

8. May 2020

## “I am the Way”

*Jn 12,44-50*

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house there are many places to live in; otherwise I would have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you to myself, so that you may be with me where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*

This word of the Lord about the way, the truth and the life is of unsurpassed clarity. It appears at the end of today's text and is thus the instruction the Lord gives to counteract the confusion of the heart, which he calls at the beginning. "*Do not let your hearts be troubled*".

These statements are so essential for the preservation of our Christian faith that they will still accompany us in tomorrow's meditation. This is also most important because in a globalized world there are more and more encounters with people of other religions or with people who have no faith and are primarily interested in the earthly dimension of life.

As far as the practice of our Christian faith is concerned, we know both: the rejection of foreign influences and false teachings, and the Lord's command to announce the Gospel to all the world (*cf. Mk 16,15*), to be "light of the world" (*cf. Matt 5,14*) and leaven in the world (*cf. Matt 13,33*).

Especially in recent decades, the concept of dialogue in general and especially with other religions has become increasingly prominent in the Church as a way of meeting people who do not profess the Christian faith. At present, it is almost considered as a primary way to enter into dialogue with those who are alien to the faith. If the dialogue is properly understood and appropriately cultivated, then it can be called "missionary dialogue" and it becomes a very sensitive instrument of evangelization on behalf of the Lord. Thus we must agree with Prof. Bürkle, who states that "... *the theological study of the phenomena and contents (of the other*

*religions) does not have its own purpose. The interest which the Christian faith takes in meeting people of other religions is inevitably linked to the validity of this Gospel for these people too" (Theological Workbook 1997, Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference)*

But if this basic point for a "missionary dialogue" would be lost or relativized, then the interreligious dialogue turns into an instrument of confusion. It not only loses its inner supernatural dimension and thus also the Lord's commission, but turns into its opposite. It is very easy to get into the waters of promoting a kind of "world religion". This does not have to mean that there will also be a common visible "cult of all religions", but that the cults of all religions are regarded as equally important, and so the religions are regarded as an "own way of salvation".

But nothing is further from the Gospel and it contradicts the clear word of the Lord! If a Catholic were to engage in such a vision, then confusion of the heart would already have occurred and the clear word of Jesus today would have faded in memory or even been inadmissibly reinterpreted. With all the good will of understanding and to search for brotherhood of all people, one would become spiritually blind and would find oneself, without wanting to, in the proximity of those groups that took over a word of a famous statesman and described it as follows: "Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Muslims, Hinduists, Buddhists, free thinkers and faithful thinkers are only first names with us. Our family name is Freemasonry."

In contrast, the Lord leaves no doubt which is the way of man and which way leads to the Father. The way is to listen to Jesus and to follow him. It leads man out of confusion and thus into the right relationship with God. The corresponding passages in the Scriptures are legion.

The many dwellings of which Jesus speaks are in the house of the Father.

God certainly wants to lead all people to salvation and invites them to his house. But only those who accept the invitation of the Father will be there. A "true brotherhood" of all people is created when one listens to the same Father and comes to the Father through Jesus, because true worshippers worship God in "spirit and truth".

The gospel of John says the following in another passage about Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well.

*“Jesus said: Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour is coming - indeed is already here - when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.” (Jn 4,21-24)*

Two statements are to be realized, which clearly define the limits of an interreligious dialogue. Another religion does not worship God in spirit and in truth. It must first know the salvation that comes from the Jews - the Redeemer, the Saviour Jesus Christ.

The way to the Eternal Dwellings to the home of our father is the Lord Himself.