

7. July 2020

“God remains faithful”

They have set up kings, but without my consent, and appointed princes, but without my knowledge. With their silver and gold, they have made themselves idols, but only to be destroyed. I spurn your calf, Samaria! My anger blazes against them! How long will it be before they recover their innocence? For it is the product of Israel- a craftsman made the thing, it is no god at all! The calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces! Since they sow the wind, they will reap the whirlwind; stalk without ear, it will never yield flour- or if it does, foreigners will swallow it. Ephraim keeps building altars for his sins, these very altars are themselves a sin. However much of my Law I write for him, Ephraim regards it as alien to him. They offer sacrifices to me and eat the meat, they do not win Yahweh's favour. On the contrary, he will remember their guilt and punish their sins; they will have to go back to Egypt.

Again and again we are reminded by the writings of the Old Testament of how the people of God turned away from their Lord and how God had to draw the consequences of such behavior towards the end. God has made a covenant with his people and the people have affirmed this covenant.

Some people might be tempted to think that the God of the Old Covenant was a different God and only the God of the New Covenant, whom Jesus reveals to us, is the right God, or that we only now really understand him. But this is a false view! What has changed is that we are able to recognize God better through the coming of his Son, and in particular to receive that grace which the Lord gives us as Messiah and Redeemer and which is open to every human being. But it remains of course the same God.

If God has not changed - and this is certain - then he still wants to call men to him so that they can receive his love and get to know him. Then also today every kind of idols are an abomination to him because they distort the image of God and lead men into error. But error is objectively a great enemy of man, and St. Thomas Aquinas says: "The greatest good that can be done to a man is to lead him from error to truth."

This is a very important word of St. Thomas, and if we take it seriously, then our efforts as Catholics cannot but help people to awaken from their errors to the truth or to progress in their knowledge of the Lord.

God regards the worship of idols as a breach of the covenant, which, if the breach is not sincerely atoned for and forgiven, makes God continue to think of guilt: *“He will remember their guilt and punish their sins; they will have to go back to Egypt.”*

Back to Egypt!

Egypt was the slave house for the Israelites, the place of bondage and degradation! God had heard the pleading cries of his people in this distress and led them out of Egypt with a strong hand.

What about the former pagan peoples? Did the Lord not call them out of "Egypt" and lead them to the true knowledge of God? Couldn't they shake off the yoke that had to be carried by the lack of knowledge of God? What will be if they return to the idols or turn to the new and modern idols? Should God then simply look away and allow the darkening of souls? Or, for example, do we begin to accept the religious error and no longer distinguish between true knowledge of God, lack of knowledge of God, and false knowledge of God?

In order to do this, however, a clear recognition of faith is needed that the Catholic Church has been entrusted by God with the fullness of truth. As soon as one makes concessions here, one will no longer teach the nations, but at some point - and this path has already been taken - one will place the Catholic Church in what appears to be a larger entity, call it interdenominational, ecumenical or whatever.

Teacher of the peoples does not mean that one appears as the owner of the truth in an arrogant way. We are called to be servants of the truth in word and deed to proclaim the Lord and to invite people to open themselves to his love. This also means to call errors as errors and to try to help them to be overcome.

Idolatry remains idolatry even today and is not regarded by our Heavenly Father as valid worship of God, but means a "return to Egypt". This applies all the more to those peoples who have received the light of the Gospel. As believing Catholics we are on our way to the "Promised Land", even if we have to cross some deserts. Let us return never again to idols and errors. *"Whoever carries wooden idols around has no knowledge". "They have no knowledge, those who parade their wooden idols and pray to a god that cannot save."* (Isa 45,20b)

There should be no idols in the Catholic Church, no errors and no half-truths! The Lord has entrusted much to his Church. Let us remain faithful unto *death!* (cf. Rev 2,10)