

Christmas Homily
25th December 2020

Jn 1,1-18

p. G. Paparone o.p.

TEXT OF TODAY'S GOSPEL

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.*

*What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.
A man named John was sent from God.*

*He came for testimony,
to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light.*

*The true light, which enlightens everyone,
was coming into the world.
He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.*

*He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.*

*But to those who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to those who believe in his name,
who were born not by natural generation
nor by human choice
nor by a man's decision but of God.*

***And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.
John testified to him and cried out, saying,
«This was he of whom I said,
“The one who is coming after me
ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me”».***

*From his fullness
we have all received,
grace in place of grace,*

*because while the law was given through Moses,
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

*No one has ever seen God.
The only Son, God,
who is at the Father's side,
has revealed him.*

The Word of God as a whole is always useful to instruct, teach, encourage and enlighten. Nevertheless, there are specific words with a special power, a special light that can penetrate more deeply into the spiritual dimension of our being.

If we listen to the Word with the intellect, we will just hear words that don't normally leave any impression on us.

However, if we listen to the Word with our **spiritual intellect**, these very words will be able to show us a truth that goes beyond the simple understanding of the text's literal meaning.

My wish to you all is that you will all experience this in your life: being particularly touched by one of these words. These words are truly able to guide our life and to help us understand the big mystery of our faith.

The readings that we have just listened to contain some of these words, which can summarize the whole Revelation, and tell us everything!

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The rest is just a confirmation of their meaning.

I am about to read to you the first of these words, from the letter to the Hebrews:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son...

This sentence holds in itself the whole History of Salvation!

What is the Bible if not the progressive revelation of God in time and History, in different ways, but all of them with the same goal: to tell us about a God who wants to, who dreams to be our friend, our father, our brother?

He has spoken many times in many different ways: think about it!

But recently he has spoken through His Son, and, **through His Son, he has revealed the face of God.**

I know that, in the Church, for many theologians and thinkers, this revelation is not enough. Therefore, they use philosophical categories to search for who knows what...

But **God does not want to tell us what He is like in His essence; He wants to tell us who He is for us.**

What face is He showing us?

A loving face, a face worried for our human condition, a face willing to give life, to give hope, a face willing to free humanity from the burden of evil and sin and to let us live in harmony, love, justice and understanding; and to live in equality, which is not communism!

Equality means giving everyone what they need to live with dignity.

The face of God is especially revealed through the Word, that becomes flesh – as Saint John says in the prologue – **so that we can become children of God.**

The heart of the Christian revelation is all here: we are asked to become and to live as children of God.

For us, these words are not enough, we need a lot of things, a lot of outlines, a lot of explanations...

Usually, we don't have a contemplative mind, we need to say the rosary, we even need to tell God what He has to do...! That is to say, we build ourselves a religion that satisfies our materialism.

What is more essential than saying, when we come to church: Jesus has died so that I could live as son of God.

We Dominicans are, in a way, a contemplative order, but in some other ways, we are also active: Saint Thomas tried to go beyond this division, which – as a matter of fact – does not exist: he affirms that we need to contemplate, that is to say to understand with the eyes of the Spirit, the truths, and then we

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have to transmit them to the world.

But we should not restrict ourselves to a theological verbal transmission, parenthetical, homiletic. It must be **existential!**

I am a son of God and have to behave like one!

And when I am in front of the tabernacle, my first thought shouldn't be about asking for help. It should be **an existential comparison with the truth. We should ask ourselves: am I living as son of God?**

When am I living as son of God?

And how can I live as son of God?

Today's readings don't have any specific operative exhortations; they have a unique contemplative dimension. They invite us to look up – or better – to look deeply: *No one has ever seen God*, that's the conclusion of the prologue.

His son has made Him known; therefore, it means that **the only part of God that we can grasp is the part that we see in Jesus!**

And not what we imagine, because what we imagine are precisely figments of the imagination, mere speculations.

There is only a hint, not only symbolic but very direct, regarding our actions. This hint is so concise that we are not able to use it and make it operative. This is the hint: ***the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***

Light and darkness; we could also say that the light is what God says to us, and the darkness is us, our thoughts, our structures, our reasonings.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God: this is what we have to do!

The only thing that Saint John tells us in the prologue, the one thing that summarizes the tragedy of humanity and God's plan for us, is the following: **God wants to give us the power to become His children, if we accept Him.**

There is always a door that can be closed, open, or half closed: *to those who did accept Him.*

What does “accept” mean?

We accept the Revelation at the beginning of our path, when we proclaim our faith, when we are baptized, when we say: “Yes, I want to believe in this plan of salvation that God has for us”.

However, is this acceptance enough?

Is it enough to change humanity?

Is it enough to change our heart?

Of course not; it is not enough.

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It's a precondition, the first step towards our self-determination: "how beautiful it is that God wants me to live as His child. Yes, I want to accept Him. I want this plan to become real for me"; consequently, we get baptized, confirmed, we go to church, we get confession...

But men still remain the same!

I know people who are the same as they were thirty years ago; almost nothing has changed in their life, maybe just those psychological dynamics that belong to the natural changes in the life of human beings; but, on a spiritual, Christian point of view, almost nothing has changed.

Therefore, the acceptance that can help us become children of God and receive His power in our hearts needs to be **a continuous acceptance**. Because we live as human beings from dawn to dusk; therefore, we either live a simple psychological, social and material life, or we live as children of God.

There are no alternatives.

We cannot think of living like all the other human beings and just add the desire, the faith and the rituals that we sometimes carry out.

What is the point in today's call?

First of all, you need to **contemplate**, to start a new attitude of **gratitude and praise, because God wants me to become His son**.

He is giving me everything is necessary to be able to live as son of God.

You know that you really live when you **do things**, not just think, or desire, or dream; you really live when you act.

It is by acting that we can and we must carry out the meaning, the goal and the gift that God has come to bring us thorough His incarnation.