

Gospel text

Matthew 10: 37-42

37 He who prefers his father or mother to me cannot be in relationship with me, and he who prefers his son or daughter to me cannot be in relationship with me. 38 In the same way, he who does not take on what makes him suffer in order to follow me cannot be in relationship with me. 39 He who wants to keep his life as it is at present will end up losing it, while he who is willing to leave his life as it is at present in order to be with me will find a full life. 40 He who welcomes you welcomes me, and he who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me. 41 He who welcomes a prophet because he is a prophet will be filled with prophecy, and he who welcomes a righteous person because he is righteous will be filled with righteousness. 42 Finally, if someone happens to provide a simple glass of cold water to the most insignificant member of the community, truly I assure you, what he has done will not be forgotten.

Gospel commentary - Homily

How does the mystery reach us through his word?

One day while I was waiting in line to catch a bus, an outgoing neighbor struck up a conversation and eventually told me he was a pastor of a small Baptist community. And he began to tell me about the Bible. His reading was fundamentalist. And of course, for him, the world was created in seven days. I told him that the seven-day week is a recent human invention, in fact it comes to us from the Babylonians, by a decree of Sargon I, king of Akkad, around the year 2300 B.C., who had a lunar calendar of 28 days that was divided into four, to obtain the number of seven days, a symbol of wholeness and perfection that was venerated, because it was the number of the known celestial stars (sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn), and that the Egyptians had a solar calendar and a week of 10 days, while the Etruscans had a week of eight days, taken over by the Romans until Constantine, in the year 321 AD, instituted the week of seven days with Sunday as the first day of the week, but nothing did; The biblical text was dictated directly by God. The same was true of Deuteronomy, which was written by Moses himself under the dictation of God, even though he recounts his death. At most, he admitted to intense discussions in Baptist leadership gatherings about the notion of mediation, i.e., God does not intervene directly, but through the mediation of humans.

The notion of mediation is at the heart of today's gospel. It is the end of Jesus' mission statement. The very act of sending on mission is a delegation, i.e. we do not have access to Jesus except through his delegates. And faith in Jesus itself is an affirmation that God is not known directly and does not speak directly except through his human envoy, Jesus of Nazareth, then through his delegates, the evangelists, and now through those who try to follow in his footsteps. Matthew's conclusion to this mission discourse is difficult to read: Matthew has collected disparate words of Jesus whose original context has been lost, giving us a potpourri of diverse words whose unity is not obvious.

After giving his instructions on the content of the mission, which is in fact an extension of his own, Jesus warns his disciples that they will encounter opposition, even within their own family. They will have to make choices: the bond with him, Jesus, will have to take precedence over blood ties; they will have to accept the pain of opposition and of going against the grain; they may have to die to a social life and to certain ambitions.

Then, at the end, Matthew seems to present us with words, no longer addressed to the missionaries, but to those who will be called to receive the missionaries: "Whoever receives a prophet... a righteous man... will receive a prophet's reward... a righteous man's reward"; "whoever gives even a glass of water to one of these little ones as a disciple will not lose his reward." Isn't the language of reward infantilizing? No, if instead of referring to a gift that one will receive in the future, including in the next life, we speak rather of the consequences of an action. More precisely, by welcoming someone as a prophet I am able to receive his prophecy, his message, his wisdom; I am the first beneficiary. Conversely, if I distrust someone, if I am closed to everything he or she may say, I deprive myself of the wisdom he or she can offer me. So there is a fundamental attitude towards others that has a great impact. In the same way, welcoming a righteous person, today we would say an authentic being, means that I let myself be influenced and transformed by this person. In the same way, giving a glass of water to an insignificant person makes me enter into the attitude of Jesus, and therefore puts me in communion with him.

We do not have direct access to the mystery at the source of this world. This is frustrating for many, who would like to receive a direct word from God. Our way of access is through others, for better or for worse. So it's all about my ability to be open. No one has a label: I am a word from God. It is up to me to exercise discernment. But if I distrust everyone, I will never be able to welcome anything. My intimate sense of what is true and authentic helps me to exercise this discernment. It can happen that a person who is execrable, or who can be blamed for many things, says something good and right about me, it is up to me to know how to accept this word. I knew a priest who really helped me in my life orientation, even if it was recognized later that he was a sexual predator.

It is easy to imagine that the young Jesus listened to his parents, his extended family, his neighbors, his customers as artisans, and many people who mediated for him the mystery at the source of this world, and who led him to call this mystery: "Daddy". He had to discern between what brought him closer to this mystery and what kept him away from it. But at the base, one can only imagine a fundamental attitude of openness, of great listening: each individual was to be a source of teaching. To refuse such an attitude is to make oneself a great loser, and above all it is to condemn oneself to never progress in the knowledge of the mystery at the source of this world.