



IT'S JESUS, THAT'S TO SAY, GOD WHO SAVES US!

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There are words that from over-use and our hearing them time and again, lose their vitality and evocative power. Then there are words that, aside from the field of study of specialists, little by little fall out of use.

"Salvation" is certainly a word that has suffered from overuse. There is perhaps no homily, no catechesis in which generous use is not made of this word in all its possible forms: from the salvation of the soul to the plan of salvation and the history of salvation and so on.

But what is it that we mean by this word that is so fundamental to our faith? What is salvation?

From the start, we must say that by salvation we refer to, more than any specific words, facts or related and interconnected events, the person of Christ, the son of Almighty God, who took on flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He is the Saviour, the fullness and completion of God's designs (cf. 2 Tim 1, 10; Ti 1,4; 2,13; 3,6).

In the Gospel of St. Matthew we read: "And you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins" (Mt 1, 21). In that name, the nature and entire mission of the Son of God is designated, that is to restore, to rescue, to reconcile and to return to harmony that which had been destroyed, corrupted and scattered Today, in describing our times (let's call upon our sociologists and philosophers for once!),

we speak of a 'liquid society', that is a society that is lacking in unity, that spreads out haphazardly and whose origins are difficult to trace with precision and accuracy. All phenomena, we know, should be seen in context and as a reaction, often just, from rigid and oppressive ideals, totalitarianisms, cultural tyrannies... The need, however, for harmony cannot be denied and has nothing to do with a levelling out or uniformity, but rather, an acclaim of all our peacefully attained differences.

In Greek the word "cosmos" signifies the ordered and varied beauty of the universe in contrast to chaos which means disharmony, disorder and confusion. In Sacred Scripture, the first creation is described as the passage from chaos to the cosmos. This is God's great work: "Yaweh, our Lord, how great Your name throughout the earth! I look up at Your heavens, made by Your fingers..." (Ps 8).

The second creation however, was even greater and more awesome. For that is what it truly was, a re-creation through Our Lord Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus all of creation re-finds its splendour and fullness, and especially man who from the beginning has been indelibly marked in the depths of his soul with the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1, 1 ff.).

In the Creed we pray: "For us men and for our salvation, He

came down from Heaven." This is what Christmas means. It is the gift of a new creation, the restoration of that harmony that had been disrupted and lost. It is the fulfilment of the Word of God, even if within the frailty and instability of our temporal existence, and of which He said, no less than seven times "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen 1, 1 ff.).

Let us read over again in the faint light of the shepherd's grotto the words from the book of Wisdom: "For when peaceful stillness compassed everything and the night in its swift course was half spent, Your all-powerful word from heaven's royal throne bounded..., For all creation, in its several kinds, was being made over anew" (Wis 18,14; 19,6).

Let us make room also in our homes for Jesus our Saviour, the Almighty Word of God, who took on flesh, and for us too, we will see emerge out of the Red Sea, an unimpeded road where before there had been water (cf. Wis 19, 7).

May Padre Pio help and guide you and the wishes he made to his spiritual father come true for you too: "that your heart become His cradle adorned with flowers, in which He can rest without the slightest discomfort..." (Letters I). And without any fear, because it's Jesus, that's to say, God who saves us!

Happy Christmas!