

"You are my Beloved Son"
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Readings:

Matthew 4:1-4

Matthew 27:39-40

Luke 3:21-22

INTRODUCTION

- The time of Epiphany is the time of revelation.
- It is when the Christian faith proclaims that God allows himself to be seen, heard, and encountered in the midst of the world.
 - Because it reveals Jesus.
- Epiphany reveals not only who Jesus is but also how God acts:
 - with a powerful voice;
 - relationally.
- Today, the Sunday on which we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, this revelation reaches a decisive point.
 - Because before any public miracle, before any teaching, even before any confrontation,
 - Jesus hears a voice.
 - While still in the waters of the Jordan, the sky opens and God speaks:
 - "You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased." (Luke 3:22)

- This becomes the silent center of Jesus' entire life.
 - Because, along the way, many other voices will rise up to question, distort, and challenge that identity.
 - But Jesus goes through the desert, the ministry, and even the cross, carrying within himself the voice of the Father.
- And this story speaks deeply to our time, in which so many voices compete to define who we are.

1. IDENTITY BEFORE PERFORMANCE

- Immediately after his baptism, Jesus is led into the desert (Matthew 4:1).
- Before being tested, Jesus is called Son.
- Before hunger, loneliness, and confrontation with evil, he receives a word of belonging.
- The tempter questions precisely this sense of belonging:
 - "If you are the Son of God..."(Matthew 4:3)
- It is not an innocent question.
 - It is an attempt to shift the identity of Jesus from relationship to performance.
 - The devil suggests: prove who you are.
 - Turn stones into bread.
 - Use power to satisfy an immediate need.
 - Reduce your divine lineage to a visible demonstration of success.

- Jesus responds by quoting Scripture, but more than that, he responds based on the voice he has already heard:
 - "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."(Matthew 4:4)
 - And the words for him were:
- "You are my beloved son".
- In our times, this temptation remains extremely relevant.
- We live surrounded by voices that say:
 - If you are somebody, prove it.
 - Prove it with productivity, with results, with recognition, with spiritual or professional performance.
 - Even faith can be captured by this logic, as if God's love depended on achievements.
- The baptism of Jesus reminds us that identity comes before performance.
 - We are loved before we are efficient.
 - We are called before we are successful.
- The voice of God does not originate from our performance;
 - it sustains us in the midst of trials.

2. OTHER VOICES

- Throughout his public life, Jesus is constantly questioned by many voices.

- Religious authorities, political leaders, and even crowds try to fit him into expectations that are not God's.
 - They want a spectacular Messiah, in control, a victor in the mold of human power.
- These voices do not disappear.
 - On the contrary, they intensify.
- They reveal a deep tension:
 - Jesus does not fit into the religious, moral, or political categories of his time.
 - And that's a problem for many.
- The voices that surround us and try to define us are many and, often, subtle.
 - Culture tells us that our value is measured by what we produce or display.
 - The market measures us by efficiency and results.
 - Rigid religion imposes burdens of perfection;
 - permissive religion dilutes the meaning of faith.
 - Guilt constantly reminds us of our past mistakes, while fear projects future failures.
 - Constant comparison convinces us that we are never enough.
- Those are just some of the voices around us.
- These voices speak loudly, repeat themselves daily, and little by little, they try to take the place of God's voice.

- Epiphany reminds us that God reveals himself not only in extraordinary moments, but in the silent faithfulness of a sustained identity.
- Jesus doesn't react to every provocation.
 - He lives from the certainty of who he is in God.
- This is liberating.
 - Because we don't need to respond to every voice.
 - Not all criticism requires a defense.
 - Not every expectation needs to be met.
- When we know where the voice calling us comes from, we are empowered:
 - discerning which voices deserve attention
 - and which ones need to be silenced.

3. A VOICE IN THE SILENCE

- The most brutal moment of this conflict of voices in Jesus' life happens on the cross.
- There, the provocation returns with cruel force:
 - "**If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and save yourself.**" (Matthew 27:40)
- It is striking to see how the same phrase runs throughout the entire narrative:
 - "If you are the Son of God..."
 - In the desert, it was bread.
 - On the cross, survival is the goal.

- In both cases, the proposal is the same:
- To deny the path of faithful love in order to prove power.
- On the cross, there is no voice from heaven.
 - There is no dove.
 - There is no audible confirmation.
 - There is silence.
 - And yet, Jesus remains faithful because the voice he heard in the Jordan still resonates within him.
- This teaches us something profoundly human and spiritually honest:
 - There will be times when God will seem silent.
 - Moments when faith will not be sustained by signs,
 - but by memory.
 - Not for the emotion of the present,
 - but for the memory of a word already spoken.
 - These are moments when it seems our prayers go unanswered.
 - And so we need to look back at God's faithfulness that has already been manifested in our lives, and reaffirm:
- I know that I am loved by God.

- The good news is that the Father's voice was not silenced by the cross.
 - On the contrary, it was confirmed in the resurrection.
- The beloved Son did not need to come down from the cross to prove who he was.
 - His identity was proven precisely by his remaining on the cross.
- For us, this means hope.
 - Even when life confronts us with losses, failures, doubts, or deep pain,
 - the last word does not belong to the voices of accusation.
 - The voice that calls us sons and daughters remains.

CONCLUSION

- At the Baptism of Jesus, God speaks.
- And that voice echoes throughout the Gospel narrative, traversing the desert, ministry, suffering, and death.
- Epiphany invites us to listen to that same voice today.
- In a noisy world, marked by constant demands and fragile identities, the Gospel offers us a firm and gracious word:
 - You are loved.
 - Before trying anything.

- Before getting everything right.
- Even before fully understanding the path.
- You are loved..
- Jesus lived sustained by that voice.
- And it is that same voice that continues to call us by name.
 - A voice that endures.
 - A voice that sustains.
 - A voice that, even when everything seems silent, continues to say:
 - "You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter."
 - "with you I am well pleased."
- Amen.