

7. February 2020

“God above all”

Mk 6, 14-29

At that time King Herod had heard about Jesus, since by now his name was well known. Some were saying, 'John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him. Others said, 'He is Elijah,' others again, 'He is a prophet, like the prophets we used to have. But when Herod heard this he said, 'It is John whose head I cut off; he has risen from the dead! Now it was this same Herod who had sent to have John arrested, and had had him chained up in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married. For John had told Herod, 'It is against the law for you to have your brother's wife.' As for Herodias, she was furious with him and wanted to kill him, but she was not able to do so, because Herod was in awe of John, knowing him to be a good and upright man, and gave him his protection. When he had heard him speak he was greatly perplexed, and yet he liked to listen to him. An opportunity came on Herod's birthday when he gave a banquet for the nobles of his court, for his army officers and for the leading figures in Galilee. When the daughter of this same Herodias came in and danced, she delighted Herod and his guests; so the king said to the girl, 'Ask me anything you like and I will give it you. And he swore her an oath, 'I will give you anything you ask, even half my kingdom.' She went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?' She replied, 'The head of John the Baptist.' The girl at once rushed back to the king and made her request, 'I want you to give me John the Baptist's head, immediately, on a dish. The king was deeply distressed but, thinking of the oaths he had sworn and of his guests, he was reluctant to break his word to her. At once the king sent one of the bodyguard with orders to bring John's head. The man went off and beheaded him in the prison; then he brought the head on a dish and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. When John's disciples heard about this, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Today's Gospel presents us with the sad fact that the prophet, who speaks on behalf of God, stands in the way of the powerful. These often run the risk of becoming a law for themselves, and no longer submitting to God's law; a presumption that, sooner or later, will fall on them, if they do not convert.

Thus, we meet in the text the sad figure of Herod, who is blinded by the eroticism of Herodias' daughter. And then, when the young woman, influenced by her nefarious mother, demands the decapitation of the Baptist, the king is too cowardly to retract his oath before all the guests. We see the perfidy of the vengeful Herodias!

All this is in stark contrast to John the Baptist, who knows that he is committed to the law of God and is not afraid to bear witness to the powerful. It is a difficult task of the prophets to bring the Word of God to bear and to point out when the instructions of the Lord are violated. Thus it is a ministry of humility that is only sounded out by God Himself in its depths and receives the true reward from Him. On earth, this ministry can very easily result in the loss of life, as we hear it in the case of John.

To follow the truth of God, to obey His irrevocable commandments and to "put oneself under these commandments" is what we have to do. This is a call that we Catholics must put into practice, in order to become, in our own way, a prophetic sign in this world and to be "salt of the earth" (*cf. Mt 5,13*).

But what happens when the *"salt of the earth loses its saltiness"*?

What if we Catholics move away from the truth of the Gospel and no longer observe the teaching of the Church? What if we listen more to the powerful of this world and adapt ourselves to the spirit of this world? Could we then still consider ourselves as Catholics?

When I ask these questions in the context of today's Gospel, then I unfortunately feel obliged to tell all those who listen to us about a very sad and painful development of the Catholic Church in Germany:

A so-called "synodal way" has begun, which is to last two years, where bishops and lay committees will discuss and determine the future path of the Church in Germany. Issues that have long been cultivated "underground", so to speak, are now openly put on the table: a new view of sexual morality, blessing of homosexual couples, advocacy of the admission of women to church ministries.... As a result of *Amoris Laetitia*, people who live in a second intimate union, although still bound by a valid sacramental marriage, are to be officially allowed to receive Holy Communion.

It is to be agreed with the sharp-sighted observation of Auxiliary Bishop Athanasius Schneider, who wrote on this subject in a comment in kath.net, an Austrian internet portal:

"The "Synodal Way" is ultimately about the attempt to officially confirm errors of faith with their corresponding sacramental and pastoral practice, which for decades have already spiritually undermined the life of the Catholic Church in Germany."

And Cardinal Müller, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, also sharply criticizes the "Synodal Way":

"In the suicidal process, the majority has decided that its decisions are valid even if they contradict Catholic doctrine."

I won't go into the issues the synod will discuss now, since no decisions have been taken yet. However, the direction is clear, because we have been observing for a long time in Germany and other parts of the universal Church that a process of modernization is being sought in order to bring the Church into harmony with the thinking and feeling of the world.

But it is important to listen carefully and to grasp the significance of the following sentence which now applies to the "Synodal Way":

"The majority has decided that its decisions will apply even if they contradict Catholic doctrine."

This is an inconceivable statement for a believing Catholic! Cardinal Müller comments on it in the following terms:

"(It is) A self-appointed assembly, which is not authorized by God or the people it purports to represent, overrides the constitution of the Church of divine right, which is based on the Word of God (in Scripture and Tradition)."

We therefore now have a situation in the Catholic Church in Germany in which an assembly of bishops and lay people has authorized itself to take decisions that contradict the doctrine of faith. This should awaken every Catholic who has the Church at heart.

Quo vadis, Catholic Church in Germany? This course taken leads to apostasy!

On my own matter: I refer you to my blog, which deals critically with the topic "Global Education Pact", to which Pope Francis invited on May 14th. Also the theme of the synodal way in Germany will be discussed there more intensively!

<https://en-baltalelija.blogspot.com/2020/01/global-education-pact.html>