

Politics

By Franco Maggiotto

Alpignano, Italy ~ October/November 2004

“If you bow down before me I will give you the power and glory of all the kingdoms of the world.” Luke 4:6-7

The devil, in his diabolical cunning, senses the aspiration of Jesus to become the Lord of the world: “that every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father”, (Phil 2:11). Satan thinks himself to be the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31), and rightly fears the competition that Jesus could represent for him. However he does not hesitate to affirm that he is really the ruler of the world, and to demonstrate it, leads Jesus up to a high mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of the world. “The power and glory of all these kingdoms has been given to me and I give it to whom I wish.” We don’t really know who entrusted to Satan’s supremacy the glory and power of the world and it is not even clear why the devil would be willing to give it to whomever he desires. These words reaffirm his legitimate and counter-state rule over all the kingdoms of the world; even Jesus doesn’t seem to deny Satan’s reckless affirmation. The devil does not want the battle and perhaps even fears it, warns the presence of a power greater than his that he wants to dethrone him. However, he declares himself willing to compromise and is ready, based on his legitimate authority, to confer to Jesus the power and glory of the kingdoms of this world, but not completely for free. He requests in exchange a small act of submission, recognition of his power, an act of worship: “To You belong the Kingdom, power and glory”, but you belong to me!!

The offer seems enticing, but the price is too high and Jesus rejects this offer as well. It is once again the authority of the biblical Word that constitutes the opposing forces to the allurements of the tempter: “Worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve”, (Deut 6:13-14). The account does not finish with a ridiculed and humiliated devil. “The tempter parted from him until an opportune time”, (Luke 4:13), and in Jesus’ ministry the opportunities will never lack. The presence of the antagonist will manifest itself at every moment: even in the words of the great apostle Peter when, after having confessed his faith in Christ, exhorts him to avoid the cross. “Get behind me, Satan, you are an offense to me”, (Mt. 16:23) will be Jesus’ sharp reply. In refusing to compromise with his antagonist, Jesus will sign his death sentence. The political powers will obligate the religious powers to align themselves with them to decree his crucifixion (John 11: 47-52.).

Satan’s suggestion, refused by Jesus, will be fully welcomed by those powers who will not hesitate to bow down to the demonic powers, adopting their systems and methods of conquest, oppression, violence and death -- the prince of this world against the prince of peace. There is no compromise, no neutrality. The battle means here and now a radical choice must be made. Jesus said “He who is not with me is against me”, (Mt. 12:30), “My reign is not of this world”, (John 18:36), “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not the peace of the world; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be dismayed”, (John 14:27). The peace of God is found only in justice and must be won at a price. “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Mt. 5:9). Infallible men and dictators who would like to use God, like Satan here with Jesus, would like to kill us all without us defending ourselves, in order not to have to spend money on war. The Bible teaches us to make peace defending ourselves from enemies. (Compare Genesis 14 with Genesis 18:16, ff.) May the Lord, through His Word illuminated by His Spirit, in this time of grief and loss, make us workers of the peace of God that is based upon justice, so that we might be “the salt of the earth and the light of the world”. With Him and in Him everything is possible. Amen.

Living the Gospel Seriously

Living the Gospel seriously does not mean to transcend the world we live in and to escape into a religious one, into a non-existent world that is created by the religion of ideas (Roman Catholicism); nor does it mean to transcend reality and the world we live in with an idealistic and unreal vision of a *generalized* peace and reconciliation (Islam). (The Unification Church - the Moonies - bring these two religious ideals together in their church.) To live the Gospel seriously means instead *to be prepared for a state of conflict and of battle in order to free man from the fear of false gods that continue to create wars in men’s hearts and throughout the world.*

Franco Maggiotto