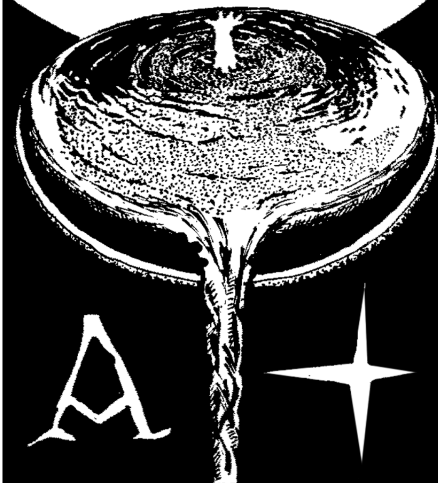
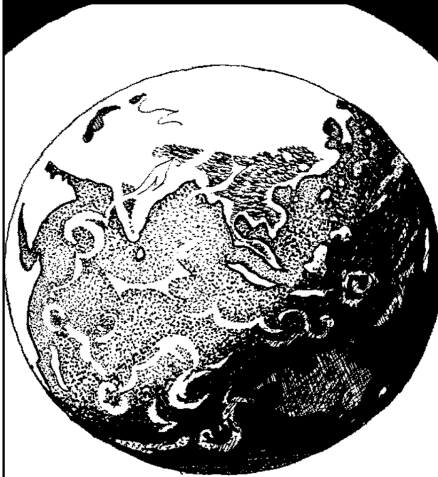


# JOHN



At the outset, the first three Gospels may have us overlook the work and skills of its writers. Whatever vision they wanted to transmit about their Savior, they dealt so plainly with the witnesses that oftentimes we seem to have seen and heard Jesus himself.

The fourth Gospel unfolds in a different setting than the other three. To start with, while Jesus' activity in Galilee occupied a major part of the Synoptics, the fourth Gospel does not say much about it. It deals with what Jesus did between his baptism by John and his return to Galilee (Jn 1-3) and after that, almost everything takes place in Jerusalem. There, within the framework of the pilgrimage feasts, our author observes the mounting conflicts between Jesus and Jewish authorities. He seems to be at home, aware of what is going on behind the scenes of power, namely among the priests.

The difference of tone is even more important. Whether John is dealing with scenes or miracles of Jesus or with the discourses that accompany them, everything bears the seal of a personal eyewitness. This is especially true for the discourses that the evangelist builds upon authentic words of Jesus, but thanks to John's prophetic gift, he is able to develop the intentions of Jesus and the deep meaning of his words and gestures. John does not let us ignore his purpose: "*These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*" (Jn 20:31). The faith of the Church proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God. But how should we understand this term? Though Jesus' resurrection had manifested the divine character of his person, one could wonder how and from what moment was Jesus Son of God and to what extent was he identified with God. John's Gospel clearly asserts that Jesus' existence was forever in God.

This assertion on Jesus' origin helps us understand the range of his work. His discourses reaffirm the incredible promises of Jesus to those who believe in him, promises that for John, became a reality.

The Gospel of John proclaims the existence of the Son of God *from all eternity*, and this light on the origin of Jesus immediately enlightens the scope of his work. Jesus, the eternal Son of God who became man, did not come to just each us to be better but he came to transform creation.

This Gospel seems to have accompanied John throughout his life. He reworked it several times. A small paragraph added at the end suggests that the Gospel was published after the death of its author, about the year 95 A.D. Here we find an important element to understand John's mind. He finished writing twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman armies. John knows as well as Paul that Jesus' Resurrection originated a new age. The revelation to the Jewish people and the great liturgies in the temple belong, to a certain extent to the past, but in this first Covenant that has become the old Covenant are found the keys to the understanding of Jesus' achievements. This is why John will call to mind the Jewish feasts and religious symbols such as the water, the palms, the lamb... and he will show how these are transfigured in the Christian life and liturgy.

This is why three sections can be gleaned after an opening that we call the week of discovery (till 2:16). These are:

- In 2:17 Jesus goes up to the temple for the Passover: Chapters 2–5 develop the sign of the temple.
- In 6:4 the Passover is mentioned again and John develops the sign of bread.
- In 13:1 we find the third Passover, when Jesus is put to death at the moment in which the lambs are sacrificed in the temple. The lamb will be the third sign.

### ***Is John the Author of the Gospel Called by His Name?***

This question is very difficult to answer. There are many reasons to doubt authorship of the Apostle John, but there can be found as many reasons to vindicate the traditional attribution to John. John's message is so clear that it sets us on fire. Telling us that the one who marked him forever, the one he loved and who loved him was the eternal Word of God..., is really an astounding statement. Some would prefer someone else, not an eyewitness, to have written the Gospel. It could have been some theologian who might have more readily idealized Jesus because from a distance, he would not have had all the evidence of his human presence, his way of looking, eating, and the smell of his sweat...

This explains, for the most part, the countless hypotheses that have been built up for a century to attribute this Gospel to a theologian from the second generation after Jesus. None of these have gathered convincing proofs.

However, we have to admit that there are many reasons to doubt that the author is John the Apostle. The main reason is the following: could John, the Galilean fisherman, have written the theological and mystical discourses proper of this Gospel? Naturally, it is not impossible.

But there is still more! The one who gave their final shape to the discourses, in the years 70-80 A.D., probably near Ephesus where an ancient tradition asserts that John had retired, is not only a theologian but he must also have been a priest (18:15) because of his interest for the liturgy and the temple. Can this fit with the person of

John, Zebedee's son, a fisherman of Tiberiadis? Is it possible that such a vision of Jesus, the Messiah, and then the Son of God, Savior of the world, had been borne in him and that he has expressed it in his Gospel?

### *The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved*

We have always thought that the fourteen mentions (2 x 7) of the *disciple whom Jesus loved* in the latter part of the Gospel referred to the author himself. Verse 21:24, added after his death, state it explicitly. This beloved disciple was identified with John the Apostle, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee and he was thought to be the youngest of the Twelve. But what was actually known about it?

Zebedee the fisherman might have been a priest. However, the evangelist says nothing about part of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, about the transfiguration... and even in 21:2, he appears to have been one of the *two disciples* (as in 1:35) and therefore, not the son of Zebedee.

It is only at the Last Supper that the author really enters into the Gospel. We see him in the seat of honor, the seat that rightfully belonged to the host. Could he have been the owner who welcomed Jesus and his disciples (Lk 22:12)? And from then on, he could have accompanied Peter. He can venture to be at the foot of the cross while the Galilean group thought only about escaping from reprisal. Jesus entrusted Mary to him and a few moments later, he understood everything.

The indications that would allow to attribute this Gospel to another John, a priest from Jerusalem and different from Zebedee's son are, then as numerous as the ones that give preference to the latter one and it is difficult to give preference to one of them. However, it is a very interesting clue that leads to many discoveries. Specifically, in Chapter 19:31-37, the author of the Gospel reports the precise event that so deeply moved him and gave him access to the mystery of Jesus. He was really a priest.

We may have met believers who are deeply and truly theologians though they have not passed through university. They encountered some outstanding personality and this was enough to awaken their gifts. Later they became one of these few apostles who continually go over the events and the discoveries of this ministry, always eager to understand the ways of God. Do they need some books, some friends to help them to mature in their thinking? The same God who pours in them wisdom will direct to them this kind of help.

Can't this be the case of John, so close to Jesus and then Apostle for some sixty years? He did not go, as Paul did through rabbinical schools, and this is why he does not use sophisticated arguments, but ever so, couldn't he be a Theologian, this someone who knows God?

### *Composition of the Gospel of John*

There have been many attempts to determine the structure of the Gospel of John. We present here a division in three great sessions. These all begin with the expression: the time/hour that appears three times.

It is also important to bear in mind the frequency of Jewish feasts. The Passover appears three times, and then a "feast," the Tents, the Dedication of the Temple.

**Prologue:** The first week: 1:1–2:11.

**First Part:** The presentation of God's gift: 2:12–6:71.

**Second Part:** Rejection of the world and homicidal attempts: 7:1–12:50.

**Third Part:** Jesus completes his work bringing to perfection the love for his people: Chapters 13–20.

**Conclusion:** The author's purpose: 20:30-31.

**Epilog:** Until his return.

### The Word became a human

Gen 1:1-5; 1Jn 1:1-2; Rev 19:13  
 Phil 2:6  
 Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; Wis 9:1; Pro 8:22  
 1Cor 8:6; 1Jn 2:8; 1Thes 5:4  
 1Jn 2:9  
 Mt 3:1  
 3:19; 8:12; 12:46  
 14:17; 17:25

**1** • <sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God;  
<sup>2</sup>he was in the beginning with God.  
<sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him nothing came to be. Whatever has come to be, <sup>4</sup>found life in him;  
 life, which for human beings, was also light,  
<sup>5</sup>light that shines in darkness, light that darkness could not overcome.  
<sup>6</sup>A man came, sent by God; his name was John.  
<sup>7</sup>He came to bear witness, as a witness to introduce the Light, so that all might believe through him.  
<sup>8</sup>He was not the Light, but a witness to introduce the Light;  
<sup>9</sup>for the Light was coming into the world, the true Light that enlightens everyone.  
<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and through him the world was made, the very world that did not know him.  
<sup>11</sup>He came to his own, yet his own people did not receive him;

Gal 3:26; 1Jn 5:13  
 3:5; Jas 1:18; 1Jn 5:18  
 Rom 1:3; Gal 4:4; 1Tim 3:16; Heb 2:14; 1Jn 4:2; Rev 21:3; 25:8; Dt 4:7; Bar 4:1; 37:27; 34:6; Ps 89:2; Hos 2:21  
 1:27; Mt 3:11  
 3:34; Col 2:9  
 31:18; Rom 6:14; Jn 7:19; 10:4  
 5:37; 6:46; 33:20; 1Tim 1:17; 6:16; 1Jn 4:12; Mt 11:27

<sup>12</sup>but to all who received him, he empowers to become children of God,  
 for they believe in his name.  
<sup>13</sup>These are born, but not by seed, or carnal desire, nor by the will of man: they are born of God.  
<sup>14</sup>And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;  
 and we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father: fullness of truth and loving-kindness.  
<sup>15</sup>John bore witness to him openly, saying,  
 “This is the one who comes after me, but he is already ahead of me, for he was before me.”  
<sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received, favor upon favor.  
<sup>17</sup>For God had given us the law through Moses,  
 but Truth and Loving-kindness came through Jesus Christ.  
<sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God, but God-the-only-Son made him known:  
 the one, who is in and with the Father.

• **1.1** *In the beginning was the Word.* The real beginning is not the creation of the universe. For this beginning of time, space, matter, existence explains nothing yet demands an explanation. The real beginning is beyond time. John does not say that at this beginning “God was” because we know it. He speaks of *the Word*. We keep this traditional term word, although the term *word* that John uses says more than “word.” It is both “thought” and “word”, which is the word expressing what one carries in oneself. We ought perhaps translate with: The “Expression” of God. To speak of this *Word*, or Expression of the Father, or to speak of his Son, is the same thing. In other pages he will be called Splendor (Heb 1:1) and Image (Col 1:15) of the Father. The Son is not part of the Father, or another God since he has nothing that is of himself but all which is the Father’s is also his (Jn 16:15).

John will remind us that *no one has ever seen God* (v. 18). The Father from whom existence comes and all that exists is without beginning and his springing forth is known only to him-

self. John tells us here that for him, “being,” is communicating himself, expressing himself, giving himself. God expresses himself in him who is at the same time his Word and his Son and through this uncreated, unique Word, which fully expresses him; he creates a universe that is yet another way of saying what is in God.

This is still not enough to satisfy the need of God to communicate himself. As several texts of the Old Testament have already said (Pro 8:22 and 31, 2 S 7:2-30), God has entered through his Word into the history of humankind. It was he who was “spoken” of in their own way by all who carried the Word, all the prophets of the Scriptures and those of other religions as well. The Word *enlightened* all human beings, including those who did not know God; he was the conscience of the upright in every race, in every age. This Word, Son and Expression of the Father came one day to give us the definitive word by means of his own existence in becoming human among us.

*Whatever has come to be, found life in him* (v. 4). It is a property of life to develop from

## FIRST PART: JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF THROUGH SIGNS

**John the Baptist presents Jesus, the Lamb of God**

• <sup>19</sup>This was the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup>John recognized the truth, and did not deny it. He said, “I am not the Messiah.”

<sup>21</sup>And they asked him, “Then who

are you? Elijah?” He answered, “I am not.” They said, “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, “Tell us who you are, so that we can give some answer to those who sent us. How do you see yourself?” <sup>23</sup>And John said, quoting the prophet Isaiah, “I am the voice

Is 40:3

Lk 3:3

3:28;  
Acts  
13:25Mal  
3:23;  
Mt 11:14;  
17:10;  
Dt 18:15

within until maturity is reached. This growth is to be seen throughout history in all the work of the Word; it is the language of God that develops among humankind. Whether we study the history of our race from its origins, or whether we read the Old Testament, we see how the language of God has been developed among humans. It always was a human language, but this language was inhabited by the Spirit of God, and in a special way within the history of Israel, it was also the word of God. We shall find this living word in him who is the Son-made-human, Jesus, but in a way that disconcerts us. For there is the mystery about the Son: it is true that he is God like the Father, but having received all, he is in a posture of offering: he empties himself so that the Father may exalt and glorify him anew.

A man came, sent by God (v. 6). Twice in verses 6-8 and 15, John, the author of the Gospel, speaks to us of John the Baptist, precursor of Jesus. The Word has truly identified himself: he has not come with glory; he was introduced by a word which came from himself, but remained human in John's preaching. It was easy to reject this witness and in fact when he came to his own, to the people of Israel, his own did not receive him.

The Word was made flesh (v. 14). John uses the word *flesh* to underline the utter humility of God who, despite being spirit, became a creature with a mortal body. John says: *was made*, and not: “took the appearance” of a human person, because the Son of God was truly human.

God become human dwelt among us. The root sense of this verb “dwell” in Scripture is: *to have one's tent pitched*. So John is pleased to allude to the sacred tent that served as the Hebrews' Sanctuary in the desert: in that tent, God was present beside them (Ex 33:7-11). In reality Jesus, the Son of God become human, is the true Temple of God among people (Jn 2:21), a temple as humble and apparently fragile as the tent in the desert was: nevertheless, in him is the fullness of God. The apostles saw his glory at certain moments of his mortal life (Jn 2:11 and Lk 9:32). They saw his glory in his Passion and Resurrection.

How does the Word save us? John does not speak only of Jesus rescuing us from the abyss of sin; he prefers to speak of Jesus allowing us

to attain a status totally unexpected and beyond our reach: *he made them children of God*. We are made children of God by the very Son of the Father, provided that we believe in his name, which is in his divine personality.

In him was the fullness of truth and loving-kindness (v. 14). Love (or Grace) and Truth (or Faithfulness) are God's two main qualities (Ex 34:6-7). These words are repeated as a refrain throughout Psalm 89. John means then that he has recognized the fullness of Jesus' divinity (Col 2:9).

God had given us the law (v. 17). While recounting the sins of Israel, the biblical story foretold the time when there would be no need for a law engraved in stones or written in books (Jer 31:31). Some day God would change the sinners' hearts (Ezk 36:26) so that relationships of mutual Love and Faithfulness between God and humankind would begin (Hos 2:21-22). John affirms that the promised time of Love and Truth (of perfect religion) arrived through Jesus Christ.

## • 19. THE LAMB

The authorities wondered: “Who is this who on his own initiative has begun to preach?” At that time, various Jewish groups “baptized,” or bathed, as a means of purification and to hasten the coming of the Messiah.

Regarding John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, see Luke 3:10.

The Messiah is the name the Jews gave to the expected Savior. They also expected the Prophet, but it was not clear whether or not the Prophet would be someone other than the Messiah. It was believed that the prophet Elijah would reappear before the Messiah's arrival (Mk 9:11).

There is the Lamb (v. 29). In the language of the Jews, the word “Lamb” can mean both servant and lamb. Jesus is the Servant of God spoken of by the prophets, who was to sacrifice himself for his brothers and sisters. He is also the true Lamb that replaces the Paschal Lamb (Mk 14:12).

A man comes after me (v. 30). In history, Jesus appears after John, but being the word of God, he existed before all creatures. He also precedes, that is to say, all—including John the Baptist—are guided by his light.

*of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord!"*

<sup>24</sup>Those who had been sent were Pharisees; <sup>25</sup>and they put a further question to John, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are not the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup>John answered, "I baptize you with water, but among you stands one whom you do not know; <sup>27</sup>although he comes after me, I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal."

<sup>28</sup>This happened in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

<sup>29</sup>The next day, John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>It is he of whom I said: A man comes after me, who is already ahead of me, for he was before me. <sup>31</sup>I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing to prepare for him, so that he might be revealed in Israel."

<sup>32</sup>And John also gave this testimony, "I saw the Spirit coming down

on him, like a dove from heaven, and resting on him. <sup>33</sup>I myself did not know him, but God, who sent me to baptize, told me, 'You will see the Spirit coming down, and resting on the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup>Yes, I have seen! And I declare that this is the Chosen One of God!"

### Jesus meets the first disciples

• <sup>35</sup>On the following day, John was standing there again, with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup>As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and said, "There is the Lamb of God." <sup>37</sup>On hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>He turned and saw them following, and he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Rabbi (which means *Master*), where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Come and see." So they went and saw where he stayed, and spent the rest of that day with him. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

<sup>40</sup>Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard

### • 35. DISCOVERING JESUS

This Gospel is the work of John the Evangelist who should not be confused with John the Baptist. John the Evangelist was one of the first two disciples to follow Jesus (v. 39).

John, concerned about helping us understand the profound meaning of Jesus' actions, dwells on details to which we would not immediately pay attention. For example, Scripture begins with the poem describing Creation as happening in seven days, and because John sees Jesus' work as a new creation, he describes the beginning of Jesus' public ministry as happening within a week (seven being a symbolic number) (vv. 29, 35, 43 and 2:1).

On the first day John the Baptist affirmed: there is one among you whom you do not know. We see how, during the week, John the Baptist was the first to discover Jesus. Then later, John, Andrew and Simon also discovered him. The last day of the first week will be at the wedding in Cana, where Jesus will let them discover his glory.

*What are you looking for?* (v. 38). John did not forget these first words Jesus spoke to them. We want to know who Jesus is, but he asks us

what our inner dispositions are: because we will gain nothing through finding him unless we are disposed to submit ourselves to him.

These two disciples began to live with Jesus. With time, they would discover that he is *the Teacher, the Messiah, the Son of God*. So, too, with us. We progress in this knowledge of Jesus Christ as we go on our journey through life.

John the Baptist was without jealousy; he had encouraged his disciples to follow Jesus, and later the first two brought others. Likewise, we come to Jesus because of another person who spoke to us of him, or involved us in an apostolic task.

These two disciples recognized Jesus. It would be more exact to say that Jesus recognized those whom the Father had entrusted to him. Thus he recognized Nathanael when he was *under the fig tree* (v. 48). Among the Jews, this expression referred to a teacher of the law engaged in teaching religion, since ordinarily they taught under the shade of a tree. In the same way, Jesus recognized Simon whom the Father chose to be the first Rock of the Church (Mt 16:13).

*You will see the heavens opened.* See Genesis 28:12.

Mt  
16:14;  
Mk  
11:30

Acts  
13:25

1Cor5:7;  
1P 1:18;  
2:24;  
Zbc 3:9;  
Rev 5:6;  
Mt 8:17

Is 11:2;  
6:1

Mt 3:16

Is 42:2

Lk 5:  
1-11

what John had said, and followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup>Early the next morning, he found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means *the Christ*), <sup>42</sup>and he brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon, son of John, but you shall be called Cephas” (which means *Rock*).

<sup>43</sup>The next day, Jesus decided to set off for Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” <sup>44</sup>Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and the prophets: he is Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”

<sup>46</sup>Nathanael replied, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said of him, “Here comes an Israelite, a true one; there is nothing

false in him.” <sup>48</sup>Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?” And Jesus said to him, “Before Philip called you, you were under the fig tree, and I saw you.”

<sup>49</sup>Nathanael answered, “Master, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!” <sup>50</sup>But Jesus replied, “You believe because I said, ‘I saw you under the fig tree.’ But you will see greater things than that.

<sup>51</sup>Truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

### The wedding at Cana

**2** • <sup>1</sup>Three days later there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus was also invited to the wedding with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>When all the wine provided for the celebration had been served, and they had run out of wine,

21:15;  
Mt 16:18;  
Gal 2:11

7:41;  
Dt 18:18

Gen 28:  
10-17;  
Lk 3:21;  
Mt 4:11

### • 2.1 THE SIGNS OF JESUS

The Week of Discovery ends with the wedding at Cana. Indeed Jesus was at the wedding and brought his disciples to join in the singing, dancing and drinking wine. His presence and participation sanctified not only marriage but also festive celebrations and togetherness.

The disciples began to know Jesus, but someone else already understood and believed in him: Mary his mother. How did it ever occur to her to ask him for a miracle? Did she know that Jesus could perform miracles? Mary did not ask for the conversion of sinners, or for bread for the hungry; rather, what she wanted was a miracle or something like it to free the groom from embarrassment.

Jesus answered her with a phrase which, directed to a stranger, could be interpreted as a reproach, but said in a different tone to his mother demonstrated a familiarity and a mutual understanding that went beyond words. Apparently Jesus had no thought of beginning his mission in that manner or at that moment, but his spirit recognized the Spirit speaking through his mother, and he granted this first *miraculous sign*.

It is worth noting that John relates only seven miracles of Jesus, and sometimes he calls them *works*, sometimes *signs*. They are works of the Son of God in which he manifests his power.

They are signs, that is to say, visible things adapted for us by which he enables us to understand his true work—that of bringing life and renewal to the world.

This is why John mentions some details of this event that were symbolic of spiritual realities. Jesus participated in a *wedding*, and what was he trying to do, but to prepare for other weddings—of God with humanity? Jesus speaks of *his hour* that had not yet come, for, in reality, his true *hour* will be that of his Passion and Resurrection.

John adds that Jesus made use of the water that the Jews set aside to purify themselves. The Jews were obsessed with avoiding “defilement,” so their religion multiplied the rites of purification (v. 6). Jesus, by changing the blessed water into wine, signified that true religion should not be confused with the fear of sin: what is important is to receive from Jesus the Spirit which, like heady wine, makes us break from established norms and the narrowness of our own knowledge and learning.

The water changed into wine: Jesus comes into our house to sanctify our daily life—its routine and its chores.

It was thus Jesus *manifested his glory* to those who were beginning to discover him. Mary brought grace to John the Baptist (Lk 1:39); again she intervenes to hasten the beginnings



the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, "Woman, what concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come."

<sup>5</sup> However his mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup> Nearby were six stone water jars, set there for ritual washing as practiced by the Jews; each jar could hold twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup> Then Jesus said, "Now draw some out and take it to the steward." So they did.

<sup>9</sup> The steward tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing from where it had come; for only the servants who had drawn the water knew. Immediately he called the bridegroom, <sup>10</sup> and said, "Everyone serves the best wine first, and when people have drunk enough, he serves that which is ordinary. But you have kept the best wine until the end."

<sup>11</sup> This miraculous sign was the first, and Jesus performed it at Cana in Galilee. In this way he showed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

• <sup>12</sup> After this, Jesus went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers and his disciples; and they stayed there for a few days.

### Jesus clears the temple

• <sup>13</sup> As the Passover of the Jews was at hand, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple court he found merchants selling oxen, sheep and doves, and money-changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup> Making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple court, together with the oxen and sheep. He knocked over the tables of the money-changers, scattering the coins, <sup>16</sup> and ordered the people selling doves, "Take all this away, and stop making a marketplace of my Father's house!"

<sup>17</sup> His disciples recalled the words of Scripture: *Zeal for your house devours me like fire.*

<sup>18</sup> The Jews then questioned Jesus, "Where are the miraculous signs which give you the right to do this?" <sup>19</sup> And Jesus said, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then replied, "The building of

of the Gospel. She will not speak again in the Gospel, and her last words are: *Do whatever he tells you* (v. 5).

In those first days after John's baptism, Jesus was still living among his relatives and town-mates whom the Gospel calls "his brothers": see commentary on Mark 3:31.

• 12. With the wedding at Cana, the first section of the Gospel we have called the Week of Discovery ends. Another section begins in which Jesus defines himself in relation to the Jewish world and their hopes. John presents four scenes:

– *Jesus in the temple*: The priests are materialistic, and Jesus judges them severely.

– *Jesus and Nicodemus*: Nicodemus expresses the concerns of the learned and believing Jews.

– *the Samaritan Woman*: This is the dialogue of Jesus with the townspeople who are believers in their own way.

– *Jesus heals the son of an official*: Jesus points out that the majority of those who come to him, seek him because of his miracles.

• 13. Jesus had not yet begun his preaching. He went to the temple of Jerusalem that was the heart of the Jewish nation and the symbol of their religion (Mk 11:12). The temple, however, was not immune from corruption and lust for power. In the temple the people had to make use of the priests' services to offer their sacrifices. The priests' authority and power derived from the temple. The temple was the place where the community's offerings and gifts were brought; and there the chief priests disposed of this treasure. Besides this, they also received the taxes that the sellers and money changers paid.

*Zeal for your house consumes me as fire and those who insult you insult me as well* (v. 17). This is taken from Psalm 69. Actually the hatred of the chief priests for Jesus would bring him to his death.

The apostles could not understand these words: for at that time nothing was more sacred to them than the temple and the Scripture. Later, they would know that the most ordinary word of Jesus had as much weight as the whole of Scripture. They would also understand that

19:26

Gen 41:55

Mk 7:3

4:54;  
12:37;  
21:14;  
1:14;  
11:40;  
12:41Mt 21:  
12:13;  
Mk 11:  
15-17;  
Lk 19:  
45-46;  
Jn 2:23  
6:4;  
11:55Zec  
14:21;  
Lk 2:49

Ps 69:10

6:30;  
20:29;  
Lk 11:29Mk  
14:58;  
15:29;  
Acts  
6:14

this temple has already taken forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?"

<sup>1</sup>Cor 6:19  
21 Actually, Jesus was referring to the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>Only when he had risen from the dead did his disciples remember these words; then they believed both the Scripture and the words Jesus had spoken.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus stayed in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, and many believed in his name, when they saw the miraculous signs he performed. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all of them. <sup>25</sup>He had no need of evidence about anyone, for he himself knew what there was in each one.

4:45;  
7:31;  
11:47

### Jesus and Nicodemus

**3** • <sup>1</sup>Among the Pharisees there was a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus. <sup>2</sup>He came to Jesus by night and said, "Rabbi, we know that

7:48;  
12:42;  
19:39

you have come from God to teach us, for no one can perform miraculous signs like yours unless God is with him."

<sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again from above."

Mt 18:3;  
1P 1:23

<sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said, "How can there be rebirth for a grown man? Who could go back to his mother's womb and be born again?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you: No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup>What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Because of this, don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again from above.'

1Jn 5:1;  
Jas 1:17

Ezk 38:25;  
Rom 6:4;  
Eph 5:26;  
Tit 3:5

1P 1:3;  
2P 1:11

<sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it pleases and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

6:63;  
Gen 6:3

<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus asked again, "How can

*Jesus is the true Temple.* Until then, people constructed temples and looked for places where they could meet God and obtain his favors. Now God has made himself present in Jesus: it is he who delivers God's riches to us.

#### • 3.1 A NEW BIRTH

Nicodemus was a religious person, concerned about knowing God and his ways, and he went to Jesus as to a teacher of religion. What he needed was not so much to receive instruction, however, as to undergo a change within himself. That, too, is what we need. We must recognize our powerlessness—by ourselves, unaided—to pass through the barriers which block us from an authentic life. Like Nicodemus, despite all our accumulated experience and knowledge (or because of them), we are *old* people.

Jesus says we must *be born again and born from above*: John's gospel uses a word that can be interpreted in both senses (v. 3). Nobody gives birth to himself, and just as we received our life in *the flesh* from others so, too, we receive the life of the Son of God from the Spirit.

All claim that they live: something moves in them, thoughts come to them, and they make decisions ... Yet this could possibly be nothing more than *the life of the flesh*, or the life of an unawakened person.

The other life, that of the Spirit, is more mysterious because it takes place in the inner-

most depths of our being. We see the external appearance; we notice a person's face and behavior, but we do not see God's working in her. The awakened believer, however, who is habitually led by the Spirit gradually discovers changes in what motivates her actions and her ambitions. She feels at ease with God and without fear, experiencing that it is not so much she who orients her life, as another who lives in her. Yet she could not, in fact, be able to say exactly what happens within her.

Hence Jesus compares the action of the Spirit with the passing of *the wind* that we feel, although we do not see or hold it. Let us also take note that in Jesus' language the same word means *spirit* as much as "wind."

We have to be reborn of *water and of the Spirit*: this points to Baptism. Let us not think that merely by receiving the waters of baptism, one is fully established in the life of the Spirit; rather, let us realize that normally one is baptized in order to begin the life of the Spirit: the words of the Gospel refer to adults converted to the Christian faith. The case of infant baptism is different. Baptism works within them. Yet they should receive instruction in the faith to lead them to personal conversion.

Like many in Israel, Nicodemus was a religious person and a believer. Why did he come by *night*? Possibly he did not want to risk his position and reputation, or mix with the common

this be?”<sup>10</sup> And Jesus answered, “You are a teacher in Israel, and you don’t know these things!

• <sup>11</sup> Truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we witness to the things we have seen, but you don’t accept our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If you don’t believe when I speak of earthly things, what then, when I speak to you of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ever gone up to heaven except the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man.

<sup>14</sup> As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> God did not

send the Son into the world to condemn the world; instead, through him the world is to be saved. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him will not be condemned. He who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

<sup>19</sup> This is how Judgment is made: Light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For whoever does wrong hates the light, and doesn’t come to the light, for fear that his deeds will be seen as evil. <sup>21</sup> But whoever lives according to the truth comes into the light, so that it can be clearly seen that his works have been done in God.”

### John the Baptist’s last testimony

• <sup>22</sup> After this, Jesus went into the

people around Jesus. This would not be the attitude of those who have been born again: these have been liberated from many things that paralyze others.

### JESUS REVEALS THE PLAN OF GOD

• 11. John’s Gospel is different from the other three. Often, after relating some words of Jesus, John adds an explanation of the faith, which he supports with declarations that Jesus made on other occasions. That is what happens in this case.

*How can this be?* Nicodemus asked. To enter into the life of the Spirit, we need to know God’s plan for us. Yet no one can speak properly of such things except the Son of God. He has seen *heavenly things*, that is, the intimate life of God; he also speaks of *earthly things*, that is, of the kingdom that God brings to us. Many of Jesus’ listeners will not accept what he says about the Reign of God; much less will they pay attention to what he reveals about the mystery of God. Jesus reveals to us that which, by ourselves, we are unable to know. Thus a Christian is not one who merely “believes in God”; we are Christians because we believe the *testimony* of Jesus (v. 11) regarding God and his plan of salvation.

In this plan, there was something very difficult to accept: that the Son of Man would have to die on the cross and to rise from the dead (*be lifted On High* means the same). Jesus reminds them of the *serpent in the desert*. This episode in the Scriptures (Num 21) prefigured what would happen to Jesus. Of course, the Jews did not

grasp the meaning of this message; in fact, they passed over all the predictions of the sufferings of their Savior without understanding them.

They had to revise their ideas about other matters, also. The Jews had been praying for God to come and expected him to condemn the world and to punish the bad. He, on the other hand, sent his own Son to the cross so that *the world will be saved* (v. 17).

Other verses of the New Testament say that we should not love the world; which seems to contradict what we have just read: *God so loved the world*. The reason for this contradiction is that the word world has several meanings.

First, the *world* means all of creation, which is good since it is God’s work. The center of this divine work is humankind, which has come under the influence of Satan (8:34 and 44). Everything that sinful humanity creates—riches, culture, social life—is influenced, disfigured and used for evil. Hence, *God sent His Son* so that *the world will be saved*.

Yet, even though Christ’s resurrection initiated his invincible power over history, a strong current of evil continues, dragging along all who refuse to acknowledge the truth. This evil current is sometimes called *the world*. It would be more appropriate to say: the people who surrender themselves to the Master of the world. The Scripture points to them in saying: *Do not love the world, or You are not of the world* (1 Jn 2:15; 4:6).

• 22. The Gospel admits that many disciples

12:49;  
1Cor  
2:14;  
Wis9:16

Dt  
30:12;  
Eph 4:9

Num  
21:4-9;  
Wis  
16:5-7

8:28;  
12:32

18:32;  
Gen  
22:16;  
Rom5:8;  
8:32;  
Mt21:37

1Jn  
4:9

12:47;  
5:22;  
2Cor  
5:19

1:5;  
8:12

12:48;  
Eph  
5:13

1Thes  
5:4

territory of Judea with his disciples. He stayed there with them and baptized.<sup>23</sup> John was also baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, where water was plentiful; people came to him and were baptized.<sup>24</sup> This happened before John was put in prison.

<sup>25</sup> Now John's disciples had been questioned by a Jew about spiritual cleansing,<sup>26</sup> so they came to John and said, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, and about whom you spoke favorably, is now baptizing, and all are going to him."

<sup>27</sup> John answered, "No one can receive anything, except what has been given to him from heaven.<sup>28</sup> You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'<sup>29</sup> Only the bridegroom has the bride; but the friend of the bridegroom stands by and listens, and rejoices to hear the bridegroom's voice. My joy is now full.<sup>30</sup> It is necessary that he increase, but that I decrease.

<sup>31</sup> He who comes from above is above all; he who comes from the earth belongs to the earth, and his

words belong to the earth. He who comes from heaven<sup>32</sup> speaks of the things he has seen and heard; he bears witness to these things, but no one accepts his testimony.<sup>33</sup> Whoever does receive his testimony acknowledges the truthfulness of God.

<sup>34</sup> The one sent by God speaks God's words, and gives the Spirit unstintingly.<sup>35</sup> The Father loves the Son and has entrusted everything into his hands.<sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son lives with eternal life; but he who will not believe in the Son will never know life, and always faces the justice of God."

#### Jesus and the Samaritan woman

**4** • <sup>1</sup> The Lord knew that the Pharisees were informed about him; people said that Jesus was attracting and baptizing more disciples than John; <sup>2</sup> but in fact it was not Jesus himself who was baptizing, but his disciples. <sup>3</sup> So Jesus left Judea and returned to Galilee. <sup>4</sup> He had to cross Samaria.

<sup>5</sup> He came to a Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that

of John the Baptist did not recognize Jesus. They had been drawn by their teacher's example: he was intense and outspoken, hard on himself in food, drink and clothing. Somehow they had the hope, maybe because of John the Baptist's manner, that God's true justice would come and bring about direct punishment of the wicked. Like militant followers of whatever good cause, John's disciples had this weakness: they were too focused on their own leaders and ways to consider other possibilities. To become Christ's disciples, they would have to give up their own prophets.

*It is necessary that he increase but that I decrease, said the greatest of the prophets (v. 30). Only Jesus comes from On High, and can fully satisfy the human heart. In him nothing of the good is lost, since he embodies all.*

*Always faces the justice of God (v. 36). Those who do not recognize the Son of God remain in the situation humanity was in when expelled from Paradise. If they are not able to receive the witness of "God the Son who is one with the Father," they will never solve the con-*

traditions in their lives or in the world in which they live; and they cannot but mistrust God.

#### • 4.1 LIVING WATER

The Jews hated the Samaritans. In addition, talking with any woman in a public place was looked upon with disapproval in Jewish culture at that time. Jesus, overcoming racial and social prejudices, began to talk with a Samaritan woman. In the person of this woman he met the common people of Palestine. The woman was from a different province and belonged to a rival cult, but both shared the same promises of God and both were waiting for a Savior.

The first concern of the woman was to quench her thirst. The ancestors of the Jewish people walked with their flocks from one water source to another. The most famous Jews (like Jacob) dug wells, and around these wells the desert began to live. This fact was like a parable; people look everywhere for something to quench their thirst; but they are condemned to find nothing but stagnant waters. Those who make tanks to preserve water find that the tanks crack

Mt 14:3

Lk 7:18

1Cor 4:7; Heb 5:4

3:11

7:26; 1Jn 5:10

Mt 28:18

Mt 3:7; Rom 2:8; Eph 2:3

1Cor 1:17

Lk 9:52

Gen 48:22

Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well is there. Tired from his journey, Jesus sat down by the well; it was about noon. <sup>7</sup>Now a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup>His disciples had just gone into town to buy some food.

<sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan and a woman, for a drink?" (For Jews, in fact, have no dealings with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup>Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift of God! If you knew who it is, who is asking you for a drink, you yourself would have asked me, and I would have given you living water."

<sup>11</sup>The woman answered, "Sir, you have no bucket, and this well is deep; where is your living water? <sup>12</sup>Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who

gave us this well; he drank from it himself, together with his sons and his cattle?"

<sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Those who drink of this water will be thirsty again; <sup>14</sup>but those, who drink of the water that I shall give, will never be thirsty; for the water, that I shall give, will become in them a spring of water, welling up to eternal life."

<sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, "Give me this water, that I may never be thirsty, and never have to come here to draw water." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said, "Go, call your husband, and come back here."

<sup>17</sup>The woman answered, "I have no husband." And Jesus replied, "You are right to say, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup>for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you said is true."

<sup>19</sup>The woman then said to him, "I

Jer 2:13;  
Is 58:11

6:34

Di 11:29;  
12:5

(see commentary on Gen 26). Jesus brings the *living water*, which is God's gift to us, his children: the gift of the *Holy Spirit* (7:37).

When there is water in the desert, although it does not surface, it is noticeable because of the verdant vegetation. The same happens with us when we truly live: our actions become better, our decisions more free, our thoughts more directed towards the essential. The living water from which all these fruits flow is not seen: this is eternal life, against which death can do nothing.

The second concern of the woman is to know: Where is truth to be found? Jesus tells her: *You have had five husbands...* (v. 18). This symbolizes the common destiny of the townspeople who have served many masters or "husbands" and, in the end, do not have anyone whom they recognize as their Lord. To begin with, what is the true religion?

The Samaritans had their Holy Book, somewhat different from that of the Jews, and in the town itself, a few kilometers from the Well of Sychar, was their temple, which rivaled that of Jerusalem. Jesus maintains that the Jewish religion is the true one: *Salvation comes from the Jews*. In this he does not share the position of those who say: "It matters little what Church we belong to, since they are all the same." Nevertheless, although one has the good fortune of following the true religion, he has to arrive at the spiritual knowledge of God (v. 23). The *Spirit*, whom we receive, helps us worship God *according to the truth*. The Father seeks such

worshippers who enter into intimate personal contact with him.

*Spirit and truth* (v. 24). God does not need the words of our prayers, but looks for simplicity, beauty and nobility in our spirit. The Spirit of God cannot be communicated except to those who seek the truth and live according to truth in a world of deception.

In the final analysis, the Samaritan woman's account is a parable of our own lives. Each one of us is in some way the Samaritan woman. What happened at the well of Jacob describes our own encounter with Jesus; the ways by which Jesus led the woman to recognize and love him are the ways by which Jesus, step-by-step, accomplishes our own conversion. In the end, the woman became Jesus' disciple, and through this very experience she also became Jesus' apostle: *Many in that town believed in Jesus because of the woman* (v. 39). This Jesus experience is the source of the apostolate. To evangelize is to share this experience with others.

*Four more months ...* (v. 35). Like the harvest, the people who follow Jesus are also maturing.

*People who reap the harvest are paid for their work* (v. 36): this Jesus' maxim has many applications. Verse 36 possibly refers to the shared joy of the Father who sowed and of the Son who will harvest. In a different way, in verse 37, Jesus and his own are aware that they do not work in vain. *Others have worked*: Jesus refers to those who came before him, and especially to John the Baptist.

7:37;  
Rev  
21:6;  
22:17

6:31;  
8:53

see you are a prophet; tell me this: <sup>20</sup>Our ancestors came to this mountain to worship God; but you Jews, do you not claim that Jerusalem is the only place to worship God?"

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you shall worship the Father, but that will not be on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup>You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, because salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup>But the hour is coming, and is even now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for that is the kind of worshipers the Father wants. <sup>24</sup>God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit, and truth."

2Cor  
3:17;  
Rom  
12:1;  
Phil 3:3

<sup>25</sup>The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah (that is the Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will tell us everything." <sup>26</sup>And Jesus said, "I who am talking to you, I am he."

<sup>27</sup>At this point the disciples returned, and were surprised that Jesus was speaking with a woman; however, no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" <sup>28</sup>So the woman left her water jar and ran to the town. There she said to the people, <sup>29</sup>"Come and see a man who told me everything I did! Could he not be the Christ?" <sup>30</sup>So they left the town and went to meet him.

<sup>31</sup>In the meantime, the disciples urged Jesus, "Master, eat." <sup>32</sup>But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." <sup>33</sup>And the disciples wondered, "Has anyone brought him food?" <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to carry out his work."

6:38;  
17:4

<sup>35</sup>You say that in four months there will be the harvest; now, I say to you, look up and see the fields white and ready for harvesting. <sup>36</sup>People who reap the harvest are paid for their work, and the fruit is gathered for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

19:30

Lk 10:2;  
Rev  
14:15

<sup>37</sup>Indeed the saying holds true: One sows and another reaps. <sup>38</sup>I sent you to reap where you didn't work or suffer; others have worked, and you are now sharing in their labors."

Ps 126:5;  
1Cor 3:6

<sup>39</sup>In that town many Samaritans believed in him when they heard the woman who declared, "He told me everything I did." <sup>40</sup>So, when they came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and Jesus stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup>After that, many more believed because of his own words, <sup>42</sup>and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is the Savior of the world."

Lk 9:52;  
Mt 8:34

<sup>43</sup>When the two days were over, Jesus left for Galilee. <sup>44</sup>Jesus himself said that no prophet is recognized in his own country. <sup>45</sup>Yet the Galileans welcomed him when he arrived, because of all the things which he had done in Jerusalem during the Festival, and which they had seen. For they, too, had gone to the feast.

Lk 4:24

### Jesus cures the son of an official

• <sup>46</sup>Jesus went back to Cana of Galilee, where he had changed the water into wine. At Capernaum there was an official, whose son was ill, <sup>47</sup>and when he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went

Mt 8:  
5-13;  
Lk 7:  
1-10

- 46. See Luke 7:1.

*Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe* (v. 48). Jesus' reproach is directed, not to the official who will later show great faith, but to the Jews and to us. While Jesus works

miracles which confirm his mission, he also stresses that we should recognize him by seeing and hearing him. Do lovers demand miracles in order to trust one another? Do those who follow leaders demand absolute proof? Those who

and asked him to come and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

<sup>48</sup> Jesus said, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe!"

<sup>49</sup> The official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." <sup>50</sup> And Jesus replied, "Go, your son lives!"

The man had faith in the word that Jesus spoke to him, and went his way.

<sup>51</sup> As he was approaching his house, his servants met him, and gave him the good news, "Your son has recovered!" <sup>52</sup> So he asked them at what hour the child began to recover, and they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday, at about one o'clock in the afternoon."

<sup>53</sup> And the father realized that that was the time when Jesus had told him, "Your son lives!" And he became a believer, he and all his family.

<sup>54</sup> Jesus performed this second mi-

raculous sign when he returned from Judea to Galilee.

### The paralytic at the pool of Bethzatha

**5** • <sup>1</sup> After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Now, by the Sheep Gate <sup>9.7</sup> in Jerusalem, there is a pool (called Bethzatha in Hebrew) surrounded by five galleries. <sup>3</sup> In these galleries lay a multitude of sick people: blind, lame and paralyzed.

(<sup>4</sup> All were waiting for the water to move, for at times an angel of the Lord would descend into the pool and stir up the water; and the first person to enter the pool, after this movement of the water, would be healed of whatever disease that he had.)

<sup>5</sup> There was a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> Jesus saw him, and because he knew how long

really seek the truth recognize it when it is presented to them.

Jesus' second miracle in Cana concludes this second part of the Gospel in which Jesus defines himself in relation to Jewish society and its hopes.

Now begins a new section: Jesus proclaims *the work* for which he has come into this world; his Father has sent him to judge and to give life. We must first believe in the Messenger of God. This is treated in Chapters 5 and 6.

• **5.1** Why did Jesus go to the Pool of Bethzatha? It is known that the said pool was a pagan place dedicated to Aesculapius, the god of health. Rumors abounded that, from time to time, the sick were healed there. The pious Jews, scandalized that healings should occur in a pagan place, maintained that people were healed not by Aesculapius but by *an angel of the Lord*. Unscrupulous Jews went there to seek a cure even from pagan idols. Jesus, too, went there, but in search of the sinner he wished to save.

Note the sick man's first response. In this miraculous place many hoped for a cure but few were healed. By ourselves alone—*I have no one—we cannot be saved. We need a Savior.*

Jesus disappears after the miracle. Some people might have said that he was at ease in a pagan temple, or think he healed the sick in the name of their gods. Jesus will make himself known in the temple of the true God, his Father.

The Jews attacked Jesus because he "worked"

on the Sabbath day. Let us examine Jesus' reply more closely: *My Father goes on working.* It is well that people observe a day of rest to pay homage to God; yet God himself does not rest, nor is he absent from the world: he gives life to people. Being God-the-Son, Jesus should imitate God the Father instead of resting like people do. His enemies, on hearing him, were not mistaken about his claims: they wanted to kill him because he made himself *equal with God* (v. 18).

*Don't sin again...* (v. 14). Jesus reminds the sick man of his lack of faith that led him to the pagan sanctuary where he waited in vain for 38 years, just as in former times the Israelites remained secluded 38 years in the oasis of Kadesh in the desert, without being able to enter the Promised Land. John noted this coincidence. He also understood that the cure in the pool represented baptism. Jesus' remark to the healed person is addressed to those who have been converted and baptized: *Do not sin again.*

After this account the Christian faith is presented again. See commentary on John 3:11.

It should be mentioned that in these "discourses" John the Evangelist is fond of repeating key words of the discourses seven times. Here, for example, we find the words *Sabbath, Jesus, and Moses* seven times each; and the Father 14 times. John intends to contrast the Jewish religion instituted by Moses, whose major precept was the Sabbath rest, with that of the new times which Jesus came to inaugurate, wherein he enables us to know the Father.

Mt  
12:38;  
16:1;  
1Cor  
1:22

Mk 7:29

Acts  
11:14

this man had been lying there, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"<sup>7</sup> And the sick man answered, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; so while I am still on my way, another steps down before me."

Mk 2:11 <sup>8</sup>Jesus then said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk!"<sup>9</sup> And at once the man was healed, and he took up his mat and walked.

Jer 17:21 Now that day happened to be the *Sabbath*.<sup>10</sup> So the Jews said to the man who had just been healed, "It is the *Sabbath*, and the law doesn't allow you to carry your mat."<sup>11</sup> He answered them, "The one who healed me said to me, 'Take up your mat and walk!'"<sup>12</sup> They asked him, "Who is the one who said to you: Take up your mat and walk?"<sup>13</sup> But the sick man had no idea who it was who had cured him, for Jesus had slipped away among the crowd that filled the place.

Mt 9:2 <sup>14</sup>Afterward Jesus met him in the temple court and told him, "Now you are well; don't sin again, lest something worse happen to you."<sup>15</sup> And the man went back and told the Jews

that it was Jesus who had healed him.<sup>16</sup> So the Jews persecuted Jesus because he performed healings like that on the *Sabbath*.

<sup>17</sup>Jesus replied, "My *Father* goes on working and so do I."<sup>18</sup> And the Jews tried all the harder to kill him, for Jesus not only broke the *Sabbath* observance, but also made himself equal with God, calling God his own *Father*.

### The work of the Son is to give life

• <sup>19</sup>Jesus said to them, "Truly, I assure you, the Son cannot do anything by himself, but only what he sees the *Father* do. And whatever he does, the Son also does.<sup>20</sup> The *Father* loves the Son and shows him everything he does; and he will show him even greater things than these, so that you will be amazed.

<sup>21</sup>As the *Father* raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whom he wills.<sup>22</sup> In the same way, the *Father* judges no one, for he has entrusted all judgment to the Son,<sup>23</sup> and he wants all to honor the Son, as they honor the *Father*. Whoever

### • 19. THE SON AND THE FATHER, THE RESURRECTION

Jesus' opponents were surprised to see how he violated the law of the sacred rest; this, however, was only the *first intervention of Jesus* (7:21). Jesus intends to do much more than just reform religion: he has come to renew the whole of creation.

The books of the Old Testament spoke of God as only one. Now Jesus shows us a new face of God: he is Father and has sent his Son to complete his work. In all that he does, God endeavors to give us life, and the greatest of his works is the *Resurrection*.

This rising from the dead does not mean "to return to life" but to begin a new and transformed life. The dead will rise again, of course (v. 28), but we can also speak of the resurrection in the lives of those who become believers. A word of Jesus accepted in faith gives us life and later takes root in us and transforms us. Together, the Father and the Son raise us to new life. God's love, which engenders life,

reaches us through the voice of Christ (v. 25). Compare verse 25 with verse 28.

Jesus then is not only human like us. Though human, he is also divine and reveals to us another face of God. Jesus wants to replace in our minds any image of God as a jealous or paternalistic God. The Gospel shows the Father giving all his authority to a human, to Christ. This resonates with modern psychology that teaches that a person is not fully adult until he liberates himself from parental authority. Our contemporary world rightly rejects a paternalistic God.

On numerous occasions, Jesus called himself *the Son of Man* (See the explanation in Mark 8:27). Here John says a *Son of Man* (v. 27); that is a Jewish idiom which means a *human being*. By being human, Jesus saves humanity from within.

When Jesus claims to be the Son, he repeats these two affirmations in various ways:

- Everything that my Father does, I do; all that the Father has, I have.
- and: I cannot do anything by myself.

Mk 2:27

9:4;  
Mk 3:4;  
Lk 6:510:33;  
11:533:35;  
10:17;  
14:12;  
15:9;  
17:231S 2:6;  
4:17;  
Eph 2:5;  
Jn 11:25;  
3:17Acts  
10:42Phil  
2:10;  
Lk 10:16;  
1Jn 2:23



ignores the Son, ignores as well the *Father* who sent him.

<sup>24</sup>Truly, I say to you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; and there is no judgment for him, because he has passed from death to life.

<sup>25</sup>Truly, the hour is coming and has indeed come, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and, on hearing it, will live. <sup>26</sup>For the *Father* has life in himself, and he has given to the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup>And he has empowered him as well to carry out Judgment, for he is Son of Man.

<sup>28</sup>Do not be surprised at this: the hour is coming when all those lying in tombs will hear my voice <sup>29</sup>and come out; those who have done good shall rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

• <sup>30</sup>I can do nothing of myself. As I hear, so I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

<sup>31</sup>If I bore witness to myself, my testimony would be worthless. <sup>32</sup>But Another One is bearing witness to me, and I know that his testimony is true when he bears witness to me. <sup>33</sup>John also bore witness to the truth when you sent messengers to him, <sup>34</sup>but I do not seek such human testimony;

I recall this for you, so that you may be saved.

<sup>35</sup>John was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were willing to enjoy his light. <sup>36</sup>But I have greater evidence than that of John—the works which the *Father* entrusted to me to carry out. The very works I do bear witness: the *Father* has sent me.

<sup>37</sup>Thus he who bears witness to me is the *Father* who sent me. You have never heard his voice and have never seen his likeness; <sup>38</sup>therefore, as long as you do not believe his messenger, his word is not in you.

<sup>39</sup>You search in the Scriptures, thinking that in them you will find life; yet Scripture bears witness to me. <sup>40</sup>But you refuse to come to me, that you may live. <sup>41</sup>I am not seeking human praise; <sup>42</sup>but I know that the love of God is not within you, <sup>43</sup>for I have come in my *Father's* name and you do not accept me. If another comes in his own name, you will accept him. <sup>44</sup>As long as you seek praise from one another, instead of seeking the glory which comes from the only God, how can you believe?

<sup>45</sup>Do not think that I shall accuse you to the *Father*. Moses himself, in whom you placed your hope, accuses you. <sup>46</sup>If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. <sup>47</sup>But if you do not believe what

1Jn 5:9;  
Jn 2:11;  
10:25

Mt 3:17;  
Dt 4:12

Acts  
13:27

12:43;  
1Jn 2:15

1Cor 4:5

Dt 31:26

Lk 24:27

In this way, Jesus is a model for the sons and daughters of God. We also should commune with the *Father*, so that he may teach us his works: there is no Christian life without prayer, that is, without a personal relationship with God.

### • 30. THE TESTIMONY

To gain a direction in life, we need some understanding of the world and humankind. This understanding may come through reason and science, but more often we are influenced and guided by the testimony of others—by their words, attitudes and personal qualities.

It is thus that those in love discover one another, friends accept each other, a career is decided upon, a religious or political commit-

ment is made. It is also thus that the word of God is discovered. Therefore, Jesus speaks of the testimonies that accredit him:

- his works, that is, his miracles.
- John the Baptist's testimony in pointing him out as the Savior.
- the words of the Scriptures that refer to him.

Some people say that since Scripture is the word of God they do not need anything more than that to guide them. Let them know that just as God spoke through events and through prophets, he continues speaking to us through actual events and through spokespersons of the Spirit in the Church. Jesus rebuked those who believed they possessed the truth just by having

3:11;  
8:51;  
10:27;  
11:25

Mk 5:  
38-43;  
Lk 7:  
11-17

Dn 7:10

Rev  
20:13;  
1Thes  
4:16

8:13

3:26

10:25;  
15:26;  
Mt 11:7

he wrote, how will you believe what I say?

Rom  
2:17

**7** • <sup>19</sup>Moses gave you the law, didn't he? But none of you keep the law. Why, then, do you want to kill me?"

8:48;  
10:20

<sup>20</sup>The people replied, "You have a demon; who wants to kill you?"

Gen  
17:10;  
Rom  
4:11

<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them, "I performed just one deed, and you are all astounded by it. <sup>22</sup>But remember the circumcision ordered by Moses—actually it

Lk  
13:15;  
14:5

was not Moses but the ancestors who began this practice. You circumcise a man even on the *Sabbath*, <sup>23</sup>and you would break the law if you refused to do so because of the *Sabbath*. How

8:15

is it, then, that you are indignant with me because I healed the whole person on the *Sabbath*? <sup>24</sup>Do not judge by appearances, but according to what is right."

### The multiplication of the loaves

(Mk 6:34; Mt 14:13; Lk 9:10)

Mt 14:  
13-21;  
Mk 6:  
32-44;  
Lk 9:  
10-17

**6** • <sup>1</sup>After this, Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, near Tiberias, <sup>2</sup>and large crowds followed him, because of the miraculous signs they saw, when he healed the sick. <sup>3</sup>So he went up into the hills and sat down there with his disciples. <sup>4</sup>Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

<sup>5</sup>Then lifting up his eyes, Jesus saw the crowds that were coming to him, and said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread so that these people may eat?" <sup>6</sup>He said this to test Philip, for he himself knew what he was going to do. <sup>7</sup>Philip answered him, "Two hundred silver coins would not buy enough bread for each of them to have a piece."

<sup>8</sup>Then one of Jesus' disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, <sup>9</sup>"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what good are these for so many?"

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." There was plenty of grass there, so the people, about five thousand men, sat down. <sup>11</sup>Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were seated. He did the same with the fish, and gave them as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup>And when they had eaten enough, he told his disciples, "Gather up the pieces left over, that nothing may be lost."

<sup>13</sup>So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with bread, that is, with pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

<sup>14</sup>When the people saw the miracle which Jesus had performed, they said, "This is really the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world."

the Scriptures, but did not believe in him whom God was sending them (v. 38).

God instructs us in his way when we listen to what others teach us; in daily life and within the Church we meet people living according to the Spirit, whereas others only pretend to be religious and upright persons.

How then do we distinguish between what is true and what is false? How do we recognize those who speak of God's ways from personal experience? Jesus says that those who love the truth recognize those who speak the truth. Everyone values the testimony of an equal. To recognize the messengers of God, we must be the people who do not *look for praise from one another*, and thus are not enslaved by false values. Who-

ever seeks the truth and mercy will recognize a communication of the glory of God in the words and actions of God's more humble servants.

It pleases God when we recognize his witnesses. He desires everyone to honor the Son just as his Father does. By believing in his Son, we show ourselves worthy of his trust and thus become God's children, open to his life.

• **7.19 At the end of Chapter 5 we have placed the passage 7:19-24, which concludes the discourses but which, for some unknown reason, was placed after Chapter 6.**

• **6.1 See Mark 6:35.**

18:36; Mk 1:35  
 15 Jesus realized that they would come and take him by force to make him king; so he fled to the hills by himself.

Mt 14: 22-33; Mk 6: 45-52  
 16 When evening came, the disciples went down to the shore. 17 After a while, they got into a boat to make for Capernaum on the other side of the sea, for it was now dark and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 But the sea was getting rough because a strong wind was blowing.

Mt 14:27  
 19 They had rowed about three or four miles, when they saw Jesus walking on the sea, and he was drawing near to the boat. They were frightened, 20 but he said to them, "It is I! Don't be afraid!"

21 They wanted to take him into the boat, but immediately, the boat was at the shore to which they were going.

• 22 Next day, the people, who had stayed on the other side, realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples; but rather, the disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias landed near the place where

all these people had eaten the bread. 24 When they saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Master, when did you come here?"

26 Jesus answered, "Truly, I say to you, you look for me, not because of the signs which you have seen, but because you ate bread and were satisfied. 27 Work then, not for perishable food, but for the lasting food which gives eternal life. The Son of Man will give it to you, for he is the one on whom the Father has put his mark."

Is 55:2; Jn 4:14

**The bread of life;  
to believe in the Son of God**

• 28 Then the Jews asked him, "What shall we do? What are the works that God wants us to do?" 29 And Jesus answered them, "The work God wants is this: that you believe in the One whom God has sent."

30 They then said, "Show us miraculous signs, that we may see and believe you. What sign do you perform?"

Lk 11:29

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• 22. In the following pages John expands Jesus' pronouncements in the synagogue of Capernaum. Surely Jesus himself at that time did not develop so fully the doctrine on the Eucharist (vv. 48-58). There is no doubt, however, that Jesus expressed himself in a manner that scandalized his listeners. What did he say but to affirm clearly that we must go to him, for he is the true bread from whom we receive eternal life?

People struggle for adequate food, and their first preoccupation is to survive, because if they do not eat they will cease to live. We do not have life in ourselves and have to constantly depend on others for what is necessary to maintain life. In spite of everything, some day life escapes us because we have not encountered the *lasting food* (v. 27).

In fact, we need much more than bread: beyond eating and drinking, we seek something that permits us to no longer experience hunger or thirst. We will find this on the day of the resurrection, in the assembly of all the Saints in Heaven, where there will be total and perfect

peace and unity. That is precisely what the Work of the Son of Man (the Human One) is.

The discourse begins with a question from the Jews: Which are *the works* that God wants us to do? Jesus replies: *The Work* that God wants is that you believe. The Father does not demand "works," that is, the practices of a religious law, but rather, faith. In the previous chapter, Jesus declared that his work is to raise people up. Here he indicates our work: to believe in the Messenger of the Father.

The key word of the discourse is bread (or *loaves*). That is why John repeats it seven times in each section of this chapter. The expression *who has come down from heaven* appears seven times in the chapter.

• 28. Here begins the first part of the discourse: Jesus becomes our bread when we believe in him.

In the past, when the Israelites wandered in the desert and lacked everything, God gave them a provisional meal, the *manna*. They had to give thanks to him for his gifts. But if God is

<sup>Ps</sup>  
<sup>78:24;</sup>  
<sup>16:4;</sup>  
<sup>Num</sup>  
<sup>11:7</sup> <sup>31</sup>Our ancestors ate manna in the desert; as Scripture says: *They were given bread from heaven to eat.*"

<sup>32</sup>Jesus then said to them, "Truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the *bread from heaven*. My Father gives you the true *bread from heaven*.

<sup>4:15;</sup>  
<sup>Mt 6:11</sup> <sup>33</sup>The bread God gives is the One who comes from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup>And they said to him, "Give us this bread always."

<sup>Pro</sup>  
<sup>9:1-6;</sup>  
<sup>Sir 24:</sup>  
<sup>19:22;</sup>  
<sup>Is 55:1-3</sup> <sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall never be hungry, and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty.

<sup>36</sup>Nevertheless, as I said, you refuse to believe, even when you have seen.

<sup>37</sup>Yet all those whom the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I shall not turn away.

<sup>Mt 11:27</sup> <sup>38</sup>For I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the One who sent me.

<sup>39</sup>And the will of him who sent me is that I lose nothing of what he has given me, but instead that I raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>This is the will of the Father, that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall live eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day." <sup>11:24</sup>

<sup>41</sup>The Jews murmured because Jesus had said, "I am *the bread which comes from heaven*." <sup>42</sup>And they said, "This man is the son of Joseph, isn't he? We know his father and mother. How can he say that he has come from heaven?" <sup>Mk 6:3;</sup>  
<sup>Lk 4:22</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It has been written in the Prophets: *They shall all be taught by God*. So whoever listens and learns from the Father comes to me." <sup>Mt 16:17</sup>

<sup>Is 54:13;</sup>  
<sup>Jer 31:</sup>  
<sup>33-34;</sup>  
<sup>1Thes</sup>  
<sup>4:9</sup>

only our benefactor and we go to him seeking favors, we end up concerned only for what God gives us; we will hardly thank him, and later will continue to ask and complain.

This was what happened with the Israelites who, after receiving the manna, rebelled against God and *died in the desert*. Material things, although they may come from heaven, do not make us better nor do they give us true life.

For this reason, God now proposes something new. The bread that *comes down from heaven* is not something, but someone, and that is Christ. That true bread communicates eternal life to us, but to receive it, it is necessary to take a step, that is, to believe in Christ and to make a personal commitment to him.

*All those whom the Father gives me will come to me* (v. 37). Not all those who take pride in belonging to the true religion come to Christ, but only those whom the Father knows. Though the church embraces many people of all descriptions, only those to whom the Father has given this grace will find their way to the controversial and humble Christ. While acknowledging the value of the sacraments and good works, we should not forget what Jesus taught: none of our own efforts can substitute for the grace of being chosen by the Father who calls us to know his Son in truth.

*They shall all be taught by God* (v. 45). Several texts from the prophets showed in what way Jewish religion should transcend itself.

God's Covenant celebrated in Mount Sinai had given the laws through which the conscience of God's people would be educated. Then should come new times when God would teach each of his believers as he did the great prophets (Is 54:13; Jer 31:34; Jl 3:1). Jesus recalls these promises and interprets them. It is not a matter of revelations given to everyone but of a mysterious call that directs us to Jesus. In Jesus, the perfect mirror of God, we discover the will of the Father for us. Jesus is the word of God and from now on the most authentic revelations can only send us back to him.

*This man is the Son of Joseph* (v. 42). Jesus' listeners were Jews who believed in God and in the Scriptures. To believe in the prophets who were honored after their death was easy; but to recognize God's contemporary and controversial messengers, especially when the *messenger of God* was a simple carpenter was another matter. This is equally true today, for we must overcome doubts and listen to God's messengers who point out the mission of the Church in today's world. There are many who believe in the Scriptures or in Christ but refuse to listen to the Church, especially when it speaks through Christians and religious belonging to the world of the poor and of workers.

*Do not murmur* (v. 43). The Scriptures use the verb "to murmur" in Exodus and Numbers: the Israelites distrusted God and constantly criticized Moses' decisions (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3).

1:18; 7:29 <sup>46</sup>For no one has seen the Father except the One who comes from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

### The body of Christ, bread of life

• <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Though your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, they died. <sup>50</sup>But here you have the *bread from heaven*, so that you may eat of it, and not die.

Mt 26:26 <sup>51</sup>I am the living *bread from heaven*; whoever eats of this bread will live forever. The bread I shall give is my flesh, and I will give it for the life of the world.”

<sup>52</sup>The Jews were arguing among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” <sup>53</sup>So Jesus replied, “Truly, I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in

you. <sup>54</sup>The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

<sup>55</sup>My flesh is really food, and my blood is truly drink. <sup>56</sup>Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood, live in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup>Just as the Father, who is life, sent me, and I have life from the Father, so whoever eats me will have life from me. <sup>58</sup>This is the *bread from heaven*; not like that of your ancestors, who ate and later died. Those who eat this bread will live forever.”

<sup>59</sup>Jesus spoke in this way in Capernaum when he taught them in the synagogue.

### Will you also go away?

• <sup>60</sup>After hearing this, many of Jesus’ followers said, “This language is very hard! Who can accept it?”

<sup>61</sup>Jesus was aware that his disciples

### • 48. COMMUNION—THE SACRAMENTS

The second part of the discourse: Jesus becomes our bread when we eat his body in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

*How can this man give us flesh to eat?* (v. 52). Thus spoke the Israelites who distrusted God in the desert (Num 11:4 and 18). John plays on the same words and gives them a different meaning here: why would a messenger from heaven give flesh to the world, when what we need is something spiritual? Jesus answers in verse 63: this *flesh to eat* may sound like food for bodily sustenance, but it is really a sharing in the life of the risen Christ transformed by the Spirit. For that reason it *gives life* (v. 63).

Through material means the believer participates in a heavenly reality and enters into communion with the risen Christ. The Church defines *sacrament* as something material that symbolizes and brings about a spiritual reality. When we faithfully participate in a sacrament, we encounter the living Christ in person renewing our lives. In the Supper of the Lord, that is, in the Eucharist, we really receive the body and blood of Christ, in what appears to be only bread and wine. The risen Christ becomes for us the food of eternal life.

Jesus acts as living bread in us. When we eat ordinary bread our body digests and assimilates it, but when we eat *living bread* (the body of Christ), this bread *actively* changes us. Christ transforms us; gives his life to us and unites us

with himself: *Whoever eats me will have life in me.*

*Flesh and blood.* In Hebrew culture *flesh and blood* denotes the human being in his mortal condition. Jesus wants us to make our own his entire human being in its humble and mortal condition, and communicates to us his divinity. It is evident that communion only shows its full meaning if taken in the two species of bread and wine; even in the Latin Church there is no Eucharist if the celebrant at least does not communicate under the two species.

Regarding this means of Jesus’ life being transmitted to us, we are not easily convinced. We often wonder at Jesus’ words: *he who eats my flesh has life, he who does not...* We need to study the parables on the kingdom of God more closely. The gift of God, whether it be his word or the Body of Christ, is a seed so small that it may be lost or may not bear fruit. It is fruitful only in those who believe and persevere.

The sacraments we receive help us mature in the life of God; they affect the very core of our being. Sometimes we feel discouraged about the many defects and prejudices we still have despite our reception of the sacraments. We do not understand that transformation is something deep and often not immediately evident.

• 60. *This language is very hard.* How could Jesus’ listeners believe that he, the “Son of Joseph,” had come from God? And today

were murmuring about this, and so he said to them, "Does this offend you?"<sup>62</sup> Then how will you react when you see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?<sup>63</sup> It is the spirit that gives life, not the flesh. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.<sup>64</sup> But among you there are some who do not believe."

From the beginning, Jesus knew who would betray him.<sup>65</sup> So he added, "As I have told you, no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father."

<sup>66</sup> After this many disciples withdrew and no longer followed him.<sup>67</sup> Jesus asked the Twelve, "Will you also go away?"<sup>68</sup> Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.<sup>69</sup> We now believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

<sup>70</sup> Jesus said to them, "I chose you, the Twelve, did I not? Yet one of you

is a devil."<sup>71</sup> Jesus spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. He, one of the Twelve, was to betray him.

### Jesus goes up to Jerusalem

**7** • <sup>1</sup> After this, Jesus went around Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews wanted to kill him.<sup>2</sup> Now the Jewish feast of the Tents was at hand.<sup>3</sup> So the brothers of Jesus said to him, "Don't stay here; go instead to Judea and let your disciples see the works you are doing.<sup>4</sup> Anyone who wants to be known doesn't work secretly. Since you are able to do these things, show yourself to the world."

<sup>5</sup> His brothers spoke like this because they didn't believe in him.<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.

<sup>7</sup> The world cannot hate you; but it hates me because I bear witness and I

3:11;  
2Cor 3:6;  
Gal 6:8;  
1Cor  
15:45  
13:11

Mt 16:16;  
Lk 22:28

Mk 1:24

2:4;  
7:30;  
8:20

15:18;  
3:19

how can we believe that we need the Eucharist? Jesus tells us why he came: The Son of God came down to us, so that later he would ascend to where he was before. He came from God to communicate to us the very life of God and then to bring us to the bosom of God (Jn 14:12).

The truth is that by Christ's resurrection, our world has already started its renewal. For when the Son of Man entered the glory of his Father, he carried on his shoulders the whole of creation that he wanted to renew and consecrate. Clothed in our humanity, the Son of God has ascended to where he was before: the first of our race has achieved full union with God.

Although, to all appearances, life goes on as before, we believe that the renewed world has been activated. The Spirit is at work within gigantic disturbances that continually agitate and shake the whole of humanity. Christ is invincibly consecrating this world. He enables humanity to arrive at maturity by means of innumerable crises and deaths that prepare for a resurrection.

Jesus' listeners could not understand (v. 61) the mystery of the Son of God and his humiliations. Jesus wanted to dispossess himself of his divine glory by becoming human and dying like a slave (see Jn 1:14 and Phil 2:6), so that later the Father would enable him to ascend to where he came from. It is likewise a test of our faith to believe that God continually works among us in our world. In spite of our unresponsiveness,

God still loves us; the Church is so unworthy, yet God uses it to fulfill his plan; history is so destructive, yet it is preparing us for the fullness of the kingdom.

*It is the spirit that gives life, not the flesh* (v. 63). Jesus spoke of giving us his flesh, but this should not be understood as a continuation of the Jewish religion, in which the meat of sacrificed animals was eaten. In Hebrew culture, *flesh and blood* denote "the world below," where humankind moves and where one has no access to communication with God. The Eucharist is different. This is the body, or flesh, of the risen Christ transformed by the Spirit, which acts in us spiritually and brings us into communion with God.

*Lord, to whom shall we go?* (v. 68). Many of Jesus' followers left but, in the name of those who remained, Peter pledged his fidelity (see also Mt 16:13).

• **7.1** Jesus moves people to question his identity. It is better to question than to belong to a group that does not question because they think they already know. The brothers of Jesus were like that.

*Show yourself to the world* (v. 4). These brothers of Jesus were the families and townspeople of Nazareth (see Mk 3:31). These people were to enter the Church after Jesus' resurrection, and thought themselves important merely because of

show that its deeds are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the feast! I am not going to this feast, because my time has not yet come.”

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said these things, and remained in Galilee. <sup>10</sup>But after his brothers had gone to the festival, he also went up, not publicly but in secret.

<sup>11</sup>The Jews were looking for him at the festival and asked, “Where is he?”

<sup>12</sup>There was a lot of talk about him among the people. Some said, “He is a good man,” but others replied, “No, he is misleading the people.” <sup>13</sup>For fear of the Jews no one spoke openly about him.

<sup>14</sup>When the festival was half over, Jesus went to the temple and began to teach. <sup>15</sup>The Jews marveled and said, “How is it, that he knows Scriptures when he has had no teacher?”

<sup>16</sup>And Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but it comes from the One who sent me. <sup>17</sup>Anyone who does the will of God shall know

whether my teaching is from God, or whether I speak on my own authority.

<sup>18</sup>Those who speak on their own authority wish to gain honor for themselves. But the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is truthful, and there is no reason to doubt him.”

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vv. 19 -24 have been placed after Chapter 5 . See footnote there.

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• <sup>25</sup>Some of the people of Jerusalem said, “Is this not the man they want to kill? <sup>26</sup>And here he is speaking freely, and they don’t say a word to him? Can it be, that the rulers know that this is really the Christ? <sup>27</sup>Yet we know where this man comes from; but when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.”

<sup>28</sup>So Jesus announced in a loud voice in the temple court where he was teaching, “You say that you know me and know where I come from! I

their former association with Jesus; but at that time they were still very far from understanding his mission. They wanted Jesus to be known for his miracles; but Jesus chose, rather, to reveal himself to those who could enter into the mystery of death that leads to glory.

*My time has not yet come...* (v. 6). Let us note here two types of persons: one type lives according to their plans, and the other type allow themselves to be guided by the Spirit. For the former, one time is as good as another; because they have no experience of the calling of God, they act impetuously and when they feel like it. Those who are guided by the Spirit wait for signs indicating that this is God’s time. Whatever is undertaken in God’s time will bring glory to God.

Like Jesus, John was a Jew. He was surrounded by Jews converted to the Christian faith. He consistently calls his unbelieving compatriots *Jews*. We would be mistaken if we thought he is designating here all the Jews. With this name of Jews he points out the religious, political and social ambiance that did not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah.

Those Jews adhered to an established social order and to a certain manner of understanding life and religion that was common in their time. It was social and religious formalities that were important to them; they were interested in God

only in the measure to which they had made him the defender of these things (Mt 23:29).

#### • 25. SALVATION—SEEKING THE TRUTH

Who is Jesus? It is very important for us to know who Jesus is and from where he comes because, unlike the founders of other religions, he offers us the unheard of gift of sharing in God’s very life. If Jesus does not come from God, of what value is this promise?

We need to discover for ourselves who Jesus is, because it is only in this way that we will be saved.

As a person he attracts us, but his words shock us. When Jesus proclaims that the kingdom is at hand, that we are sons and daughters of God, we think he uses figures of speech since the reality appears to be quite different. In time, with more experience and suffering, we modify our viewpoint and discover that the world and people are just as he describes them. We then acknowledge him as Savior. In another way, we are saved because we have acquired the capacity to see things as God does. Hence, when we wish to help others arrive at faith, it is better at times to refrain from discussions about religion. They must first enter into themselves to discover the wellspring of life. One cannot advance in the knowledge of Christ without advancing in knowledge of oneself.

9:22

Mk 6:2;  
Acts  
4:13

3:11

8:50;  
5:41

5:18

9:29;  
Mk  
12:35;  
Mk 5:1;  
Mt 1:68:19;  
19:9

have not come of myself; I was sent by the One who is true, and you don't know him. <sup>29</sup>I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."

8:55

Lk 4:29;  
Jn 2:11

<sup>30</sup>They would have arrested him, but no one laid hands on him because his time had not yet come. <sup>31</sup>Many people in the crowd, however, believed in him and said, "When the Christ comes, will he give more signs than this man?"

<sup>32</sup>The Pharisees heard all these rumors among the people; they and the chief priests sent officers of the temple to arrest him. <sup>33</sup>Jesus then said, "I shall be with you a little longer; after that, I shall go to him who sent me. <sup>34</sup>You will look for me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come."

Am 8:11;  
Is 55:6

<sup>35</sup>The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go, where we shall not find him? Will he go abroad to the Jews dispersed among the Greek nations, and teach

13:36;  
Acts  
11:20

the Greeks also? <sup>36</sup>What does he mean when he says, 'You will look for me and not find me,' and, 'Where I am going you cannot come'?"

16:16;  
Dt 4:29

### The promise of living water

• <sup>37</sup>On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me; <sup>38</sup>and let the one who believes in me drink, for the Scripture says: *Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.*"

4:10;  
19:34;  
Rev  
21:6;  
22:17;  
Is 55:1;  
Ezk 47:1;  
Zec 13:1

<sup>39</sup>Jesus was referring to the Spirit, which those who believe in him were to receive; the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.

15:7;  
16:7;  
20:22;  
Acts  
19:2

### Dispute on the origin of Christ

<sup>40</sup>Many who had been listening to these words began to say, "This is the Prophet." <sup>41</sup>Others said, "This is the Christ." But some wondered, "Would the Christ come from Galilee?"

6:14;  
Dt 18:15

*We know where this man comes from (v. 27).* So these Jews thought they knew who God was and what his plans were; but, in reality, they interpreted everything according to their own views and remained closed to the Truth. Standing before them, Jesus claimed to be the Envoy of God. In speaking like this he was not looking for a title to become credible, but wanted to emphasize his total dependence on the Father and his intimate knowledge of him.

*You will look for me and you will not find me (v. 34).* This is the same warning God gave through earlier prophets (Jer 13:16). Once again, Jesus applies to himself scriptural words and prerogatives reserved for God.

#### • 37. THE COMMUNICATION OF THE SPIRIT

*Spirit had not yet been given.* In Wisdom 1:7, however, we read, "the Spirit of God fills the universe." Actually God never ceased communicating himself. His Spirit enters into a person's spirit whom he awakens, animates and impels. At all times he has been active in the artists, thinkers and heroes, and is also present in the spirit of people of upright heart.

The Spirit is not poured out like water. The Spirit of God becomes one with the spirit of the one who receives him. As long as we do not

know God in truth, the Spirit comes "over" us, as occurred with the liberators of Israel, who did not necessarily become better for having been an instrument of God (Jdg 11:29). Only after *Jesus had entered into his glory* could he give his Spirit to those who would be united with him.

*Spirit had not yet been given (v. 39).* Many manuscripts read: *There was no Spirit.* In fact the meaning is the same. In this second way of speaking *spirit* refers to the manifold communications of God's Spirit.

This ambiguity sounds strange to believers, who consider the Spirit to be a divine Person. Of course, the Spirit is as much person and as much God as the Father and the Son are, but the Spirit's manner of being God and person and One is not the same. The Spirit is "communication of God dispensed" to all creatures through all times. He is somehow able to distribute himself, dwelling in each creature with different gifts; then he brings them back to unity in God. Because of this, Scripture sometimes says: "the Spirit," at other times: "spirit" (Lk 1:15; Acts 6:3), or even: "the spirits" (Rev 1:4; 3:1).

Out of him shall flow rivers of living water. Compare 4:10. Bread and water: the Body of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In verse 38 we read: *Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.*



Pss 89:4; Mic 5:1 <sup>42</sup>Doesn't Scripture say that the Christ is *a descendant of David and from Bethlehem, the city of David?*" <sup>43</sup>The crowd was divided over him. <sup>44</sup>Some wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

<sup>45</sup>The officers of the temple went back to the chief priests, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him?"

Mt 13:54 <sup>46</sup>The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man." <sup>47</sup>The Pharisees then said, "So you, too, have been led astray! <sup>48</sup>Have any of the rulers or any of the Pharisees believed in him?" <sup>49</sup>Only these cursed people, who have no knowledge of the law!"

12:42; 1Cor 1:26 <sup>50</sup>Yet one of them, Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier, spoke out, <sup>51</sup>"Does our law condemn people without first hearing them and knowing the facts?" <sup>52</sup>They replied, "Do you, too, come from Galilee? Look it up and see for yourself that no prophet is to come from Galilee."

Dt 17:4 <sup>53</sup>And they all went home.

### The adulteress

**8** <sup>1</sup>As for Jesus, he went to the Mount of Olives.

Lk 21:37; Mt 26:55 <sup>2</sup>At daybreak Jesus appeared in the temple again. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.

<sup>3</sup>Then the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand in front of everyone. <sup>4</sup>"Master," they said, "this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup>Now the law of Moses orders that such women be stoned to death; but you, what do you say?" <sup>6</sup>They said this to test Jesus, in order to have some charge against him.

Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup>And as they continued to ask him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who has no sin be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup>And he bent down, again, writing on the ground.

<sup>9</sup>As a result of these words, they went away, one by one, starting with the elders, and Jesus was left alone, with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" <sup>11</sup>She replied, "No one." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go away and don't sin again."

### I Am the light of the world

<sup>12</sup>Jesus spoke to them again, "*I am the Light of the world; the one*"

• **8.1** The selection 8:1-11 is not found in most ancient manuscripts of John's Gospel. Many think that this selection is from other sources. Perhaps it did belong to the gospel of Luke (compare 8:2 and Lk 21:38) and was later inserted in John's text.

If Jesus showed such respect to the sinner and refused to condemn her, as humans would, was it because he did not consider her fault grave? No, it was because God uses different ways than people do to bring sinners to repentance and to purify them through suffering.

There is a big difference between telling a person his ideas or deeds are wrong or sinful, and condemning him. We usually condemn the person; we do not make room for change and mercy. In this Gospel episode Jesus is both demanding and merciful towards the woman.

It seems that certain pages in John's Gospel have shifted. We already remarked that the selection 7:19-24 is really a continuation of Chapter 5.

Also, the discourse 8:12-29 seems to be a continuation of the miracle story related in Chapter 9. After healing the blind man and proving the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees, Jesus declares: *I am the light*. Jesus' pronouncement: hence I have just told you that *you will die in your sins* (v. 24), reminds us of the saying in 9:41.

### • 12. THE LIGHT

Jesus is the light for all people of all times. God guided the Hebrews in the desert by means of a luminous cloud. He guides us through his Son; whoever follows Jesus *will not walk in darkness*.

who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have light and life.”

5:31 <sup>13</sup>The Pharisees replied, “Now you are speaking on your own behalf, your testimony is worthless.”

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus said, “Even though I bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I have come from and where I am going. But you do not know where I came from or where I am going.

<sup>15</sup>You judge by human standards; as for me, I don’t judge anyone. <sup>16</sup>But if I had to judge, my judgment would be valid for *I am* not alone: the Father who sent me is with me. <sup>17</sup>In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid; <sup>18</sup>so I am bearing witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me.”

Dt 17:6;  
Num  
35:30

5:32

<sup>19</sup>They asked him, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You don’t know me or my Father; if you knew me, you would know my Father as well.”

12:45;  
16:3

<sup>20</sup>Jesus said these things when he was teaching in the temple area, in the place where they received the offerings. No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Mk  
12:41

<sup>21</sup>Again, Jesus said to them, “*I am* going away, and though you look for me, you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come.” <sup>22</sup>The Jews wondered, “Why does he say that we can’t come where he is going? Will he kill himself?”

7:33;  
13:36

Am 8:11;  
Pro 1:22

<sup>23</sup>But Jesus said, “You are from below and *I am* from above; you are of this world and I am not of this world.”

3:31

Light means many good things: the welcome light of dawn after a night of darkness; the electric lights which illumine our homes while darkness reigns outside; the street lights which shine for everyone, poor and rich alike; the light that triumphs over the dark forces of evil and ignorance. Christ is all that and more for whoever follows him. He is the light by which we live with wholeness and integrity, and through whom we learn to attribute to material things and human activities their proper value.

By the light of Christ a person triumphs over all inner darkness. We are conscious of only a small part of our inner self; we often obey impulses not under our control that come from our nature. Good intentions animate us, and we have a clean heart (so we think), but we do not realize that actually we often obey the call “of flesh and blood,” as Scripture puts it. If we live in the light, the light will gradually illumine our innermost being.

Part of the human condition aggravated by sin is the absence of light for seeking and discerning what is good. Therefore, in serious matters, it is not wise to simply follow our first impulse. We need to be continuously enlightened through prayer, listening to the word of God, studying the teaching of the Church, and accepting the good advice of our brothers and sisters. By these means Jesus enlightens our conscience.

### I AM

In this discourse Jesus gives witness to his own divinity. He makes us understand that in him there is a mysterious secret regarding his origin. On this page we read the expression *I*

*am* seven times. John wishes us to understand that this is the key word of the discourse. *I AM*. It was thus God designated himself, speaking to Moses. We know that the Jews called God, *Yahweh*, that is, *He who is*. Jesus declares: “*I am*,” thus claiming for himself the name that should not be given to any creature, no matter how prominent the person might be. There are Christians (e.g. the Witnesses of Jehovah) who would make Christ less than he is. They argue that since God is only one, how can the fullness of divine life be shared among three persons. While they call Christ the Son of God, they deny that he is God born of God. Yet Jesus *IS* as much as the Father, and must not be confused with the Father, hence he says: *The Father sent me*, and also: *The testimony of two persons is worthy* (in the Jewish law code).

*You will die in your sin* (vv. 21 and 24). Sin is not just doing something bad. Sin is, also, to enclose ourselves in our own petty problems and rely only on human wisdom, without opening ourselves to the horizons of God. This eventually leads to death, for a life closed to God is no real life. Scripture divides people into two groups: *those from above*, who seek God’s ways, and *those from below*, who seek limited human goals. Sin is to refuse to allow oneself to be *born again from above*, as Jesus told Nicodemus (3:3). These Jews did not believe in Jesus, because his way of life and his message reflected a world of transcendent values—beyond this world—that did not attract them. Jesus would have wasted his time with them; the wisdom of God would be better revealed in his death on the cross (v. 28).

Is 43:11 <sup>24</sup>That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. And you shall die in your sins, unless you believe that *I am He*.”

<sup>25</sup>They asked him, “Who are you?”; and Jesus said, “Just what I have told you from the beginning. <sup>26</sup>I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the One who sent me is truthful and everything I learned from him, I proclaim to the world.”

<sup>27</sup>They didn’t understand that Jesus was speaking to them about the Father.

3:14; 12:32 <sup>28</sup>So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that *I am He* and that I do nothing of myself, but I say just what the Father taught me. <sup>29</sup>He who sent me is with me and has not left me alone; because I always do what pleases him.”

16:32

### The children of truth

• <sup>30</sup>As Jesus spoke like this, many believed in him. <sup>31</sup>Jesus went on to say to the Jews who believed in him, “You will be my true disciples, if you keep my word. <sup>32</sup>Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” <sup>33</sup>They answered him, “We are the descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves of anyone. What do you mean by saying: You will be free?”

Lk 3:8

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, “Truly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave. <sup>35</sup>But the slave doesn’t stay in the house forever; the son stays forever. <sup>36</sup>So, if the Son makes you free, you will be really free.

Rom 6:17; 1Jn 3:8

Gen 21:10; Gal 4:30; Rom 6:18; 2Cor 3:17

<sup>37</sup>I know that you are the descen-

Mt 21:38

### • 30. THE TRUTH—FREEDOM—SIN

Jesus spoke to the Jews who believed in him. Those Jews believed in Jesus according to their own view of him, very much like the Jews whom Paul would oppose in Galatians 3–4 did. From Jesus’ discussions with those who claimed to have the true religion, we can surmise how Jesus would confront us were he to pass among us today.

Jesus would not reproach us so much for our sins, as for our continuing to live *in sin*. Sins are evil deeds that at times may be excusable; often we repent of them as soon as we have committed them. To be in sin, on the other hand, is to live in falsehood; it is to persist stubbornly in a certain pride, an attachment to our own judgments. This attitude prevents us from entering into the ways of God, even though to all appearances we live an upright life and proclaim our faith.

Jesus is not a banner for every social group, whether known as Catholic or by some other name, with which we go to fight other groups. He has come as a king of the kingdom of *truth*. Those who seek the truth are his, whatever their ideas may be. Rather, those *who live in truth* are his.

For those Jews the world was divided into two groups: the *sons of Abraham*, that is themselves, and the rest. They boasted of their ancestry and forgot that in God’s eyes, each one is what he is.

Jesus comes to them as a witness to the truth; and his presence alone obliges all to examine themselves. The truth Jesus speaks of is not a doctrine that his followers should impose by force. Propagandists with arguments and biblical

quotations are not needed, but witnesses who speak from their experience. Jesus says: *The truth will set you free*, and: *the Son makes you free* (vv. 32 and 36). Our truth consists in living in accordance with our vocation as children of God.

The believer who knows he is loved by God and consequently endeavors to be authentic is already in the truth, even if he retains some prejudices common to his milieu, or is unconsciously guided by some lies or illusions in his way of living.

Jesus also speaks of *freedom*. Truth and freedom go together. Many individuals and people have not spared themselves in an effort to break their chains. Once liberated they quickly fall into other forms of subjugation, because the root of all slavery lies within everyone.

By doing evil one becomes an accomplice of the Devil and, even without wanting to do so, falls into a trap. He will then be unable to resist the illusions and harmful influences by which the Father of Lies brings the world under his power (v. 44).

As long as we continue to be unconcerned about our true condition and are either agitated or idle, we are no more than slaves, even though we may excel in wealth, knowledge or status. We thus add to the population of the world of *below* (v. 23), which is unstable. Generations of slaves will follow like the waves of the sea: slaves are people who *are for a time* in the house (v. 35). Christ enables us to enter yet another world, the *world above* in which the sons and daughters stay forever (v. 35). From the time we become children of God, everything we do bears fruit for eternity.

dants of Abraham; yet you want to kill me because my word finds no place in you. <sup>38</sup>For my part, I speak of what I have seen in my Father's presence, but you do what you have learned from your father."

<sup>39</sup>They answered him, "Our father is Abraham." Then Jesus said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do as Abraham did. <sup>40</sup>But now you want to kill me, the one who tells you the truth—the truth that I have learned from God. That is not what Abraham did; <sup>41</sup>what you are doing are the works of your father."

The Jews said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one Father, God." <sup>42</sup>Jesus replied, "If God were your Father you would love me, for I came forth from God, and I am here. And I didn't come by my own decision, but it was he himself who sent me. <sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand my teaching? It is because you cannot bear my message.

<sup>44</sup>The father you spring from is the devil, and you will carry out the evil wishes of your father, who has been a murderer from the beginning. He didn't uphold the truth for, in him, there is no truth; and now, when he speaks for himself, he lies. He is a liar and the father of lies.

<sup>45</sup>Now I speak the truth and you don't believe me. <sup>46</sup>Who among you can find anything false in me? Then, if I speak the truth, why do you not believe me? <sup>47</sup>He who is of God hears the words of God; you don't hear because you are not of God."

<sup>48</sup>The Jews retorted, "So we are right in saying that you are a Samari-

tan and are possessed by a demon." <sup>49</sup>Jesus said, "I am not possessed, and you try to shame me when I give honor to my Father. <sup>50</sup>I don't care about my own glory; there is One who cares for me and he will be the judge.

<sup>51</sup>Truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never experience death." <sup>52</sup>The Jews replied, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died and the prophets as well, but you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never experience death.' Who do you claim to be? <sup>53</sup>Do you claim to be greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets who also died?"

<sup>54</sup>Then Jesus said, "If I were to praise myself, it would count for nothing. But he who gives glory to me is the Father, the very one you claim as your God, <sup>55</sup>although you don't know him. I know him, and if I were to say that I don't know him, I would be a liar like you. But I know him and I keep his word.

<sup>56</sup>As for Abraham, your ancestor, he looked forward to the day when I would come; and he rejoiced when he saw it."

<sup>57</sup>The Jews then said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?" <sup>58</sup>And Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." <sup>59</sup>They then picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and left the temple.

### Jesus heals the man born blind

**9** • <sup>1</sup>As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him,

keep their own ideas and "their own" belief and refuse to believe in the messenger of God.

One way of deepening our understanding of this chapter would be to observe the Jewish people's reactions to the miracle. Some open

Is 63:16;  
64:8

Gen  
3:4;  
Wis  
2:24;  
Rom  
5:12;  
1P 5:8;  
1Jn 3:8

10:26;  
18:37

Sir  
50:26

5:41;  
1P 2:23

11:25;  
14:23

Lk 10:22

Gen  
17:17;  
Mt 13:17

1:1;  
1:30

Ezk  
18:20;  
Lk 13:2

### • 9.1 TO BELIEVE IS TO SEE

Jesus is the light: the blind man sees the light of day. Jesus is the light, but people are divided about him. Some are open to the light, that is, to faith; others remain blind, that is to say, they

"Master, was he born blind because of a sin of his, or of his parents?"

<sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, "Neither was it for his own sin nor for his parents' sin. He was born blind so that God's power might be shown in him. <sup>4</sup>While it is day we must do the work of the One who sent me; for the night will come when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

11:9;  
12:35

8:12;  
12:46;  
Is 49:6

Mk 8:23

Is 8:6

<sup>6</sup>As Jesus said this, he made paste with spittle and clay, and rubbed it on the eyes of the blind man. <sup>7</sup>Then he said, "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam." (This word means *sent*.) So the blind man went and washed and came back able to see.

<sup>8</sup>His neighbors, and all the people who used to see him begging, wondered. They said, "Isn't this the beggar who used to sit here?" <sup>9</sup>Some said, "He's the one." Others said, "No, but he looks like him." But the man himself said, "I am he." <sup>10</sup>Then they asked him, "How is it, that your eyes were opened?" <sup>11</sup>And he answered,

"The man called Jesus made a mud paste, put it on my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went, and washed, and I could see." <sup>12</sup>They asked, "Where is he?" and the man answered, "I don't know."

<sup>13</sup>The people brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees.

Mt  
12:10;  
Lk 14:1

<sup>14</sup>Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made mud paste and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup>The Pharisees asked him again, "How did you recover your sight?" And he said, "He put paste on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup>Some of the Pharisees said, "That man is not from God, for he works on the Sabbath"; but others wondered, "How can a sinner perform such miraculous signs?" They were divided, <sup>17</sup>and they questioned the blind man again, "What do you think of this man who opened your eyes?" And he answered, "He is a prophet!"

Mt 16:14

<sup>18</sup>After all this, the Jews refused to believe that the man had been blind and had recovered his sight; so they called his parents <sup>19</sup>and asked

themselves to the light, that is, to faith; while others prefer to follow their own lights. This Gospel story shows us the blind man who immediately understands the significance of the cure, the fearful and pragmatic parents, and the Pharisees who do nothing but judge and are unaware that they condemn themselves as they judge.

The Gospel opens up to us another way of interpreting the miracle: the one who begins to see is the believer (see vv. 4, 39-41).

*Master, was he born blind because of a sin of his, or of his parents?* (v. 2). Jesus refuses to consider every misfortune as God's punishment. The healing of the blind man was performed on the Sabbath. So people wonder if God will side with the law forbidding work on that day, or with the man who performed such a good work. The Pharisees defend the law, as is to be expected from people who are closer to the written word and more distant from human needs.

*You don't know where the man comes from?* Who live in such a way that they are able to receive the truth? It is quite understandable that the Pharisees cast out the blind man, because faith in Christ necessarily separates the believer from those who do not recognize the way God is working.

Many people think that faith is an illusion. They think faith is a cover-up of reality and that what is real is limited to material things, only that which is seen, touched, counted or measured.

Truth is different. The believer sees the same things that others see and know; but besides that, she captures something that escapes those who lack faith. A special sense is needed to see beyond the material world.

Christian faith is more than belief in a God higher than us. Faith is an ability to know by the light of Christ everything that is true, either in the goals or the means people use. The faithful one sees whatever other people see, but also perceives something that is out of their reach. We should not think that to believe or not to believe is a matter of minor importance in the struggles of life. Even when fighting together with non-Christians for concrete goals, we will hardly agree on what is more important.

With the coming of Christ a sentence, or judgment, is carried out (v. 39). This means that humanity begins to be divided, because all must take a position in respect to him. Jesus judges people, or rather, we are those who judge ourselves when we accept or reject him.

them, "Is this your son? You say that he was born blind, how is it, that he now sees?" <sup>20</sup>The parents answered, "He really is our son and he was born blind; <sup>21</sup>but how it is that he now sees, we don't know, neither do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is old enough. Let him speak for himself."

7:13;  
12:42

<sup>22</sup>The parents said this because they feared the Jews, who had already agreed that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ was to be expelled from the synagogue. <sup>23</sup>Because of that his parents said, "He is old enough, ask him."

<sup>24</sup>So, a second time, the Pharisees called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Tell us the truth; we know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup>He replied, "I don't know whether he is a sinner or not; I only know that I was blind and now I see." <sup>26</sup>They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup>He replied, "I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

<sup>28</sup>Then they started to insult him. "Become his disciple yourself! We are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup>We know that God spoke to Moses; but as for this man, we don't know where he comes from."

<sup>30</sup>The man replied, "It is amazing that you don't know where the man comes from, and yet he opened my

eyes! <sup>31</sup>We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone honors God and does his will, God listens to him. <sup>32</sup>Never, since the world began, has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person who was born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Ps  
66:18;  
Is 1:15;  
Pro  
15:29

<sup>34</sup>They answered him, "You were born a sinner and now you teach us!" And they expelled him.

Ps 51:5

<sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had expelled him. He found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup>He answered, "Who is he, that I may believe in him?" <sup>37</sup>Jesus said, "You have seen him and he is speaking to you." <sup>38</sup>He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped him.

<sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "I came into this world to carry out a judgment: Those who do not see shall see, and those who see shall become blind." <sup>40</sup>Some Pharisees stood by and asked him, "So we are blind?" <sup>41</sup>And Jesus answered, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty. But you say, 'We see'; this is the proof of your sin."

8:12;  
12:47;  
Mt 13:13;  
Lk 18:14;  
1Cor  
1:20  
Mt 15:14

3:36;  
15:22;  
Sir  
18:13;  
Rev  
7:17;  
Num  
15:30

### The good shepherd

**10** • <sup>1</sup>Truly, I say to you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup>But the shepherd of the sheep enters by the gate. <sup>3</sup>The keeper opens the gate to him and the sheep hear his

Mic 2:12

Ps 95:7

### • 10.1 COUNTRY WITHOUT FRONTIERS

Thanks to the parable of Jesus, we can imagine one of those sheepfolds in which the flocks of various shepherds are gathered together for the night under the vigilance of one caretaker. At dawn, each calls his sheep and leads them out.

Scripture foretold the day in which God would come to gather together the dispersed sheep of his people, so that they would live in their land. Jesus is the *Shepherd* and he has come to accomplish what was announced, but he will not do it in the expected way. The Jews thought

that the Shepherd would revive their former prosperity: they would again be a privileged nation among other nations.

Jesus says clearly that his people are not to be thought of as identical to the Jewish nation. Those who believe, and only they, are his. He will take from among the Jews those who are his; likewise, he will take sheep *which are not of this fold* as well (v. 16), that is, from among nations other than the Jewish nation. Therefore, he will lead them all and will guide this flock—which is not a nation with land boundaries—to

voice; he calls each of his sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>A stranger they will not follow, but rather they will run away from him, because they don't recognize a stranger's voice."

<sup>6</sup>Jesus used this comparison, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>7</sup>So Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, I am the gate of the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came were thieves and robbers, and the sheep did not hear them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved; he will go in and out freely and find food.

<sup>10</sup>The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy, but I have come that they may have life, life in all its fullness.

<sup>11</sup>I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup>Not so the hired hand, or any other person who is not the shepherd, and to whom the sheep do not belong. They abandon the sheep as soon as they see the wolf coming; then the wolf snatches and scatters the sheep. <sup>13</sup>This is because the hired hand works for pay and cares nothing for the sheep.

<sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>as the Father knows me and I know the Father. Because of this, I give my life for my sheep.

<sup>16</sup>I have other sheep which are not of this fold. These I have to lead as well, and they shall listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, since there is one shepherd.

<sup>17</sup>The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down freely. It is mine to lay down and to take up again: this mission I received from my Father."

<sup>19</sup>Because of these words, the Jews were again divided. <sup>20</sup>Many of them said, "He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?" <sup>21</sup>But others said, "A man possessed doesn't speak in this way. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

### Jesus claims to be the Son of God

<sup>22</sup>The time came for the feast of the Dedication. It was winter, <sup>23</sup>and Jesus walked back and forth in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup>The Jews then gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in doubt? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." <sup>25</sup>Jesus

where he knows. The only *flock* (not the only "fold", as people say), that is, the only Church, moves freely through history, not confined to any one nation or era of civilization.

The shepherds of the Jewish people thought they could achieve unity by promoting national pride, by maintaining the privileges of the "higher" castes, and by discriminating against non-Jews. Jesus unites his people solely by attracting them to himself, by letting people experience who he is. All who are attracted to him, *know his voice* and believe his word are his.

People willingly gather around great figures, whether they be leaders or saints. When a people have neither frontiers, arms, language, nor laws to defend themselves against external and internal dissension, the presence of a Shepherd or leader is even more essential. Faith in Christ unites us far better than does fidelity to traditions of the past or solidarity with co-religionists.

Christ's people are not a mass; nor is it Humanity with a capital H. They are composed of persons who have begun an adventure with Jesus of mutual trust and love. *I know my own and they shall listen to my voice* (vv. 14 and 16).

When Scripture speaks of the Shepherd, it usually refers to God himself, the only king of Israel, but sometimes means the King-Messiah sent by God. Jesus spoke of only one shepherd. Though distinct from the Father, he is one with him (v. 30).

In the Scriptures angels are sometimes called sons of God, and Jesus remarks that the rulers are called gods. Because of this, Jesus did not like to be proclaimed Son of God. He speaks forcefully in saying: *the Father is in me, and I in the Father*: equal to equal (v. 38). At the same time that he stresses his divine power (vv. 15, 18, 29, 38), he also affirms his total dependence on the Father. In this we recognize God the Son.

Mic 2:12

Jer 23:1;  
Ezk 34:2Ps 23;  
Is 49:9Is 40:11;  
Ezk  
34:15;  
37:24;  
Zec  
11:17;  
Acts  
20:29;  
1P 5:21Cor  
8:2;  
13:12;  
Gal 4:9;  
2Tim  
2:19;  
Mt 11:25Phil 2:6;  
Jn 14:31;  
15:10;  
Rev 5:91Mac  
4:36Acts  
3:11;  
5:12

8:25

answered, "I have already told you, but you do not believe. <sup>26</sup>The works I do in my Father's name proclaim who I am, but you don't believe because, as I said, you are not my sheep.

<sup>27</sup>My sheep hear my voice and I know them; they follow me <sup>28</sup>and I give them eternal life. They shall never perish, and no one will ever steal them from me. <sup>29</sup>What my Father has given me, is greater than all things else. To snatch it out of the Father's hand, no one is able! <sup>30</sup>I and the Father are One."

<sup>31</sup>The Jews then picked up stones to throw at him; <sup>32</sup>so Jesus said, "I have openly done many good works among you, which the Father gave me to do. For which of these do you stone me?"

<sup>33</sup>The Jews answered, "We are not stoning you for doing a good work, but for insulting God; you are only a man, and you make yourself God."

<sup>34</sup>Then Jesus replied, "Is this not written in your law: *I said, you are gods?* <sup>35</sup>So those who received this word of God were called gods, and the Scripture is always true. <sup>36</sup>What then should be said of the one anointed, and sent into the world, by the Father?

Am I insulting God when I say, 'I am the Son of God'?"

<sup>37</sup>If I am not doing the works of my Father, do not believe me. <sup>38</sup>But if I do them, even if you have no faith in me, believe because of the works I do; and know that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

<sup>39</sup>Again they tried to arrest him, but Jesus escaped from their hands. <sup>40</sup>He went away again to the other side of the Jordan, to the place where John had baptized, and there he stayed.

<sup>41</sup>Many people came to Jesus, and said, "John worked no miracles, but he spoke about you, and everything he said was true." <sup>42</sup>And many in that place became believers.

### The raising of Lazarus

**11** • <sup>1</sup>There was a sick man named Lazarus who was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>This is the same Mary, who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was sick.

<sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent this message to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." <sup>4</sup>On hearing this, Jesus said, "This illness will not end in death; rather it is

• **11.1** This is the seventh and last miracle of Jesus recorded in John's Gospel. Intentionally, the first words are designed to present the sick man: Lazarus personifies the person wounded by sin, who is in process of dying unless Christ calls him to life.

Lazarus came back to life! Let us not be astounded that Lazarus had the good fortune to live for a few more years and the misfortune of having to die again. This noticeable miracle only foretells the true resurrection that does not just prolong life but transforms our entire being. The resurrection is spiritual. It begins when faith moves a person to give up wrong ways of living and become open to receiving God's life.

The Jews believed in the resurrection of the dead on the last day, as Martha mentioned (v. 24). They thought a divine force would come to shake the universe and open the tombs so the dead could come out. In reality, the resurrection of the dead comes about through someone, the

Son of God, who has in himself all the power needed to raise people to life and to transform creation. One who lives in submission to Christ *has already passed from death to life* (5:24) and, because of this, *will never die* (v. 26).

All the persons mentioned here called Jesus "Master," but John has them say *Lord*. In this way he teaches us that this miracle of Lazarus recalled to life is an image of the glorious resurrection of Jesus, the Lord. (Regarding this term "the Lord" which is one of the strongest proofs of the faith of the early Church in the divinity of Jesus, see the commentary in Acts 2:36.)

The Jews wanted to stone Jesus (v. 8), but it was legally difficult for them to take Jesus prisoner. They could do this only in the province of Jerusalem, where their religious communities and political organization were strong. As long as Jesus remained on the other side of the Jordan, he was secure. The resurrection of Lazarus hastened the time of Jesus' death and glorification.

1Cor  
2:14;  
Jn 6:37

6:39;  
17:2;  
17:12;  
18:9;  
Dt 32:39;  
Rom  
8:33;  
1P 1:15

8:59

Mk  
14:64

Ps 82:6;  
1Cor 8:5

Jer 1:5

8:59

Mk 10:1

12:1;  
Lk 10:38

2:11;  
9:33



for God's glory, and the Son of God will be glorified through it."

<sup>5</sup>It is a fact that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus; <sup>6</sup>yet, after he heard of the illness of Lazarus, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup>Only then did he say to his disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." <sup>8</sup>They replied, "Master, recently the Jews wanted to stone you. Are you going there again?"

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to them, "Are not twelve working hours needed to complete a day? Those who walk in the daytime shall not stumble, for they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But those who walk at night stumble, for there is no light in them."

<sup>11</sup>After that, Jesus said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up." <sup>12</sup>The disciples replied, "Lord, a sick person who sleeps will recover." <sup>13</sup>But Jesus had referred to Lazarus' death, while they thought that he had meant the repose of sleep. <sup>14</sup>So Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead; <sup>15</sup>and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup>Then Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four

days. <sup>18</sup>As Bethany is near Jerusalem, about two miles away, <sup>19</sup>many Jews had come to Martha and Mary, after the death of their brother, to comfort them.

<sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary remained sitting in the house. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." <sup>23</sup>Jesus said, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup>Martha replied, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection, at the last day." <sup>25</sup>But Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection. Whoever believes in me, though he die, shall live. <sup>26</sup>Whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup>Martha then answered, "Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup>After that, Martha went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The Master is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup>As soon as Mary heard this, she rose and went to him. <sup>30</sup>Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.

<sup>31</sup>The Jews, who were with Mary in the house consoling her, also came.

*The twelve working hours* (v. 9). Jesus will complete the twelve hours of his journey, that is, of his mission, without fear of the risks involved. Those who, like him, walk by day, that is, in accordance with the divine plan, will not stumble; Christ will be for them *the light of the world*.

*I have come to believe that you are the Christ* (v. 27). What more extraordinary profession of faith is there than Martha's! It is like Peter's (Mt 16:16), and in a short while it will be Mary who will tell about the resurrection to the same apostles. Truly the Gospel is not male chauvinist, nor does it enthrone ecclesiastical hierarchy.

*Father, I thank you ...* (v. 41). This act of thanksgiving is the only one we read in John,

aside from the long prayer in Chapter 17 that is full of praise for the Father. We read another such prayer in Luke 10:21. These recorded acts of thanksgiving may seem very few, considering that thanksgiving is an essential attitude of a Christian, but Jesus expressed his act of thanksgiving in all he did. In his mortal existence, he dispossessed himself of his own will and power so that the Father could use him for his greater glory (Jn 12:27-28).

*Untie him* (v. 44). For burial the Jews bound their dead with linen. This word "to untie" means something more, it was the expression used by the primitive Church in referring to forgiveness of sins. Like Lazarus, one who receives pardon returns to life.

7:8;  
9:48:12;  
12:35Mk 5:39;  
Lk 8:52Acts  
7:60Mk  
10:32Dn 12:1;  
Acts  
24:15;  
Jn 5:28;  
6:39

1Jn 3:14

Mt 16:16

When they saw her get up and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep.

<sup>32</sup>When Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “*Lord*, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” <sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping, who had come with her, he was moved to the depths of his spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup>Then he asked, “Where have you laid him?” They answered, “*Lord*, come and see.” <sup>35</sup>Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup>The Jews said, “See how he loved him!” <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, “If he could open the eyes of the blind man, could he not have kept this man from dying?”

<sup>38</sup>Jesus, again deeply moved, drew near to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, “Take the stone away.”

Martha said to him, “*Lord*, by now he will smell, for this is the fourth day.”

<sup>40</sup>Jesus replied, “Have I not told you that, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” <sup>41</sup>So they removed the stone.

Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you, for you have heard me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that you hear me

always; but my prayer was for the sake of these people, that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup>When Jesus had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”

<sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Untie him, and let him go.”

### The plot to kill Jesus

• <sup>45</sup>Many of the Jews who had come with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw what he did; <sup>46</sup>but some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup>So the chief priests and the Pharisees called together the Council.

They said, “What are we to do? For this man keeps on performing many miraculous signs. <sup>48</sup>If we let him go on like this, all the people will believe in him and, as a result of this, the Romans will come and destroy our Holy Place and our nation.”

<sup>49</sup>Then one of them, Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! <sup>50</sup>It is better to have one man die for the people than to let the whole nation be destroyed.”

### • 45. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Caiaphas' words were fulfilled but not in the sense he intended. Jesus was going to die to gather into one the scattered children of God (v. 52).

The worldwide effect of Christ's resurrection is to unite all of humanity in renewed creation—as Jesus himself put it, “when I'm lifted up from earth I shall draw all to myself” (Jn 12:32). That is to say, the cross and resurrection are the source of communion and fraternity.

The Church reunites believers of all races and cultures: we call it “Catholic,” that is, universal. This Church, however, is but a beginning and a sign of that which will be attained at the end of time, when the whole of humanity will be reunited in Christ (Rev 7).

In our world, preventing people from grouping together to discuss and understand their situ-

ation perpetuates the oppression of rural and urban masses. This hidden violence opposes unity. Some current ideologies promote a struggle for liberation that attempts to unite people by targeting adversaries and continually deciding on whom to expel. There, too, the seed of violence (for both murder and exclusion are violence) gives birth to more oppressive societies.

Christians should be the first to notice we are living in an exceptional century in which, for the first time, all people share the same history and must accept a common destiny, either willingly or by force. This awareness enables them to see and to indicate the goals of human effort. They must ponder all of human reality, and even international relationships, in the light of the Gospel and not waste all their energy in projects of aid for the poor.

Lk 19:  
41-42

1:14;  
2:11;  
4:23;  
17:1;  
Mt 14:19

1K18:36

5:26

19:40;  
20:5

Lk 16:31

Mt 26:3

15:24;  
Acts  
4:16

<sup>51</sup>In saying this Caiaphas did not speak for himself, but being High Priest that year, he foretold like a prophet that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup>and not for the nation only, but also would die in order to gather into one the scattered children of God. <sup>53</sup>So, from that day on, they were determined to kill him.

<sup>54</sup>Because of this, Jesus no longer moved about freely among the Jews. He withdrew instead to the country near the wilderness, and stayed with his disciples in a town called Ephraim.

<sup>55</sup>The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and people from everywhere were coming to Jerusalem to purify themselves before the Passover.

<sup>56</sup>They looked for Jesus and, as they stood in the temple, they talked with one another, "What do you think? Will he come to the festival?" <sup>57</sup>Meanwhile the chief priests and the elders had given orders that anyone who knew where he was should let them know, so that they could arrest him.

### The supper at Bethany

(Mt 26:6; Mk 14:3)

**12** • <sup>1</sup>Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany,

where he had raised Lazarus, the dead man, to life. <sup>2</sup>Now they gave a dinner for him, and while Martha waited on them, Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>Then Mary took a pound of costly perfume, made from genuine spike-nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair. And the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

<sup>4</sup>Judas Iscariot—the disciple who was to betray Jesus—remarked, <sup>5</sup>"This perfume could have been sold for three hundred silver coins, and the money given to the poor." <sup>6</sup>Judas, indeed, had no concern for the poor; he was a thief, and as he held the common purse, he used to help himself to the funds.

<sup>7</sup>But Jesus spoke up, "Leave her alone. Was she not keeping it for the day of my burial?" <sup>8</sup>(The poor you always have with you, but you will not always have me.)"

<sup>9</sup>Many Jews heard that Jesus was there and they came, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup>So the chief priests thought about killing Lazarus as well, <sup>11</sup>for many of

• **12.1** Matthew and Mark also relate the incident at a supper when Mary showed her passionate love for Jesus. She loved him with all her strength, and her love, far from blinding her, made her sense and respect the mysterious personality of Jesus.

Not all the apostles understood her gesture, because they still had much to learn about loving Christ.

Like Judas we often speak of *giving to the poor*. Yet the Lord's command is not to give but to love. To love the poor is to reveal to them their call from God, and to help them grow as persons by overcoming their weaknesses and divisions and by fulfilling the mission God entrusted to them. The poor will live the Gospel and witness to it in the world. If we are not among them, we need conversion and true poverty to discover with them the kingdom. How can we really love the poor unless we have passionate love for Jesus? When we do not, we prefer to speak only of giving to the poor.

*Six days before the Passover.* Mark and Matthew give the impression that this supper happened two days before the Passover, not six (Mt 26:2; Mk 14:1). The evangelists also disagree regarding the date of the Passover. While John declares that Jesus died on the eve of the Passover (Jn 19:14), the other three say that the Last Supper took place on the same day that the Jews celebrated the Passover. According to a very ancient tradition that various Oriental churches still maintain, Jesus could have celebrated the Last Supper, not on Thursday, but on Tuesday. His trial would then have lasted two days: Wednesday and Thursday. (That seems much more probable than having all the sessions of the double trial of Jesus in the one morning of Friday). He would die on Friday, as all the texts affirm.

A possible explanation for these disagreements might be the following: The Passover is celebrated in accordance with the new moon which is not a fixed date, nor is it determined

10:16

7:1

2:13;  
6:4;  
Num 9:6;  
Acts  
21:24

Mk 14:1

Mt 26:  
6-13;  
Mk 14:  
3-911:2;  
Lk 10:40

Lk 7:37

13:29;  
Lk 8:3

19:40

Dt 15:11

the Jews were drifting away because of him, and believing in Jesus.

### The Messiah enters Jerusalem

Mt 21: 1-9; Mk 11: 1-10; Lk 19: 28-38

<sup>12</sup>The next day, many people who had come for the festival heard that Jesus was to enter Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him. And they cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"

<sup>14</sup>Jesus found a donkey and sat upon it, as Scripture says: <sup>15</sup>*Do not fear, city of Zion! See, your king is coming, sitting on the colt of a donkey!*

<sup>16</sup>The disciples were not aware of this at first, but after Jesus was glorified, they realized that this had been written about him, and that this was what had happened to him.

<sup>17</sup>The people who came with him bore witness, and told how he had called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead. <sup>18</sup>It was because of this miraculous sign, which Jesus had given, that so many people welcomed him. <sup>19</sup>In the meantime the Pharisees said to one another, "We

are getting nowhere; the whole world has gone after him."

### Unless the grain dies

• <sup>20</sup>There were some Greeks who had come up to Jerusalem to worship during the feast. <sup>21</sup>They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup>Philip went to Andrew, and the two of them told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.

<sup>25</sup>Those who love their life destroy it, and those who despise their life in this world save it even to everlasting life.

<sup>26</sup>Whoever wants to serve me, let him follow me; and wherever I am, there shall my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

• <sup>27</sup>Now my soul is in distress. Shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But, to face all this, I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from

according to the same criteria by everyone. Hence, in certain years some religious groups celebrated it three days before others. Jesus could have celebrated the Passover on the eve of Wednesday, while the majority of the people celebrated on the eve of Saturday.

Three hundred denarii would be nearly a year's salary for a laborer.

• 20. Several foreigners (called Greeks because of their language) were converted to the faith of the Jews. Though they did not observe the Jewish laws, they were accepted in the temple of Jerusalem where a courtyard, (separate from that of the Jews) was reserved for them. The question from those Greeks offers Jesus the opportunity to announce that his kingdom will be extended through the whole earth, when he will have been raised on the cross.

*Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies (v. 24).* Jesus will die and the univer-

sal Church will be born. Jesus allows his lifeless body to be laid in the earth; on rising from the tomb, his same body, now glorified, will also embrace the believers united to him. The life that is now his will be communicated to all the children of God.

*Unless the grain dies.* This is the law for all life that will be fruitful (Mk 8:34). The first believers were already saying: "The blood of the martyrs is a seed."

• 27. This page of John's Gospel records both Jesus' transfiguration (Mk 9:2) and agony in Gethsemane (Mk 14:32).

*Then a voice came (v. 28).* While Jesus was in the midst of the noisy crowd a noise erupted: a message from heaven or simply a noise? This event, insignificant perhaps for the historian, was like the fleeting presence of reality breaking through the illusory scene in which most people are caught up. The fact that the people

7:35

13:31; 17:1; Is 53:10; Mt 16:21; 1 Cor 15:36

Mk 8:35; Lk 17:33

7:34; 14:3; 17:24; Mt 16:24

16:21; 18:11; Mk 14:34; Heb 5:7

Mk 9:7; Lk 3:22

heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

<sup>29</sup>People standing there heard something and said it was thunder; but others said, "An angel was speaking to him."

<sup>30</sup>Then Jesus declared, "This voice did not come for my sake but for yours."

<sup>31</sup>Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be cast down. <sup>32</sup>And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself."

<sup>33</sup>With these words Jesus referred to the kind of death he was to die.

<sup>34</sup>The crowd answered him, "We have been told in the law that the Messiah stands forever. How can you say that the Son of Man shall be lifted up? What kind of Son of Man is that?"

<sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, "The light will be with you a little longer. Walk

while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. <sup>36</sup>While you have the light, believe in the light and become children of light."

After Jesus had said this, he withdrew, and kept himself hidden.

### The unbelief of the Jews

• <sup>37</sup>Even though Jesus had done so many miraculous signs among them, they didn't believe in him. <sup>38</sup>Indeed the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah had to be fulfilled: *Lord, who has believed what we proclaimed? To whom have the ways of God the Savior been made known?*

<sup>39</sup>They could not believe. Isaiah had said elsewhere: <sup>40</sup>*He let their eyes become blind and their hearts hard, so*

misunderstood his message, and that later they would deliver him up to their rulers, has become of minor importance to Jesus. He looks beyond all that. Jesus knows that he cannot save the nation from historical failure, but he understands that his death will change the course of world events: he will conquer where the destiny of humankind is to be played out.

From the beginnings of our history, the ruler of this world, the Spirit of Evil, has obscured in humankind the capacity to recognize God. God has directed the whole of creation towards a progressive growth in maturity until the birth of the New Creature. Because of sin this birth comes about in a world characterized by suffering, indifference and slavery.

The only way to salvation is to return to obedience, not "to God," but to *the Father*. And Christ had to open the way through his sacrifice: *to face all this, I have come to this hour (v. 27).*

We easily forget that the purpose of our life is to glorify God. We do not glorify God principally by constructing temples or by singing: "Glory to God!" but by making ourselves pleasing and living sacrifices to God. A bishop and martyr of the primitive Church, St. Irenaeus, wrote: "God is glorified when people are fully alive: but for a person to be fully alive is to see God."

A sacrifice is a surrender of something for the sake of something or someone else. Our sacrifice is to allow God to be our life, to make us like him and to prepare us to reflect his own glory. This indeed requires sacrifice because God makes us pass through a death to attain this life.

Through obedience to God's will, we are freed of our selfishness and the limits of our present condition, and we are prepared for another and everlasting state. God is glorified when his children attain glory, that is to say, attain his own perfection and are transformed through fire and the Holy Spirit.

### • 37. AN IRREPARABLE CHOICE

Jesus' life of preaching is coming to an end. John later finds it difficult to understand how God's chosen people could remain so blind regarding their Messiah. John tries to search out the meaning of this refusal by using two texts from the prophets:

The first is a long poem dedicated to the Servant of Yahweh, a voluntary victim for the sake of his people (Is 53:1). It shows us that people do not willingly accept a humiliated Savior.

The second text shows how the rejection of Christ could have been foreseen. Indeed, the ancient prophets were also ignored while they were living, thus fulfilling a mysterious plan of God.

John stresses the sin of the majority who were not committed to Christ, although within themselves they secretly respected him. Somehow the Jewish people suspected that Jesus came from God, but to believe in what he claimed and asked was another matter.

For us, too, to believe in the Gospel is to take a stand; we cannot pass by the Church Jesus founded even though it may not be totally transparent. His word comes to us amidst numerous preoccupations, and most often we feel inclined

Acts 23:9;  
Lk 22:43

3:19;  
9:39

14:30;  
16:11;  
Lk 10:18;  
Rev 12:9

3:14;  
8:28

18:32;  
21:19

Ps 89:5;  
110:4;  
Is 9:6;  
Dn 7:14

7:33;  
8:12;  
9:4;  
12:46;  
Jer 13:16

11:10;  
Eph 5:8;  
1Thes 5:5

Dt 29:1;  
Mt 11:20

Is 53:1;  
Rom 10:16

Is 6:  
9:10;  
Mt 13:14;  
Acts 28:26

that they could neither see nor understand, nor be converted—otherwise, I would have healed them. <sup>41</sup>Isaiah said this when he saw the his glory, and his words refer to him.

<sup>42</sup>Many of them, however, believed in Jesus, even among the rulers, but they did not acknowledge him because of the Pharisees, lest they be put out of the Jewish community. <sup>43</sup>They preferred the favorable opinion of people, rather than God's approval.

<sup>44</sup>Yet Jesus had said, and even cried out, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in him who sent me. <sup>45</sup>And whoever sees me, sees him who sent me. <sup>46</sup>I have come into the world as light, so that who-

ever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

<sup>47</sup>If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I am not the one to condemn him; for I have come, not to condemn the world, but to save the world. <sup>48</sup>The one who rejects me, and does not receive my words, already has a judge: the very words I have spoken will condemn him on the last day.

<sup>49</sup>For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father, who sent me, has instructed me what to say and how to speak. <sup>50</sup>I know that his commandment is eternal life, and that is why the message I give, I give as the Father instructed me."

## SECOND PART: JESUS COMPLETES HIS WORK

**13** • <sup>1</sup>It was before the feast of the Passover. Jesus realized that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father; and as he had loved those who were his own in the world, he would love them with perfect love.

### Jesus washes his disciples' feet

• <sup>2</sup>They were at supper, and the devil had already put into the mind of

Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray him. <sup>3</sup>Jesus knew that the Father had entrusted all things to him, and as he had come from God, he was going to God. <sup>4</sup>So he got up from the table, removed his garment, and taking a towel, wrapped it around his waist. <sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.

to respond: "I'll see later!" When we neglect his word, we often think it is not grave. Actually it is God and his truth that we reject and we may not have another occasion to receive it. All eternity is decided today.

There is absolutely nothing in the Scriptures that support the belief that we will have other lives in order to repair our errors of today. If so many people of our time have grasped this belief in a succession of lives, it is above all because it encourages them to delay making real decisions; the devil takes charge of spreading this belief.

• **13.1** Here begins the second half of John's Gospel.

In the first half, through signs and discourses Jesus foretold the work he was going to accomplish in the world and the glory that would be

given him after he would be "raised On High." Now *Jesus' hour has come*, in which he will realize all that was announced.

The second half begins with the farewell discourses of Jesus at the Last Supper.

Just as in the previous chapters each of Jesus' discourses begins with a miracle, the farewell discourses narrated in Chapters 14–17 have, as a point of departure, the extraordinary act of the "washing of the feet." This gesture contains two lessons:

- the need to purify ourselves before participating in the Supper of the Lord.
- how the commitment of love is to be put into practice.

### • 2. THE PENITENTIAL RITE

John does not narrate the institution of the

8:56;  
Is 6:1;  
1Cor  
10:4

7:31

5:44

13:20;  
Mt 10:40

14:7

3:19;  
8:12;  
9:5

5:19;  
6:57;  
7:17

Di 31:26;  
Jn 6:40;  
17:2

12:12;  
Jn 2:4

10:18;  
16:28;  
17:5;  
Lk 9:51;  
Gal 2:20

Lk  
12:37;  
17:7

Mt 26:20

Lk 7:44

<sup>6</sup>When he came to Simon Peter, Simon asked him, "Why, *Lord*, do you want to wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup>Jesus said, "What I am doing you cannot understand now, but afterward you will understand it." <sup>8</sup>Peter replied, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Mt 16:22

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you can have no part with me." <sup>9</sup>Then Simon Peter said, "*Lord*, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!"

15:3;  
Eph 5:26

<sup>10</sup>Jesus replied, "Whoever has taken a bath does not need to wash (except the feet), for he is clean all over. You are clean, though not all of you." <sup>11</sup>Jesus knew who was to betray him; because of this he said, "Not all of you are clean."

<sup>12</sup>When Jesus had finished washing their feet, he put on his garment again, went back to the table, and said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup>You call me *Master* and *Lord*, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup>If I, then, your *Lord* and *Master*, have washed your feet, you also must wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>I have given you an example, that as I have done, you also may do.

Lk  
22:27;  
1Tim  
5:101P 5:5;  
1Jn 3:16;  
Phil 2:5;  
Eph 5:2;  
Col 1:13

<sup>16</sup>Truly, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his master, nor is the messenger greater than he who sent him. <sup>17</sup>Understand this, and blessed are you, if you put it into practice.

Mt  
10:24;  
Lk 6:40;  
Jn 15:20

<sup>18</sup>I am not speaking of you all, because I know the ones I have chosen, and the Scripture has to be fulfilled which says: *The one who shares my table will rise up against me.* <sup>19</sup>I tell you this now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may know that I am He.

Ps 41:10

14:29;  
Mt 24:25

<sup>20</sup>Truly, I say to you, whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the One who sent me."

Mt 10:40;  
Gal 4:14

<sup>21</sup>After saying this, Jesus was distressed in spirit, and said plainly, "Truly, one of you will betray me."

Mt 26:  
21-25;  
Mk 14:  
18-21;  
Lk 22:  
21-23

<sup>22</sup>The disciples then looked at one another, wondering whom he meant. <sup>23</sup>One of the disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining near Jesus; <sup>24</sup>so Simon Peter signaled him to ask Jesus whom he meant.

19:26;  
20:2;  
21:7

<sup>25</sup>And the disciple, who was reclining near Jesus, asked him, "*Lord*, who is it?" <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered, "I shall dip a

21:20

Eucharist, but the washing of the feet and what follows (vv. 26-30) may be seen as an obscure allusion to the Eucharist.

*He began to wash the disciples' feet* (v. 5). The poor among the Jews walked barefoot while the rest wore sandals. A traditional gesture of welcome was to order a servant to wash the feet of the traveler (see Gen 18:4). The apostles did not have servants, but that night Jesus chose to be their servant.

Jesus did not intend merely to make the apostles clean and comfortable. His washing of their feet was a sacred act that symbolized purifying them just as baptism does. The apostles were already in the grace of God: the word of Jesus that they received with faith *had purified them* (15:3). They needed more preparation, however, before sharing the bread of life at the table of their Lord. All religions observe some preparatory or purification rites before offering sacred things to their members. Jews, for example, observed purification rites before participating in the Passover meal.

Jesus was no less demanding: he himself washed the feet of his apostles. He did not ask them to confess their sins; all he wanted was that they would humbly allow him, their Lord, to wash their feet.

This act reminds us at once of the sacraments of Baptism and Penance. There, bonds of humility and mercy are forged both for the one who purifies and for those purified. Henceforth the apostles *will do what their Lord did* before them, since *he will send them* in his name to forgive sins. They are not to act as hierarchical officials or judges granting pardon to sinners but to take the first step in humility and mercy, in order to likewise purify those who approach the Supper of the Lord.

The word *Lord* appears seven times in this chapter. With this in mind we understand that by washing the feet of his apostles Jesus performed a significant act which shows us, in a most surprising way, who our Lord and God is, and how he acts.

piece of bread in the dish, and he to whom I give it, is the one.”

Lk 22:3 So Jesus dipped the bread in the dish and gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. <sup>27</sup>As Judas took the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus then said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”

12:6 <sup>28</sup>None of the others, reclining at the table, understood why Jesus had said this to Judas. <sup>29</sup>As Judas had the common purse, they may have thought that Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or, 12:35; Lk 22:53 “Give something to the poor.” <sup>30</sup>Judas left as soon as he had eaten the bread. It was night.

12:23; 17:1 <sup>31</sup>When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup>God will glorify him, and he will glorify him very soon.

1:14; 7:39; Phil 2:9 <sup>33</sup>My children, I am with you for only a little while; you will look for me, but as I already told the Jews,

now I tell you: where I am going you cannot come. <sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment: Love one another! Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

<sup>36</sup>Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but afterward you will.” <sup>37</sup>Peter said, “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I am ready to give my life for you.” <sup>38</sup>“To give your life for me?” Jesus asked Peter. “Truly I tell you, the cock will not crow, before you have denied me three times.”

### I’m going to the Father

**14** • <sup>1</sup>“Do not be troubled! Trust in God and trust in me! <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house there are many rooms; otherwise, I would not have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>After I have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall come again and

### • 33. CHRISTIAN LOVE

*I give you a new commandment* (v. 34). That is to say, a commandment appropriate for the advent of a new era. The Old Testament spoke of interior fidelity to God and love of neighbor, but this message often remained hidden among the complexities of the law. Besides, there are many ways of loving: even a fanatically religious person can claim to be loving God. In the New Testament Jesus says that love of God is the highest law. The example given by the Lord during his earthly life reminds us of the way to love.

Love that is like God’s aims at liberating our neighbor and enabling her to fully develop her God-given gifts. Love like the Lord’s helps the neighbor become what God wishes her to be, by passing through death to resurrection.

Moreover, when we go deeper into the mystery of divine love revealed to us through Jesus, our love becomes merged with the eternal love of God that alone, in the end, shall permeate all we do. True love comes from God and makes us return to unity within God.

Time and again, Jesus points out the unique importance of Christian love. Later, his apostles (e.g., 1 Jn 4:7 ff.) and the Church would sum up his teaching on love: Love of God is shown

through love of our neighbor, love of our neighbor depends on love of God. What is it really to love God? The great saints and mystics of the Church tell us that love of God is not “to feel God,” to feel devotion or affection for God. Christian love lies not in sentiment or feelings (though on some occasions we might feel affection or devotion, which is helpful); to love God is to be determined to do what God wishes at each moment of our lives. What God wishes of us regarding our neighbor is that we render loving service and forgiveness.

### • 14.1 THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

After the washing of the feet, John continues with Jesus’ three farewell discourses to his apostles. Those who had lived intimately with him for several months, would soon need to discover another way of living with the risen and present, though invisible, Christ. “I was *with* you,” says Jesus (vv. 9 and 25); henceforth, “I will be in you.” The first of these discourses is found in Chapter 14.

Jesus’ ascension to the Father was not just an individual achievement, but opened for all of us a way to our house, not situated high above us, but in God. There are many mansions (v. 2), that means that there is also a place for us: not

15:12

Lk 10:  
26-27;  
Gal 6:2;  
1 Jn 2:7;  
4:11;  
5:1;  
Acts 4:32

21:18

Lk 22:  
31-34Mt 26:  
33-35;  
Mk 14:  
29-31Dt 1:  
29-33;  
Jn 14:27;  
16:3317:24;  
Heb  
6:20;  
Phil 1:23;  
1 Thes  
4:17



take you to me, so that where I am, you also may be. <sup>4</sup>Yet you know the way where I am going.”

<sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going; how can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me. <sup>7</sup>If you know me, you will know the Father also; indeed you know him, and you have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup>Philip asked him, “Lord, show us the Father, and that is enough.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “What! I have been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever sees me sees the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

All that I say to you, I do not say of myself. The Father who dwells in me is doing his own work. <sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and

the Father is in me; at least believe it on the evidence of these works that I do.

<sup>12</sup>Truly, I say to you, the one who believes in me will do the same works that I do; and he will even do greater than these, for I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>Everything you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>Indeed, anything you ask, calling upon my name, I will do it.

<sup>15</sup>If you love me, you will keep my commandments; <sup>16</sup>and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup>the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he is with you, and will be in you.

<sup>18</sup>I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup>A little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me, because I live and you

just one mansion for everybody, but a place for each one, because Heaven is not like a performance which is the same for everyone in the audience. God’s radiance will draw from each one the resonance only he can bring forth. Each one will be in his own mansion, being in communion with all.

Now, knowing what is the goal, we should walk towards this definitive communion. “*I am the way,*” says Jesus. He became human precisely so that we might see the Father in him. He followed his way, so disconcerting for us, so that, meditating on his actions, we would progress towards the truth. Although in the beginning we may not understand him well, with time, we will discover the Lord and understand that his way is ours. Passing through the cross and death, we will achieve our own *truth* and arrive at *life*.

*I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, and you in me* (vv. 11 and 20). Christ makes us enter into the divine family. Thus, we no longer speak of approaching God as if he were far from us. We no longer feel as if God were a single person in front of us. We enter “into” the mysterious life of the divine Persons who share everything and who are the one and only God. Material things cannot penetrate each other; but in the world of the spirit such is possible. Christ is in the *Father* and the *Father* in *him*. *They make their home within us*.

In the introduction to the Gospel, John explained that all of God’s actions in the world should be understood in the light of the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son. Now he adds that the presence of God in us is due to another person, the Holy Spirit. Neither the Father alone, whom no one has seen, nor the Son, who made himself known, can enter into communion with people. They can, however, do so by means of the Spirit, whom we should call: God who is *communicated*. Hence we call *spiritual life* everything that refers to our relationship with God.

The spiritual life includes three elements:

- keeping the words of Jesus: meditating on them, putting them into practice and letting them take root in our soul.

- then, instructed by the Spirit regarding what we should ask in Jesus’ name, let us ask, with all confidence, for those things that he himself desires.

- finally, let us do the same things he did. He did not multiply good works, but completed that which his Father asked him to do, even when his obedience would seem to us a vain sacrifice.

*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper* (v. 16). Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit whom he calls the *Paraclete*. This Greek word has several meanings. Here we use *Helper*. The Spirit helps the believers and inspires their prayer so that it may be heard (Rom 8:26).

Heb  
10:20;  
Mt 11:27

8:19;  
12:46

33:18

10:38;  
17:21

Mt 21:21

15:16;  
16:24;  
Acts  
3:16

Dt 6:4;  
Wis 6:18

14:26;  
15:26;  
16:7;  
Rom  
8:26

8:21;  
16:16

will also live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

<sup>21</sup>Whoever keeps my commandments is the one who loves me. If he loves me, he will also be loved by my Father; I too shall love him and show myself clearly to him.”

<sup>22</sup>Judas—not Judas Iscariot—asked Jesus, “Lord, how can it be that you will show yourself clearly to us and not to the world?” <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him; and we will come to him and live with him. <sup>24</sup>But if anyone does not love me, he will not keep my words; and these words that you hear are not mine, but the Father’s who sent me.

<sup>25</sup>I told you all this while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup>From now on the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I have told you.

<sup>27</sup>Peace be with you! My peace I give to you; not as the world gives

peace do I give it to you. Do not be troubled! Do not be afraid! <sup>28</sup>You heard me say, ‘I am going away, but I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

<sup>29</sup>I have told you this now before it takes place, so that when it does happen you may believe. <sup>30</sup>There is very little left for me to tell you, for the prince of this world is at hand, although there is nothing in me that he can claim. <sup>31</sup>But see, the world must know that I love the Father, and that I do what the Father has taught me to do. Come now, let us go.

### The vine and the branches

**15** • <sup>1</sup>I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower. <sup>2</sup>If any of my branches doesn’t *bear fruit*, he breaks it off; and he prunes every branch that does *bear fruit*, that it may bear even *more fruit*.

<sup>3</sup>You are already made clean by the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Live in me as I live in you. The branch

Because of this the apostles, who have seen him as a man among humans in the time of his humiliation, should now rejoice.

*The Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name* (v. 26). Compare with 15:26. The Holy Spirit proceeds as much from the Father as from the Son being, with them, only one God.

• **15.1** In this second farewell discourse, Jesus invites us to remain steadfast in the midst of the world. The discourse is divided into four parts:

- the parable of the vine: I have sent you to produce fruit.
- the world will hate you.
- the work of the Holy Spirit.
- in a little while you will see me again.

First, the parable of the vine. Jesus uses an image from the Scripture, but he changes the original meaning, as he did before when speaking of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1). The vine represents the people of Israel. Planted from selected stock, cared for by the Lord, it should have produced fruits of justice (Mk 12:1).

*Now the true Vine* has taken root. Christ is the trunk from which the *branches* sprout, that is to say, all of us who live by him. He is also

Rev  
3:20;  
Pro 8:17;  
2Cor  
6:16;  
Eph 3:17

14:16;  
15:26;  
16:13

2Thes  
3:16;  
Rom 5:1;  
Eph 2:14;  
Phil 4:7

13:19;  
Phil 2:7

12:31

Mk  
14:41

Jer  
2:21;  
Is 5:1;  
Ps 80:9

Sir  
24:17;  
Mt 3:10;  
15:13;

*The Helper* (or *Interpreter*) will teach you (v. 26). The Spirit enables us to understand and interpret Jesus’ words throughout all time.

*Lord, how can it be that you will show yourself clearly to us and not to the world?* (v. 22). Judas thought that Jesus meant he would summon them for secret meetings, but Jesus really meant he would make himself known to them through interior teaching and by letting them experience peace.

*For the Father is greater than I* (v. 28). This does not contradict what John teaches throughout the whole Gospel about Jesus’ divinity. This is to be read together with 5:18; 10:30; 16:15, if we want to know something of the mystery of Christ, “true God,” as spoken of in Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; and 1 John 5:20.

As early as the fourth century Saint Hilary, the great bishop and defender of the faith, wrote: “The Father is greater because of being the one who gives. As he gives the Son all that he himself is, yet the Son is not inferior to the Father.”

Moreover, it is characteristic of the Son to deny himself so that he may give glory to the Father, until the Father gives him back “the glory he had before” as said in 17:5 and 6:62.

Acts 15:9; Rom 11:17 cannot *bear fruit* by itself, but has to remain part of the vine; so neither can you, if you don't remain in me.

1Cor 12:12 <sup>5</sup>I am the vine and you are the branches. As long as you remain in me and I in you, you *bear much fruit*; but apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not remain in me is thrown away, as they do with branches, and they wither. Then they are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned.

Mk 11:24; 1Jn 5:14 <sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask whatever you want, and it will be given to you.

Mt 5:16; Phil 1:11 <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified when you *bear much fruit*: it is then that you become my disciples.

<sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love!

14:15; 1Jn 2:5; 5:3 <sup>10</sup>You will remain in my love if you keep my commandments, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

16:20; 1Jn 1:4 <sup>11</sup>I have told you all this, that my own joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you! <sup>13</sup>There is no greater love than this, to give one's life for one's

friends; <sup>14</sup>and you are my friends, if you do what I command you.

<sup>15</sup>I shall not call you servants any more, because servants do not know what their master is about. Instead, I have called you friends, since I have made known to you everything I learned from my Father. Lk 12:4; 33:11

<sup>16</sup>You did not choose me; it was I who chose you and sent you to go and *bear fruit*, fruit that will last. And everything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. 6:70; 13:18; Rom 6:20-23

<sup>17</sup>This is my command, that you love one another.

### The hostile world

• <sup>18</sup>If the world *hates* you, remember that the world *hated* me before you. <sup>19</sup>This would not be so if you belonged to the world, because the world loves its own. But you are not of the world, since I have chosen you from the world; because of this the world *hates* you. Mt 10:22; Mk 13:13; Jn 17:14; 1Jn 3:13

<sup>20</sup>Remember what I told you: the servant is not greater than his master; if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours as well. <sup>21</sup>All this 13:16; Lk 6:40

the entire plant, trunk and branches together: Christians are really the body of Christ.

The vine was the people of Israel, and what mattered more to them was the collective conduct of the community as one body. What mattered was not the individuals but Israel. Now Jesus does not say: The Christian community is the vine, but: *I am the vine*. So each of us has to consider how he is joined with Jesus through faith, prayer, and keeping his word. Each one has to bear fruit. Jesus does not specify what these fruits should be: whether service, understanding, action for social justice, or a life silently offered to God. Rather he insists that these fruits should come from the Spirit and bear his proper seal. The success of the Church is not measured by its achievements, but by the progress of those who interiorize Christ's mystery and share in his cross and resurrection.

After making it clear that we depend totally on him, Jesus repeats his commandment of love. There is a necessary order in building the Christian life.

If from the start we say: We should love our neighbor because this is the only commandment, we will achieve nothing; because each one understands love in his own way, while not having as yet interiorized the thinking of Christ. Moreover, we need to receive from the source of all love the ability to love selflessly. Christ asks us to first share his thinking: that is what the expression, *keep my commandments* means. Thus we become his friends, knowing him as a person who loves us and acts in us. Later we will produce the authentic fruit of love, whose source is Christ.

• 18. In spite of Jesus' having returned to his Father to initiate a more effective and universal presence among humankind, Satan continues to act with the power he has usurped. The hatred of those who belong to Satan is directed against the believers and the Church. Such helpers of Satan are called in John's Gospel: the world.

Believers are destined to be hated by the world. It often happens that when a person

Mt 5:11; Acts 5:40: they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know the One who sent me.

<sup>22</sup>If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

<sup>23</sup>Those who *hate* me *hate* my Father.

9:41 <sup>24</sup>If I had not done among them what no one else has ever done, they would have no sin. But after they have seen all this, they hate me and my Father, <sup>25</sup>and the words written in their law become true: *They hated me for no reason.*

Ps 35:19; 69:5

### The Spirit will come

14:26; Mt 10:19; Acts 5:32: • <sup>26</sup>From the Father, I will send you the Spirit of truth. When this Helper has come from the Father, he will be my witness, <sup>27</sup>and you, too, will be my witnesses, for you have been with me from the beginning.

begins to live in a more Christian and responsible way, she meets with opposition and hatred from her own family. No one knows what has aroused the hatred, but the devil does, who moves everything to discourage us.

Even in the Church we find those who are *serv*ing God (16:2) when they persecute the true disciples of Christ. Some who identify themselves with what they consider "the interests of the Church" can even persecute, and at times with malice, those who are Gospel-minded. In reality they know *neither Jesus nor his Father*.

When our hope does not come from God, trials discourage us; but when our hope is rooted in God, we are strengthened and remain steadfast. In the parable of the vine, Jesus said: "My father prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it will bear more fruit."

### • 26. THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

In making us children of his Father, Jesus enables us to discover the intimate mystery of God. In God there is communion among the three persons: the Father, the Son and their common Spirit.

We speak of their common Spirit, because Jesus said both: *The Father will give you another Helper* (14:16) and: *The Helper which I will send you* (15:26). Now he says: *He will take what is mine and tell it to you: everything that the Father has is also mine* (16:15).

**16** <sup>1</sup>I tell you all this to keep you from stumbling and falling away. <sup>2</sup>They will put you out of the synagogue. Still more, the hour is coming, when anyone who kills you will claim to be serving God; <sup>3</sup>they will do this, because they have not known the Father or me. <sup>4</sup>I tell you all these things now so that, when the time comes, you may remember that I told you about them.

9:22; Acts 26:9-11

Mk 13:23

I did not tell you about this in the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup>But now I am going to the One who sent me, and none of you asks me where I am going; <sup>6</sup>instead you are overcome with grief, because of what I have said.

14:1

<sup>7</sup>Believe me, it is better for you that I go away, because as long as I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go away, I will send

"The Spirit" is not a poetic figure: it is Someone. This has already been commented on (Jn 7:37; 14:1).

Starting from the day of Pentecost, the Spirit began to act in the Church, thus showing that he was the Spirit of Christ. The unbelieving Jews thought that God was with them, but in reality his Spirit did not act among them. So it was clear that they had sinned (16:9) for not believing in Christ.

*What is the path of righteousness* (16:10). The righteous One is Christ and the righteous persons are those who believe in him without seeing him.

The Acts of the Apostles records how the Spirit worked in the first disciples of Jesus. Before granting miraculous powers, the Spirit gave them joy, peace and mutual love, as well as inner certainty that Jesus had risen and was among them.

The Spirit guides missionaries; he gives them the power to perform miracles; he gives to believers the knowledge of God, new capacities for working, healing, serving and shaking up a sinful world. Throughout history the Spirit would raise up people of faith, martyrs, prophets, and through them transform the world. In this way the Savior, seemingly defeated, would be justified; and it becomes evident that the loser is Satan, who already *has been condemned* (v. 11). The evil spirit, great director of the worldly show, is displaced and his influence limited. A new force, which is the Spirit, orients history and guides us towards the total truth.

him to you, <sup>8</sup>and when he comes, he will vindicate the truth before a sinful world; and he will vindicate the paths of righteousness and justice.

<sup>9</sup>What is the world's sin, in regard to me? Disbelief. <sup>10</sup>What is the path of righteousness? It is the path I walk, by which I go to the Father; and you shall see me no more. <sup>11</sup>What is the path of justice? It is the path on which the prince of this world will always stand condemned.

<sup>12</sup>I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now.

<sup>13</sup>When he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into the whole truth.

For he will not speak of his own authority, but will speak what he hears, and he will tell you about the things which are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will take what is mine and make it known to you; in doing this, he will glorify me.

<sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine; for this reason, I told you that the Spirit will take what is mine, and make it known to you.

### The promise of a new presence

• <sup>16</sup>A little while, and you will see me no more; and then a little while, and you will see me."

### • 16.16 JESUS IN OUR MIDST

Jesus is in our midst, but to be aware of his presence requires faith. He himself said: "You will see me because you live and I also live (14:19)." It is not important that we feel his presence, what matters is to persevere in his ways. In order to attain mature faith, it is necessary that we be deprived of the consolation of his presence for more or less prolonged periods: *a little while, and you will see me no more.*

For his disciples this happened for the first time at the moment of his death; later they saw him risen from the dead. This will come true for us at the end of time, when we discover the glorious Christ whom we have awaited in faith. No one should feel overconfident about feeling his presence, for example, after a conversion. When everything seems easy, we should not look down on those who find it hard to believe or who have never felt the presence of God. In

<sup>17</sup>Some of the disciples wondered, "What does he mean by, 'A little while, and you will not see me; and then a little while, and you will see me'?" And why did he say, 'I go to the Father'?" <sup>18</sup>And they said to one another, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand."

<sup>19</sup>Jesus knew that they wanted to question him; so he said to them, "You are puzzled because I told you that in a little while you will see me no more, and then a little while later you will see me.

<sup>20</sup>Truly, I say to you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. <sup>21</sup>A woman in childbirth is in distress because her time is at hand. But after the child is born, she no longer remembers her suffering because of her great joy; a human being is born into the world.

<sup>22</sup>You feel sorrowful now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice; and no one will take your joy from you. <sup>23</sup>When that day comes you will not ask me anything. Truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. <sup>24</sup>So far you have not asked for anything in

*a little while*, perhaps, the Lord will leave us in darkness.

After Jesus rose from the dead, a real companionship would be established between him and his disciples: he would speak to them clearly of the Father; they would ask in his name.

*I will speak to you plainly...* (v. 25). The naive response of the apostles in verse 29 underlines by contrast what Jesus expressed in verse 25. Jesus did not mean that he would return in visible form to teach, not in parables, but more clearly; Jesus referred rather to the spiritual knowledge of himself and his words that the disciples were to receive from the Spirit.

*You will ask in my name* (v. 26). Through a spiritual knowledge of Jesus, the believers will know what they should ask of him and he will give it to them. In the same manner, they will know the things that God does not want to give, and because of that they will neither desire nor ask for them.

12:31;  
14:301Cor 3:1;  
Acts 1:4

17:10

7:33;  
14:19Lk 5:35;  
Rev  
11:10Is 26:17;  
Rom  
6:22Lk 6:21;  
Is 66:8;  
Jn 14:19;  
20:20;  
Acts  
2:46;  
2Cor  
4:17

14:20

15:11;  
1Jn 1:4

my name; ask, and receive, that your joy may be full.

16:4 <sup>25</sup>I have taught you all these things in veiled language, but the time is coming when I shall no longer speak in veiled language, but will speak to you plainly about the Father.

16:23 <sup>26</sup>When that day comes, you will ask in my name; and it will not be necessary for me to ask the Father for you, <sup>27</sup>for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and you believed that I came from the Father. <sup>28</sup>As I came from the Father, and have come into the world, so I am leaving the world, and going to the Father.”

<sup>29</sup>The disciples said to him, “Now you are speaking plainly and not in veiled language! <sup>30</sup>Now we see that you know all things, even before we question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God.”

<sup>31</sup>Jesus answered them, “You say that you believe? <sup>32</sup>The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home,

Zec 13:7;  
Mt 28:31;  
Lk 22:31

and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

<sup>33</sup>I have told you all this, so that in me you may have peace. You will have trouble in the world; but, courage! I have overcome the world.”

14:27;  
2Tim  
3:12;  
Rom  
8:37;  
1Thes  
1:6;  
2Thes  
1:4

### Prayer of Jesus for the new holy people

**17** • <sup>1</sup>After saying this, Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come! Give glory to your Son, that the Son may give glory to you. <sup>2</sup>You have given him power over all humanity, so that he may give eternal life to all those you entrusted to him. <sup>3</sup>For this is eternal life: to *know* you, the only true God, and the One you sent, Jesus Christ.

11:41;  
12:23;  
13:1

<sup>4</sup>I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>Now, Father, give me, in your presence, the same glory I had with you before the world began.

5:21;  
6:39;  
Mt 28:18

Wis 15:3;  
Jer 24:7;  
31:34;  
Ezk  
36:25

<sup>6</sup>I have made your name known to those you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them

1:1;  
8:58;  
Phil 2:6

3:13;  
Ps  
22:23;  
Heb 2:12

### • 17.1 ONE AND HOLY

Priestly Prayer is the name many give to that prayer in which Christ, before he died, offered to sacrifice his own life, as both priest and victim (v. 19). The word *to consecrate* applied to two things: the priest was consecrated, that is, was made worthy to offer the sacrifice, and he also consecrated (made holy) the victim on sacrificing it.

Jesus put an end to the Old Testament form of worship that the Jews rendered to God in the temple for centuries. The Israelites were *holy*; that is to say, their mission among all the nations was to serve the Holy God, whom they knew by a special privilege.

Jesus prays for his own so that they may become the new people (Ps 102:19), consecrated to God, this time *according to the truth* (v. 17). He will pour over them the Spirit of Truth, who has been promised to Israel and will instruct us interiorly.

*Keep those you have given me in your name* (v. 11). In other words: keep them in the radiance of your own sanctity, with which you embrace your Son. At that moment Jesus prayed for his Church, to whom he entrusted his own

mission. The principal duty of the Church is to know God. (The word *to know* is repeated seven times, clearly showing that it expresses the essence of the discourse). Whatever the situation of the Church might be, its proper and indispensable mission will be to keep and proclaim the true knowledge of God and the commandment of his Son.

Jesus wants each of his own to know God. This knowledge comes to us when we interiorize the word of God, persevere in prayer and join community celebrations. In this we will have the help of the Holy Spirit, from whom come the gifts of knowledge and wisdom (Col 1:9). From knowledge will spring good works and love; this is the beginning of *eternal life* (v. 3) in which we will see God as he is (1 Jn 2:3).

Jesus prayed that his Church might be one, that is to say, that it might be the sign of unity in a divided world. It is not enough that Christ is preached; it is also necessary for the world to see in its midst the Church, one and united.

*Catholic Church*, means, *universal*. In the Church no one is a stranger. *One Church*, through one same spirit, and through the visible unity of its members.

to me, and they kept your word. <sup>7</sup>And now they *know* that whatever you entrusted to me, is indeed from you. <sup>8</sup>I have given them the teaching I received from you, and they accepted it, and know in truth that I came from you; and they believe that you sent me.

<sup>9</sup>I pray for them. I do not pray for the world, but for those who belong to you, and whom you have given to me. <sup>10</sup>Indeed all I have is yours, and all you have is mine; and now they are my glory. <sup>11</sup>I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me in your name, so that they may be one, as we also are.

<sup>12</sup>When I was with them, I kept them safe in your name; and not one was lost, except the one who was already lost, and in this, the Scripture was fulfilled. <sup>13</sup>And now I come to you; in the world I speak these things, so that those whom you gave me, might have joy—all my joy within themselves.

<sup>14</sup>I have given them your word; and

the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world, <sup>15</sup>I do not ask you to remove them from the world, but to keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup>Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth.

<sup>18</sup>I have sent them into the world as you sent me into the world; <sup>19</sup>and for their sake, I go to the sacrifice by which I am consecrated, so that they too may be consecrated in truth.

<sup>20</sup>I pray not only for these. but also for those who through their word will believe in me. <sup>21</sup>May they all be one, as you Father are in me and I am in you. May they be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

<sup>22</sup>I have given them the glory you have given me, that they may be one as we are one: <sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me. Thus they shall reach perfection in unity; and the world shall *know* that you have sent me, and that I have loved them, just as you loved me.

Mt 6:13;  
1Cor  
1:10;  
Lk 22:32;  
2Thes  
3:3;  
1Jn 5:18

1P 1:22

1Cor  
1:30;  
5:8;  
Heb 2:11

1Cor  
6:17;  
Gal  
2:20;  
Eph 1:4;  
4:3

The history of the Church seems to run counter to the prayer of Christ. Jesus desired unity; the evangelists relate how he named Peter as visible head of the apostolic group and the entire Church. However, to maintain unity among people of different temperaments and various cultures requires much love and understanding.

From the beginning some began to reject the faith as taught by the apostles, and several groups or sects appeared.

For historical reasons, the countries of the Roman world were divided into two main empires: one of the Orient, with the patterns of Greek culture and that of the Occident (Europe), where the medieval culture developed. After the invasions of the barbaric people, contact between the Christians of these two parts became very difficult. Because they lived the same faith with different traditions and religious practices, they began to consider themselves as having different religions. That was how the Oriental churches, that is, the Orthodox, separated from the Roman Church.

Much later the negligence of the hierarchy in not ending the abuses and useless human traditions led the Protestants or Evangelicals to found new churches, which they called reformed

churches. This separation, however, had deeper political, social and economic roots. It was part of a cultural crisis that obliged Christians to revise their views regarding the Scriptures, philosophy and politics. According to whatever stand one took concerning these issues, one joined the Protestants or stayed with the Catholic Church.

In our times, we have a better understanding of these past difficulties. Many Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants are attempting to unite as believers. At the same time, however, new problems have arisen within each Church. Today Christians disagree and are split, not only in their political options, but also in their understanding of Christ and their views on how his message is best delivered in our time.

Ecumenism, that is, efforts to reconcile in truth and bring the Churches together, demands that we overcome the new dissensions that threaten the internal unity of the Church. All of us must work so that the unity of all Christians may be realized as Christ desires, and by the means he wants. In any case, nothing can be done without obeying the truth and doing the truth. In no way can we disregard Peter's charism of unity that is granted to Peter's successors.

12:26;  
Gen  
45:13

<sup>24</sup>Father, since you have given them to me, I want them to be with me where I am, and see the glory you gave me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Rom  
8:39

<sup>25</sup>Righteous Father, the world has not *known* you, but I have *known* you, and these have *known* that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup>As I revealed your name to them, so will I continue to reveal it, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I also may be in them."

### The arrest of Jesus

Mt 26:  
30, 36;  
Mk 14:  
26, 36;  
Lk 22:39;  
2S 15:23

**18** <sup>1</sup>When Jesus had finished speaking, he went with his disciples to the other side of the Kidron Valley. There was a garden there, which Jesus entered with his disciples.

Mt 26:  
47-56;  
Mk 14:  
43-52;  
Lk 22:  
47-53

<sup>2</sup>Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, since Jesus had often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>So Judas took soldiers and some servants from the chief priests and Pharisees, and they went to the garden with lanterns, torches and weapons.

8:24;  
Ps 27:2

<sup>4</sup>Jesus knew all that was going to happen to him; he stepped forward and asked, "Who are you looking for?" <sup>5</sup>They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus said, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, stood there with them.

6:39;  
10:28;  
17:12

<sup>6</sup>When Jesus said, "I am he," they moved backwards and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>He then asked a second time, "Who are you looking for?" and they answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." <sup>8</sup>Jesus replied, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, let these others go." <sup>9</sup>So what Jesus had said came true: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

Mk 10:38;  
Jn 12:27

<sup>10</sup>Simon Peter had a sword; he drew it and struck Malchus, the High Priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. <sup>11</sup>But Jesus said to Peter, "Put

your sword into its sheath! Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?"

11:50

<sup>12</sup>The guards and the soldiers, with their commander, seized Jesus and bound him; <sup>13</sup>and they took him first to Annas. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the High Priest that year; <sup>14</sup>and it was Caiaphas who had told the Jews, "It is better that one man should die for the people."

<sup>15</sup>Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the High Priest, they let him enter the courtyard of the High Priest along with Jesus, <sup>16</sup>but Peter had to stay outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the High Priest, went out and spoke to the maidservant at the gate and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup>Then this maidservant on duty at the door said to Peter, "So you also are one of his disciples?" But he answered, "I am not."

<sup>18</sup>Now the servants and the guards had made a charcoal fire and were standing and warming themselves, because it was cold. Peter was also with them warming himself.

<sup>19</sup>The High Priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. <sup>20</sup>Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in places where the Jews meet together, either at the assemblies in synagogues or in the temple. I did not teach secretly. <sup>21</sup>Why then do you question me? Ask those who heard me, they know what I said."

Acts  
23:2

<sup>22</sup>At this reply one of the guards standing there gave Jesus a blow on the face, saying, "Is that the way to answer the High Priest?" <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to him, "If I have said something wrong, point it out. But if I spoke correctly, why strike me?"

<sup>24</sup>Then Annas sent him, bound, to Caiaphas, the High Priest.



<sup>25</sup>Now Simon Peter stood there warming himself. They said to him, "Surely you also are one of his disciples." He denied it, and answered, "I am not!" <sup>26</sup>One of the High Priest's servants, a kinsman of the one whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you with him in the garden?" <sup>27</sup>Again Peter denied it, and at once the cock crowed.

### Jesus before Pilate

• <sup>28</sup>Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the headquarters of the Roman governor. It was now morning. The Jews didn't go inside, lest they be made unclean by entering the house of a pagan, and therefore not allowed to eat the Passover meal. <sup>29</sup>So Pilate came outside and asked, "What charge do you bring against this man?"

<sup>30</sup>They answered, "If he were not

a criminal, we would not be handing him over to you." <sup>31</sup>Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your own law." But they replied, "We ourselves are not allowed to put anyone to death."

<sup>32</sup>According to what Jesus himself had foretold, it was clear what kind of death he would die.

<sup>33</sup>Pilate then entered the court again, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

<sup>34</sup>Jesus replied, "Are you saying this on your own initiative; or have others told you about me?"

<sup>35</sup>Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" <sup>36</sup>Jesus answered, "My kingship does not come from this world. If I were a king, like those of this world, my servants would have fought to save me from being handed

Mt 27:2,  
11-26;  
Mk 15:  
1-15;  
Lk 23:  
1-7;  
23:13-  
25;  
Jn 11:55

3:14;  
12:33

6:15;  
12:32;  
Lk 17:20;  
19:12

### • 18.28 CHRIST THE KING

*My kingship does not come from this world* (v. 36). It is important to remember what was said regarding Luke 8:9. In the Gospel the same word means: The *kingdom*, that is, the country that the king governs; the reign, that is the government of the king; the kingship, that is, the dignity and power of the king.

In Jesus' response to Pilate the meaning to be given to the word is not kingdom, but rather *kingship*, which is the power of the king.

In any case, it would be an error to understand Jesus' words as follows: "My kingdom is in another world, therefore, the social and political problems of this world do not concern me," and think that Jesus came to give spiritual salvation, individually, to believing souls.

Likewise, it would be an error to understand the word: *You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above* as affirming that the authorities receive their power directly from God and that no one should take steps to replace them with others less corrupt, or less unjust, or more capable. See commentary on Romans 13:1.

Jesus with hands bound, behaves like a king before the governor, Pilate, who is captive of his office and his own ambitions. Jesus is not a king like *those of this world*, because he does not exert the kind of power that people are used to obeying. Jesus, king of the Jews, did not come to revive the independent Jewish kingdom, but

to establish the *kingdom of Truth*, which God promised them for centuries.

Yet truth does not win with arms, but thanks to the testimony of those who live according to the truth. Witnesses of the truth are often persecuted, but they themselves do not persecute others.

*My kingship does not come from this world* (v. 36). Jesus is unlike other authorities that have gained their positions through force or have won in an election. He has been sent and anointed by the Father.

Pilate, on the other hand, had been appointed by the Emperor of Rome and owed his career as much to his own ambition as to several protectors. How could such a man have power over the Son of God and have him crucified for fear of the people, if it were not to fulfill a decree from *On High*? Indeed, not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father allowing it.

God would not permit human creatures to destroy the destiny of his Son. He cares for each one of us in such a way that even the injustice committed against us serves his plans for our good. Because our fate depends at the same time on the Father and on human authorities, we should believe that he takes advantage of their decisions to carry out his own purposes, even when their power is *of this world*, that is to say, of a very questionable legitimacy.

Pilate condemned Jesus unwillingly. Having oppressed and shamelessly exploited the Jews,

over to the Jews. But my kingship is not of this world.”

<sup>37</sup>Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” And Jesus answered, “Just as you say, I am a king. For this I was born and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is on the side of truth hears my voice.” <sup>38</sup>Pilate said, “What is truth?”

Pilate then went out to the Jews again and said, “I find no crime in this man. <sup>39</sup>Now, according to custom, I must release a prisoner to you at the Passover. With your agreement I will release to you the King of the Jews.” <sup>40</sup>But they insisted and cried out, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

**19** <sup>1</sup>Then Pilate had Jesus taken away and scourged. <sup>2</sup>The soldiers twisted thorns into a crown and put it on his head. They threw a cloak of royal purple around his shoulders; <sup>3</sup>and they began coming up to him and saluting him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and they struck him on the face.

<sup>4</sup>Pilate went outside yet another time and said to the Jews, “Look, I am bringing him out, and I want you to know that I find no crime in him.”

<sup>5</sup>Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak, and Pilate pointed at him, saying, “Behold the man!”

<sup>6</sup>On seeing him the chief priests and the guards cried out, “Crucify

him! Crucify him!” Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and have him crucified, for I find no case against him.”

<sup>7</sup>The Jews then said, “We have a law, and according to the law this man must die because he made himself Son of God.”

<sup>8</sup>When Pilate heard this he was more afraid. <sup>9</sup>And coming back into the court he asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup>Then Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, just as I have power to crucify you?” <sup>11</sup>Jesus replied, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given to you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is more guilty.”

<sup>12</sup>From that moment Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who makes himself a king is defying Caesar.”

<sup>13</sup>When Pilate heard this, he had Jesus brought outside to the place called the Stone Floor—in Hebrew *Gabbatha*—and sat down in the judgment seat. <sup>14</sup>It was the day of preparation for the Passover, about noon. Pilate said to the Jews, “Behold your king!” <sup>15</sup>But they cried out, “Away! Take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate replied, “Shall I crucify your king?” And the chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”

<sup>16</sup>Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

he feared the denunciations that they might make to Caesar against him. The condemnation of Jesus, however, meant for him nothing more than the death of one more Jew: he did not bear the whole guilt, since that type of justice was the result of the Roman colonial system.

Caiaphas, instead, the anointed High Priest of God, could not condemn Jesus without knowingly slandering his deeds and his word. So he was *more guilty* (19:11).

*We have no king but Caesar* (19:15). Thus shouted the crowd impelled by the leaders, although they hated the Romans and their emperor. In fact, several years later the Jews would have no other king but Caesar, and this king would destroy them. Pilate wanted to save the life of his prisoner when he presented him in his disfigured condition. Instead he wounded the pride of the Jewish people: a Christ the King humiliated—they could not accept this offense.

3:32;  
8:47;  
10:26;  
1Tim  
6:13

Acts  
24:25;  
26:28

Mk 15:6

Acts  
3:14

Mt 27:  
27-31;  
Mk 15:  
16-20

1Cor  
1:23;  
Lk 23:11

Is 50:6

1:29, 36;  
Is 53:4

Lev  
24:16;  
Jn 5:18

Ps 82;  
Wis 6:3;  
Rom  
13:1

12:6

**Jesus is crucified**

Mt 27:  
31-33;  
27:37-  
38;  
Mk 15:  
20...27;  
Lk 23:  
33, 38;  
Gen  
22:6

They took Jesus, and led him away. <sup>17</sup>Bearing his cross, Jesus went out of the city to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew *Golgotha*. <sup>18</sup>There he was crucified, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus in the middle.

Is 53:12

18:33

<sup>19</sup>Pilate had a notice written and fastened to the cross, which read: *Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews*. <sup>20</sup>Many Jewish people saw this title, because the place where Jesus was crucified was very close to the city; and the title was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. <sup>21</sup>The chief priests said to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews'; but, 'This man claimed to be King of the Jews.'" <sup>22</sup>Pilate answered them, "What I have written, I have written."

Mt  
27:15;  
Mk:  
15:24;  
Lk 23:24

<sup>23</sup>When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each of them. But as the tunic was woven in one piece from top to bottom, <sup>24</sup>they said, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots

Ps 22:19

to decide who will get it." This fulfilled the words of Scripture: *They divided my clothing among them; they cast lots for my garment*. This was what the soldiers did.

**Jesus' last words**

• <sup>25</sup>Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister Mary, who was the wife of Cleophas, and Mary of Magdala. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw the mother, and the disciple whom he loved, he said to the mother, "Woman, this is your son." <sup>27</sup>Then he said to the disciple, "This is your mother." And from that moment the disciple took her to his own home.

Mt 27:  
55-56;  
Mk 15:  
40-41;  
Lk 23:49  
  
13:23;  
20:2;  
21:7

• <sup>28</sup>Jesus knew all was now finished and, in order to fulfill what was written in Scripture, he said, *I am thirsty*. <sup>29</sup>A jar full of bitter wine stood there; so, putting a sponge soaked in the wine on a twig of hyssop, they raised it to his lips. <sup>30</sup>Jesus took the wine and said, "It is accomplished." Then he bowed his head and gave up the spirit.

Mt 27:  
48-50;  
Mk 15:  
36-37;  
Lk 23:46;  
Jn 13:1;  
Lk 12:50

Ps 69:22

2Tim 4:7

**THE MOTHER OF THE BELIEVERS**

• **19.25** At the moment of Man's fall, Eve was with Adam. Now, at the moment of restoration, that is, the second creation, another woman is with the Son of Man (*the Human One*), the second Adam. Mary has neither spouse nor son who can receive her and, for the Jews, a woman who remains alone would be considered cursed. Jesus entrusts Mary to John and, also, John to Mary. John testifies having heard both phrases. Notice that he writes: Jesus said to the Mother, and not, to his mother. This is a new symbolic gesture of Jesus. Mary will be the Mother of believers.

Through this last deed of Jesus, the Church discovered something about the mystery of the Christian life. The believer is a member of a spiritual family. As a child needs a father and a mother to grow normally so, too, does the believer need Mary and the heavenly Father. This is an unchanging doctrine of the Church, which in no way attempts to make the creature equal with the Creator.

Not without reason has God given us a mother: if it is a misfortune for a child not to have known a mother, it is also a misfortune for a

believer when his religion only expresses itself in masculine terms. The believer who welcomes Mary to his home as did John is neither a fanatic nor a quibbler regarding faith. There exists a form of humility, joy, interior peace and simple piety characteristic of those Catholics who have known how to open their doors to Mary without throwing out their Savior.

• **28.** *I am thirsty.* Jesus is tortured by thirst. He also thirsts that the kingdom of his Father be realized in the world. He thirsts for selfless love from those who may share his deepest thoughts and be willing to follow him until Calvary.

*It is accomplished.* Jesus drank the cup of sorrow and humiliation to the last drop. The Father had placed it in his hands as the means for becoming the Savior we need. The Work of the Son of God made flesh, which should be nothing less than a new creation of the world, is accomplished. The earthly existence of the Son of God comes to an end, and from the seed planted in the earth will come forth the New Creature.

The preparatory times of the Jewish religion, in which the law occupied first place and the

### The pierced Christ

Dr 21:  
22:23;  
Gal 3:13;  
Ps 22:15

• <sup>31</sup> As it was Preparation Day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross during the Sabbath, for this Sabbath was a very solemn day. They asked Pilate to have the legs of the condemned men broken, so that the bodies might be taken away.

<sup>32</sup> The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other man, who had been crucified with Jesus. <sup>33</sup> When they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water.

7:37;  
1Jn 5:6

<sup>35</sup> The one who saw that, has testified to it, and his testimony is true; he knows he speaks the truth, so that you also might believe. <sup>36</sup> All this hap-

12:46;  
Num  
9:12;  
Ps 34:21

pened to fulfill the words of Scripture: *Not one of his bones shall be broken.*

<sup>37</sup> Another text says: *They shall look on him whom they have pierced.*

Zec  
12:10;  
Rev 1:7

• <sup>38</sup> After this, Joseph of Arimathea approached Pilate, for he was a disciple of Jesus, though secretly, for fear of the Jews. And he asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate agreed; so he came and took away the body.

Mt 27:  
57-60;  
Mk 15:  
42-46;  
Lk 23:  
50-54

<sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, the man who first visited Jesus by night, also came and brought a jar of myrrh mixed with aloes, about seventy-five pounds. <sup>40</sup> They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in linen cloths with the spices, following the burial customs of the Jews.

11:44;  
12:7

<sup>41</sup> There was a garden in the place where Jesus had been crucified, and,

fear due to unforgiven sins was never lost, are finished. A stage of history has ended, in which the rest of humanity had been dragged by its fears and acceptance of its deadly fate, which was a form of its slavery to the Evil Spirit.

Now begins a new era in history, the era of the New Covenant of God with humanity. The Spirit will be communicated to the Church. John said: *Jesus gave up the spirit*; a word that also indicated that he was giving his Spirit to us.

• 31. After the account of the passion and the death of Jesus, John adds and repeats three times the personal seal of his testimony. Christ is dead. The soldier pierces his side and from Jesus' pierced heart *blood* and *water* come out. For John, this is the moment of the revelation of the meaning of the sacrifice.

It was preparation day for Passover and, on that Friday afternoon near the place of the executions, the Jews were coming down the hill to the temple for the immolation of the Passover lamb. In this ritual of the Passover sacrifice, not a single drop of blood was to be lost. That year, John did not join the crowd. Instead, he was there at the foot of the cross with Mary and a few holy women. Then, like the priest at the same time in the temple, the soldier drew the last drop of blood from Christ on the cross. At that very moment, John's eyes really opened up. What John the Baptist had said much earlier on the shore of the Jordan suddenly became clear: *There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.*

The soldier's gesture became a prophetic gesture, unveiling the mystery of the Lamb. Christ's redemptive blood was poured out, no longer on the altar of the temple but instead, on the earth renewed and enlivened by that blood. Now the sacrifice of the Passover lamb that Moses inaugurated reaches its fulfillment and its transfiguration. And like the "blood and water" of childbirth, the blood and water coming out of the side of Christ are announcing a new age with baptism and the Eucharist as its sacraments. At that point, John recalls another prescription of the ritual: *Not one of his bones shall be broken* (Ex 12:46).

• 38. All four evangelists mention the participation of Joseph of Arimathea in Jesus' burial. John also introduces Nicodemus. For John, both men are breaking free from the darkness of their fear. Jesus has just died and it is two Pharisees who took care of giving him a decent burial. *Joseph of Arimathea approached Pilate*: because the disciples had no means of approaching the Roman governor. Joseph and Nicodemus were disciples in "secret." Because Jesus identified himself with the common people, it was difficult for those in better social positions to integrate themselves into his group. Here we have an example of the inevitable consequences of a preferential option for the poor.

Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus and the women mentioned in Luke 8:2 were people of upper or middle class. This fact was enough for some scholars to hastily conclude

12:24 in the garden, a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup>And therefore, because the sepulcher was nearby, and the Jewish day of preparation was coming to a close, they placed the body of Jesus there.

### The Lord is risen

Mt 28:  
1-8;  
Mk 16:  
1-8;  
Lk 24:  
1-11;  
Acts  
20:7

**20** • <sup>1</sup>Now, on the first day after the Sabbath, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone blocking the tomb had been moved away. <sup>2</sup>She ran to Peter, and the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and she said to them, "They have taken the *Lord* out of the tomb and we don't know where they have laid him."

Lk 24:12 <sup>3</sup>Peter then set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. <sup>4</sup>They ran

together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>He bent down and saw the linen cloths lying flat, but he did not enter.

<sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and entered the tomb; he, too, saw the linen cloths lying flat. <sup>7</sup>The napkin, which had been around his head, was not lying flat like the other linen cloths, but lay rolled up in its place. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup>Scripture clearly said that Jesus must rise from the dead, but they had not yet understood that.

<sup>10</sup>The disciples went back to their homes.

• <sup>11</sup>Mary stood weeping outside the tomb; and as she wept, she bent

Ps 16:10;  
Lk 24:26;  
Acts  
2:27;  
1Cor  
15:4

Mt 28:  
9-10;  
Mk 16:  
9-11

that Jesus did not live among the poor: seemingly forgetting all the rest of the Gospel's evidence. Let us remark that, even now, wherever an apostolic person lives as a poor person among the poor, there are always people, who are better off financially, who recognize him and give him support. By being truly committed to the poor, Jesus saved the rich and won the admiration and friendship of some of them.

The huge amount of myrrh and aloes used for the burial may be one final reference to Jesus' kingship. He receives a regal burial.

*There was a garden* (v. 41). The place for the executions was an abandoned quarry near the walls of Jerusalem. Tombs were dug along the sides while the bottom was filled and passed as gardens. A rock projected, about four meters high, from the middle of the area. This rock was called Calvary and on it were raised the crosses.

• **20.1** On the second day after the burial it appeared that Jesus was alive and had gone from the tomb. The resurrection took place on the first day of the week, which henceforth would be called the Day of the Lord, that is, Sunday.

In Luke's Gospel, after Jesus' resurrection he helps his disciples revive their faith and hope. Here instead we see the believers silently contemplating the risen Lord. Christ appears to Mary, who does not recognize him. When he stands in the midst of his disciples, he has to show his wounds to prove that it is he himself, he who had died. Jesus is among them, but his appearance is that of a stranger, and his spiritu-

ally transformed body radiates the victory over sin and death.

*Then Peter arrived.* Several texts record that Peter was both a witness to the empty tomb and of Jesus risen from the dead (Lk 24:12 and 24:24; 1 Cor 15:5). Our faith is supported primarily by the testimony of the apostles, and especially by the testimony of the head of the apostles.

*He saw the linen cloths lying flat* (v. 5). The *linens* designate the sheet, about 4 meters long, spread under the body from the feet to the head and then, above the body, from the head to the feet; they also refer to the bands that tied the two ends of the sheet. The dead person's face was wrapped with a separate cloth, the *napkin* that was tied under the chin and over the head.

The sheet and the bands were lying where the body had been but were flat, for the body inside them had dematerialized. The napkin, which was rolled in the other direction, stayed as it was.

Jesus had not returned to life with his earthly body. This had dematerialized, so when we speak of the risen body of Jesus, we refer to something we have never experienced on earth. Those who have had dreams and visions of Jesus have only seen images of him, but have not actually seen him, except for a few of the most eminent saints.

• **11.** *Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father* (v. 17). Before his death, Jesus did not disapprove of the passionate feelings and actions of Mary. Now this

Song  
3:3

down to look inside. <sup>12</sup>She saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She answered, “Because they have taken my *Lord* and I don’t know where they have put him.”

<sup>14</sup>As she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him. <sup>15</sup>Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” She thought it was the gardener and answered him, “Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and take him away.”

14:28;  
16:7;

<sup>16</sup>Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned, and said to him, “Rabboni!”—which means *Master*. <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to

her, “Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them: I am ascending to my Father, who is your Father, to my God, who is your God.”

Ps22:23;  
Mt12:49;  
28:10;  
Rom  
8:29;  
Heb2:11

<sup>18</sup>So Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the *Lord*, and this is what he said to me.”

• <sup>19</sup>On the evening of that day, the first day after the Sabbath, the doors were locked where the disciples were, because of their fear of the Jews. But Jesus came, and stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you!” <sup>20</sup>Then he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples, seeing the *Lord*, were full of joy.

Mk 16:  
14-18;  
Lk 24:  
36-49;  
Jn 14:18

16:22

<sup>21</sup>Again Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent

familiar gesture to take possession of her loved Master is no longer appropriate.

He is now the Risen One, and though he lets himself be seen by his disciples for a few days, he is in the glory of the Father. His disciples must relinquish the physical presence of Jesus with which they felt so much at ease. From now on the followers and lovers of Jesus will embrace him in a secret and marvelous way, when they are given gifts of prayer and faith. It is then that the contemplative spirit, who is represented by Mary, may enjoy the whole of Christ (see Song 3:4)

*I have not yet ascended to the Father* (v. 17). Jesus is revealing the great desire that filled his life. He came from God and must return to the Father. This is “the greatest love in the world.” All the love that Jesus has for us is but a manifestation of that other love, because God the Father is the fountain and the goal of all love. See the commentary on Matthew 19:16 in this regard.

It is not by chance that the word *Lord* is again repeated seven times, the last time by Thomas: “You are my Lord and my God.” This expresses the faith of the Church.

Let us remark that the persons concerned in this event did in fact call Jesus, “the Master.” However, John puts on their lips the word *Lord*. Why? From the first days of the Church, the believers had to find words to express their faith in Jesus, Son of God. Being the Son, he was not the same person as God, but he was one with him. How is this divine condition best expressed?

In Sacred Scriptures two names were given to God: God and Yahweh. At that time the Jews no longer pronounced the name of Yahweh and instead said: “the Lord.” Moreover, in the Greek Bible used by the apostles and the Church, Yahweh was also translated as “the Lord.” So the apostles decided very soon to retain the term God when speaking of God the Father, and to call Jesus “the Lord,” by this affirming that he was not inferior to the Father.

The risen Jesus’ apparitions to his disciples, besides fostering their hope and making them qualified witnesses of his resurrection, were necessary for their spiritual formation. The disciples had to learn to recognize Jesus no longer through their senses but through faith. Likewise, we have to learn to recognize and follow Jesus in the dim light of faith, in desolation as well as in consolation, thus we too will be among those whom Jesus blesses: Happy are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe (v. 29).

• 19. Just as in the first creation God infused life into *Adam*, so, too, Jesus’ breath communicates life to the new spiritual creation. Christ, who died to take away the sin of the world, now leaves to his own the power to forgive.

Thus the hope of the Biblical people has been realized. God led them in such a way that they felt the universal presence of sin, and so they offered animals in the temple uninterruptedly to appease God. That river of blood failed to destroy sin, and the priests themselves offered sacrifices for their own sins before praying to God for the others. Ceremonies and rites had

7:39; Acts 1:8; Gen 2:7; Ezk 37:9; 1Cor 15:45  
 Mt 16:19; 18:18  
 me, so I send you.” <sup>22</sup>After saying this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit! <sup>23</sup>Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; those whose sins you retain, they are retained.”

1Cor 9:1; 1Jn 1:1  
<sup>24</sup>Thomas, the Twin, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>The other disciples told him, “We have seen the *Lord*.” But he replied, “Until I have seen in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

Mk 16:14; Lk 24:25; Mk 26:17  
<sup>26</sup>Eight days later, the disciples were again inside the house and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; stretch out your hand, and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe!”

44:8; 1P 1:8  
<sup>28</sup>Thomas said, “You are my *Lord* and my God.” <sup>29</sup>Jesus replied, “You believe because you see me, don’t you? Happy are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

## Conclusion

<sup>30</sup>There were many other signs that Jesus gave in the presence of his disciples, but they are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup>These are recorded, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Believe, and you will have life through his name!

3:15; 1Jn 5:13; Acts 3:16

## Appendix: the appearance of Jesus by the lake

**21** • <sup>1</sup>After this, Jesus revealed himself to the disciples by the Lake of Tiberias. He appeared to them in this way: <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, Thomas who was called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together; <sup>3</sup>and Simon Peter said to them, “I’m going fishing.” They replied, “We will come with you.” And they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Lk 5:10

<sup>4</sup>When the sun came up, Jesus was standing on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus called out, “Friends, have you anything to eat?” They answered, “Nothing.” <sup>6</sup>Then he said to them,

no power to purify the heart or to give the Holy Spirit.

Now, in the person of Jesus risen from the dead, a new world has begun. Although humanity may continue to sin, already the first of its sons and daughters, the “eldest brother of them all” is sharing fully the holy life of God.

Those who strive for the spiritual life, suffer above all from a keen awareness of the universal presence of sin. They grieve deeply at not yet having attained total liberation from sin. Hence they recognize the forgiveness of sin as the greatest gift given to the Church.

The capacity to forgive is the only power able to release the great tensions within humankind. Although it does not easily conquer hearts, it is an invaluable secret and the Church should consider it as its own particular treasure.

One who does not know how to forgive does not know how to love. On making us aware of sin and purifying us from it, the Church helps us demonstrate a more authentic love for the neighbor.

• **21.1** Jesus appears this time near Lake Tiberias. This delightful event is filled with divine presence as Christ stands on the lonely lake shore in the light of dawn. The apostles see a stranger but John, the prophet, recognizes Christ.

The Apostles pulled in a net full of *153 big fish*. This number had a symbolic value; it expressed plentitude and universality. Such will be the apostolic work: all nations of the earth will be brought to Christ.

The triple questioning of Peter by Jesus may be thought of as the undoing of the triple denial during Jesus’ passion. Peter, too, being the shepherd of the shepherds, is a forgiven sinner. Jesus entrusts the whole Church to him: the same as in Matthew 16:18. *Do you love me?* This is the first condition to be fulfilled by a shepherd in the Church.

This dialogue between Jesus and Peter expresses what being a Christian is all about. Jesus asks us every day if we love him in a special and exclusive way: *Do you love me more than*

“Throw the net on the right side of the boat and you will find something.” When they had lowered the net, they were not able to pull it in because of the great number of fish.

<sup>7</sup> Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” At these words, “It’s the Lord!” Simon Peter put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and jumped into the water. <sup>8</sup> The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish; they were not far from land, about a hundred meters.

<sup>9</sup> When they landed, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it, and some bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you’ve just caught.”

<sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter climbed into the boat and pulled the net to shore. It was full of big fish—one hundred and fifty-three—but, in spite of this, the net was not torn.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” And not one of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” for they knew it was the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and he did the same with the fish.

<sup>14</sup> This was the third time that Jesus revealed himself to his disciples after rising from the dead.

<sup>15</sup> After they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these do?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” And Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

*these do?* We answer, “Yes,” despite our miseries, as Peter did; Jesus then invites us to follow him anew, out of love (v. 22), and to share with him the responsibility of caring for the people of God. There is no better way of following Jesus than by giving up our lives for his mission.

Jesus orders Peter to care for the Church and, with this, orders us to obey. We obey freely and conscientiously, not because the shepherds are always capable and infallible, but rather because they perform a necessary function of authority. We believe that historically they are the succes-

<sup>16</sup> A second time Jesus said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” And Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Look after my sheep.” <sup>17</sup> And a third time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was saddened because Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Jesus then said, “Feed my sheep! <sup>18</sup> Truly, I say to you, when you were young, you put on your belt and walked where you liked. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will put a belt around you, and lead you where you do not wish to go.”

<sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to make known the kind of death by which Peter was to glorify God. And he added, “Follow me!”

<sup>20</sup> Peter looked back and saw that the disciple Jesus loved was following as well, the one who had reclined close to Jesus at the supper, and had asked him, “Lord, who is to betray you?” <sup>21</sup> On seeing him, Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, what about him?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain until I come, is that any concern of yours? Follow me!”

<sup>23</sup> Because of this, the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to Peter, “He will not die,” but, “Suppose I want him to remain until I

sors of the apostles, and for that reason have received their mission from God.

The Gospel ends with a prediction of the different fates that will be Peter’s and John’s. Peter died a martyr’s death in Rome in the year 66 or 67 A.D.; John was still living in the year 90 A.D. He was the last of the witnesses of Christ and many thought he would not die until the Lord would come again: hence, the Gospel insists that Jesus had not made such a promise.

The last paragraph was placed there by those associated with John at the time of his death.

Acts  
20:28;  
1P 5:2

Acts  
21:11;  
Mt 16:22

2P 1:14

13:25

Mt  
16:28

Lk 24:41

Mt 14:19

Mt  
16:17;  
Lk 7:42



come back, what concern is that of yours?”

<sup>24</sup>It is this disciple who testifies about the things and has written these things down, and we know that his

testimony is true. <sup>25</sup>But Jesus did many other things; if all were written down, I think the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

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