020

“True justice”

*1 Jn 2,29-3,6*

*You must see what great love the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God's children - which is what we are! The reason why the world does not acknowledge us is that it did not acknowledge him. My dear friends, we are already God's children, but what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed. We are well aware that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is. Whoever treasures this hope of him purifies himself, to be as pure as he is. Whoever sins, acts wickedly, because all sin is wickedness. Now you are well aware that he has appeared in order to take sins away, and that in him there is no sin. No one who remains in him sins, and whoever sins has neither seen him nor recognised him.*

God is the just, he is the holy one. To imitate God means the realization of the divine will, the conformity of man's thinking and acting with the will of God. To this form of justice also belongs the right behaviour toward one's fellow men, the respect for what is due to him.

If we act in this way, then we may hope that we live in this world as children of God and thus correspond to our calling from God. In order to do justice to this high calling, we need to immerse ourselves again and again in the love of our Father. From this love we draw the strength to respond to our call as Christians. It is necessary to give the Holy Spirit, who is poured into us (*cf. Rom 5,5*), the space to form us according to the image of Christ, to follow him in his suggestions and guidance.

One way to immerse ourselves in the love of the Father is through grateful contemplation of God's deeds, which are repeatedly brought before our eyes in the Holy Scriptures. They bear witness to the goodness and glory of God, his tireless care for people until the coming of his beloved Son (*cf. Jn 3,16*) and all that Jesus did for us.

The reflections on the birth of the Lord, which we heard in the Christmas octave, are invitations to entrust oneself completely to the loving God: "I want to immerse myself completely in his love, I want to give my heart to him and all that I have", says the lovely German Christmas song: "Zu Bethlehem geboren".

When we do this, when we are ready to give our heart entirely to God, to let it be cleansed of everything that prevents us from loving God completely, then we do justice to God. At the same time, we also become righteous towards people, because they should meet people who live as children of God, who witness to the Lord in word and deed, filled with His love.

To do justice means to imitate God who gave Himself for us, who did not limit His love. To imitate God therefore means to testify to Him as he testified to Himself. To imitate God and to do justice means for us Catholics to make people acquainted with the Lord, to fulfil his mission of evangelisation. If we do not do this, we do not fulfil justice either to God or to men. To abandon or weaken the mission, for example, would be a great injustice to God, who wants all people to be saved (*cf. 1 Tim 2,4*), and to man.

In order to grow in the love of God and to become more aware of his love it is very helpful to perceive God's deeds in our own lives and thus to win a grateful heart. A grateful heart discovers more and more the love of our Father and can thus let His love sink in more deeply. We know how beneficial it is when people are grateful, how the atmosphere changes to the good and we also know very well how difficult it is when you have to deal with ungrateful and accusing people.

The Word of the Lord reminds us that the world does not recognize the children of God because it has not recognized God. So we must not reckon that we as Christians are always welcome everywhere, but that if we hold on to our faith and do not compromise with the spirit of this world, our deeper identity is often not perceived. So there can even be rejection and persecution.

It is all the more comforting, however, that we are recognized by God and are made aware that something wonderful is still waiting for us: *“My dear friends, we are already God's children, but what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed. We are well aware that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is. Whoever treasures this hope of him purifies himself, to be as pure as he is”*

*“Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face”* we read from St. Paul (*1Cor 13,12*). Only in this seeing of God in eternity does our deepest and whole identity from God become visible. In Him we are then recognized and our whole dignity as human beings is revealed in His light. This point of view may also help us if we do not see ourselves correctly

recognized or judged by people in this life. God knows us, He knows our heart and His judgment is valid.

Let us take with us the word at the end of today's text that we should remain in the Lord and thus avoid sin with all attention and strength, because sin is unlawfulness and contradicts justice to the highest degree. The fight against sin is entrusted to us and so we can serve in justice. In this fight we can count very much on the mercy of God.

A wise word of St. Thomas Aquinas gives orientation: "*Justice without mercy is cruelty, but mercy without justice is the mother of all dissolution*" (*Summa Theologica I, q. 21, a. 3 ad 2.*), because mercy does not cancel out justice, it is much more than justice.