

### Homily (Is 56; Ef 4,1-13; Gv 12,31-36)

The fundamental point we are invited to reflect on by the Liturgy of the Word of this celebration, I believe, is first and foremost the centrality of Jesus Christ and his Paschal Mystery as the decisive unifying factor of humanity: he himself states it clearly in John 12,32: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." From the Johannine perspective, the elevation to the cross is not only the Passion, but also involves glorification, the ascension to the Father, and the gift of the Spirit. The elevation to the cross, in fact, is the moment in which the divinity of Jesus Christ is recognized: again in John 8,28, Jesus says, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that 'I am' he." Integrating what John says, Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, writes that "He who ascended is also he who descended," adding that the descending parable of the Son of God, which has its lowest point in the descent into hell (4,9-10), then experiences the ascent with glorification above the heavens. This path is functional so that men, having reached the fullness at the lowest point of the descent, can also ascend with him and, at the same time, be provided with gifts by the Risen One. These gifts are necessary so that men may form a unity, forming the body of Christ, to reach the unity of faith, the full knowledge of the Son of God, but also to grow to the state of perfect man in the measure proper to the fullness of Christ. The unity of the mystical body of Christ, given by the communion of its members, becomes an expression of a fully human life, lived in the fullness of relationships.

I believe this point is very important: the first calling of man with which God called him, that is, the plan of salvation that God has for man, even before making him a participant in the divine nature (cf. 2 Pt 1,4), is first of all that of tending to the state of "perfect man" (Eph 4,13), that is, to grow in humanity according to the "modeling model" who is the Lord Jesus Christ. This plan of God, in fact, is to be accepted and realized with humility (*tapeinophrosyne*), that is, that humble feeling of oneself that leads to grasping oneself in one's human objectivity, but also with greatness of spirit (*makrothymia*), which is much more than patience, the term with which it is normally translated: it is thinking great, or rather, having a heart as big as that of God, therefore seeing beyond the more or less ephemeral contradictions of life, for which we run the risk of losing sight of God's providential plan. And here, therefore, the place of verification of man's vocation is indicated: "bearing (*anechomenos*) one another" - but the translation "supporting one another in love" is also admissible and better: that is, the possibility of being together can be realized only in love: only if we are grafted into the love of him who so loved the world that he sent his own Son (Jn 3,16), we are also enabled to live alongside one another, one holding (*anechomenos*) the other.

The author continues: "striving to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." If, says Paul in Eph 2,13-16, Christ is our peace, he allows us to experience peace, which in the biblical sense is also the fullness (shalom) of human fulfillment in every aspect, especially relational: he has reconciled us with God, has broken down the wall of enmity between men and God, and has created in himself a new man by making peace. This is the unification of the human person: in Jesus Christ—the perfect man, in whom the full correspondence between human and divine will/nature is realized—the unity of the person is achieved. In him who is our peace, we are at peace with ourselves, with God, and with others. The bond of peace means safeguarding one's vocation by maintaining strong relationships with others, in a Spirit of communion, because it is the Spirit who creates communion. This means experiencing the presence of Jesus Christ in the company of men. It is precisely this passion for God's humanity that allows, beyond particular confessions of faith, an authentic worship of God, as the man Jesus did. We have heard Isaiah 56 on what is pleasing to God: the exercise of compassion unites men on an ethical basis, which on the one hand manifests the true meaning of humanity, and on the other makes concrete faith in the one God, Father of Jesus and of all men. This is what James reminds us in his *Letter* (2,4-20): even the devils have faith that God exists, but they do not have works, that is, compassion for men. And it is significant that in Mt 25,31-46, the judgment that awaits us and every man on earth transcends the recognition of Jesus Christ as such, in the name of an exercise of charity towards the poor, strangers, the sick, and prisoners: "When did we see you in these?".