

## SUNDAY WITHIN THE CHRISTMAS OCTAVE

### ST SILVESTER

(Mt: 16:13-19) (*Audio Year A Track 029*)

(*Poem* Vol. 3, pp. 370-372; *Gospel* Vol. 5, pp. 322-5;

*Azariah* (1993), pp. 221-2, 303-4, (2007), pp. 230-1, 315)

***(Traveling near Caesarea Philippi, Jesus encourages His apostles to be prudent when approaching others. He says:)*** "... The people you approach in a simple, friendly way - more than I do - without making them feel uneasy, as I may do, who do they say that I am? And who do they say the Son of Man is?"

One of the apostles says: "Some say that You are Jesus, that is the Christ - and they are the best. Some say that You are a Prophet, some say only a Rabbi, others - and You know - say that You are mad, and possessed."

Another: "But some call You by the same name that You use, and they say: 'Son of man'."

And Bartholomew says: "Some say that that is not possible, because the Son of man is a different thing. But that is not always a denial. Because in actual fact they acknowledge that You are more than the Son of man: You are the Son of God. Others, instead, say that You are not even the Son of man, but a poor man agitated by Satan, or deranged by madness. You can see that there are many different opinions."

"What is the Son of man, therefore, according to the people?" asks Jesus.

Bartholomew replies: "He is a man in whom there are all the most beautiful virtues of men - a man gifted with all the requisites of intelligence, wisdom, grace - which we think were in Adam - to which some add the gift of not having to die. You know that there is already a rumour that John the Baptist is not dead. They say that he was only carried elsewhere by angels, and that Herod, and above all, Herodias - to prevent people from saying that they had been defeated by God - killed a servant, had him beheaded, and then showed his mutilated body, saying it was the corpse of the Baptist. People say so many things! So, many think that the Son of man is either Jeremiah, or Elijah, or one of the Prophets, or that he was the Baptist, who was gifted with grace and wisdom, and said that he was the Precursor of the Christ. Christ: the Anointed of God. The Son of man: a great man, born of man. Some cannot admit, or do not want to admit, that God has sent His Son to the earth. You said yesterday: "Only those who are convinced of the infinite goodness of God, will believe". Israel believes more in God's severity, than in His goodness..."

Simon the Zealot agrees: "Yes. They feel so undeserving, that they consider it impossible that God has been so good as to send His Word, to save them. The

degraded state of their souls is a hindrance to their believing of that... You say that You are the Son of God, and of man. In fact, in You there is all grace and wisdom as man. And I really think that he who was born of Adam in the state of grace, would have been like You in beauty, in intelligence, and in all virtues. The power of God shines in You. But who can believe that? among those who consider themselves gods? and judge God by their standards, in their infinite pride? Cruel, hateful, greedy, impure as they are, they cannot possibly think that God has gone to such an extreme of kindness: as to give Himself to redeem them, His love to save them, His generosity to be at their mercy, and His purity to sacrifice His life among men. Since they are so inflexible and fault-finding in looking for faults and punishing them, they cannot believe that.”

“And who do you say that I am? Tell Me your own personal opinion, without taking into account My words, or the words of other people. If you were compelled to judge Me, who would you say that I am?”

“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” exclaims Peter, kneeling down with his arms stretched upwards, towards Jesus - Who looks at him with His face bright with love, and Who bends to raise and embrace him, saying:

“Simon, son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but My Father in Heaven. Since the first day you came with Me, you have been asking yourself that question. And because you are simple and honest, you have been able to understand and accept the reply that came to you from Heaven. You did not see supernatural manifestations - as John, James and your brother did. You did not know My holiness as son, workman, and citizen - as My cousins Judas and James did. You did not receive any miracle, neither did you see Me work any; I showed no sign of power to you - as I did with Philip, Nathanael, Simon the Zealot, Thomas and Judas, who saw them. You were not subdued by My will, as Levi the publican (meaning Matthew) was. And yet you exclaimed: "He is the Christ!". You believed since the first moment you saw Me, and your faith was never shaken. That is why I called you Cephas. And that is why on you, Peter, I will build My Church. And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth, shall be bound also in Heaven. And whatever you loose on the earth, shall be loosed also in Heaven. O prudent, faithful man, whose heart I have been able to test. And now, from this moment, you are the head, to whom obedience and respect are due - as to another Myself. (louder): And I proclaim him such, before all of you.”

If Jesus had crushed Peter under a hailstorm of reproaches, Peter would not have wept so copiously. He is weeping and is shaken by sobs, with his face on Jesus' chest. His weeping can be compared only to the tears he will shed in his grief for denying Jesus. He now weeps for many good humble feelings... A little of the old Simon - the fisherman of Bethsaida, who had laughed incredulously and facetiously at his brother's first announcement, when he said: “Of course, the Messiah would

appear just to you!..." - a good little of the old Simon crumbles under those tears, and from his vanishing frail human nature, Peter appears, more and more clearly, the Pontiff of the Church of Christ.

When he raises his shy, embarrassed face, he can make only one gesture to say everything, to promise everything, to strengthen himself completely for his new ministry: he throws his arms round Jesus' neck, compelling Him to bend and kiss him, mingling his somewhat bristly grizzled hair and beard, with the soft golden hair and beard of Jesus. And he looks at Jesus with his large, loving, imploring and adoring eyes, still shining and red with tears, holding the Master's ascetic face - bent over his own - in his rough large stumpy hands, as if it were a vase - from which a vital liquid flowed... And he drinks kindness, grace, confidence and strength - from Jesus' face, eyes and smile...

They separate at last, and resume their journey towards Caesarea Philippi. And Jesus says to everybody: "Peter has spoken the truth. Many guess it, you are aware of it. But for the time being, do not say to anybody who the Christ is, in the full truth known to you. Let God speak to the hearts of people, as He speaks to yours. I solemnly tell you, that those who add perfect faith and perfect love to My statements - or yours - will learn the true meaning of the words: 'Jesus, the Christ, the Word, the Son of man, and of God'."

-----

**(Azariah, Maria's Guardian Angel, says:)** "...One promise stands like a reef in defence of the Apostolic Church. Jesus' words: 'They shall not prevail.'

But observe the words accompanying this promise! They recall a quality of the Church, and prompt another Gospel comparison. They say, 'You are Peter, and on this Rock I shall build my Church.'

A solid building, therefore. Of rock. Not of soft mud, which the wind dries up and disperses, or which water dissolves. Not of lime mortar, which time deteriorates. Not of bricks, which a pick can undermine... or shatter... But of rock. A single rock - powerful, indestructible, unassailable, solid, firm...

But he who saw Heaven and the Last Time says, 'There came a great red dragon..., and with his tail he drew after him a third of the stars, and made them fall.' Pray, Christians, pray that no more than a third will fall, swept away by Satan: by his seven accursed hydras, by the tenfold infernal weapons, and by his serpentine, diabolical work.

Pray, pray that the organism of the believers, the Church Militant, will remain the 'Rock' and not become mud, lime-mortar, or brick. Raise up around her the shield of your prayer. For the hour is really tremendous, more tremendous than the hour of darkness in which Christ was immolated. Then, Christ was standing up against the spite of a world rendered Satanic. And against Christ, its prevailing was relative, for

his power and Holiness are measureless. But in this hour, long and ever darker, the Satanic world - which is rising up against you Christians, against the Church - is faced only with men: that is... mortal human nature which, without the aid of God, succumbs. And the more it is already infected and softened by the fumes of the world - and by the science of the world - the more it succumbs.

Pray to the Father... so that, out of respect for the Face of his Christ, the Most High will intervene to impede the affronts He already suffered on Good Friday. Over the centuries - and with increasing violence - these affronts would be hurled against the Head and the Mystical Body of Christ. And pray with merit, pray as just men: as the Blessed Paul says, 'Walk according to the spirit,' not satisfying the desires of the flesh. The select part is the spirit. Give precedence to the spirit; give it regality. The flesh is the handmaid; the spirit is the king..."

-----

*(And in a later dictation, Azariah says:)*

"...[The Church] is an eternal institution, against which not even Satan gains victory. And, if now the violence of hell, and the avalanche of heresies and sins of the ages, seem to want to overwhelm her, she will suffer only a hard jolt, which will make her tremble and suffer. But from this jolt she will emerge more beautiful, having remade her robes - which the dust of so many things had covered over - with shining linen, and having made her mantle as a persecuted one in red. Tears and blood are needed to whiten the linen and redden the mantle: for this great Bride of Christ, that will not die..."